Micro-universes and Situated Critical Theory: Postcolonial and Feminist Dialogues in a Comparative Study of Indo-English and Lusophone Women Writers

Micro-werelden en Gesitueerde Kritische Theorie: Postkoloniale en Feministische Dialogen in een Vergelijkende Studie van Indo-Engelse en Lusophone Schrijfsters

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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While in The Netherlands I was fortunate to have my own Portuguese community, the fearful tribe that, as all my Dutch friends know, you start by adopting one… and you get the whole bunch. On the other hand, you all knew the Portuguese dinners that where programmed for ten and ended up with… the friend of a friend…and one more colleague. Everybody was always welcome to the chaos. I ended up meeting several scientific communities being as I was the only literary oddity among biologists, engineers and our very own expert in nuclear physics (matter becomes a plasma inside a Donut shaped machine??? I never looked at Donuts the same way afterwards. I feel guilty at biting into the mysteries of the universe). I was very lucky in having you all with me, Dora, Cristina, Francisco, Rui and Candida.

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Este círculo familiar dos Vilela Passos inclui uma legião de tios e tias tão únicos como adoráveis, sejam de sangue ou adotados. Um abraço muito grande a todos vós.

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And…at last…center stage for the main actor, hero and seducer, charmer and "agent provocateur". My dear João, in a language where you also feel at home, I want to tell all of those who shared our lives in Utrecht of my fascination for the reliable, sensitive and intriguing character that you are. That they may smile kindly upon the little homage I pay to the one I love.

Introduction

> "Excess of saying does not depend merely on the fact that whoever does the saying is more situated than what it is said; it also depends on the fact that what is said is situated in a culture that tends to forget its own situatedness."
>
> Boaventura de Sousa Santos[1]

This research project carries out a comparative study of six pieces of postcolonial literature, analysing the selected texts through a combined critical frame developed after an intersection of postcolonial and feminist theories. The choice for such theoretical models to analyse literature, implies a particular view of literary criticism, as an activity that tries to understand the relation between represented events in the fictional lives of a set of characters, and the mechanics of the social world where they move. Following Gayatri Spivak[2], I see literary representation as a "*textualisation of the world*"[3], that is to say, as a process of constructing meaning, which makes of each literary piece a provisional explanatory thesis, in aesthetic form. In the frame of postcolonial literature, this abstract formulation becomes more concrete: this study looks at postcolonial texts as re-interpretations of colonial history, as comment on specific cultural systems and as critical reflection on the socio-political context of a postcolonial location[4]. From a feminist angle, the social world exposed in a literary text is taken as a display of patriarchal forms of social organisation, mapping their effects through the reaction of a set of women characters that resist this world order. The conflicts and tension resisting characters have to face, design the constraining limits of patriarchies. Otherwise, judged from the point of view of

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[1] Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Toward a New Common Sense, Routledge, London and New York, 1995.

[2] "The worlding of a world (…) inscribed what was presumed to be uninscribed. Now this worlding actually is also a texting, textualising, a making into art, a making into an object to be understood". Gayatri Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution", The Post-colonial Critic, Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues, Sarah Harasym (ed.), Routledge, New York & London, 1990: 1.

[3] In this research I have opted for transcribing quotes in italics when they are integrated in my text, so as to make more visible and clear the distinction of voices.
Ibid, Spivak, 1990: 1.

[4] By "location" I mean a space/time co-ordinate, invoking a specific geography, a self-represented history, a socio-political context, and a system of cultural references. I also refer to the nodal intersection between a local context, regional or national, and its exposition to global/international influences. According to Rosi Braidotti, "location" is "a collectivelly shared and constructed, jointly occupied spatio-temporal territory", where a recognised set of networks of power are active" (Metamorphoses, 2002: 12). Homi Bhabha defines "location" as a micro point of intersecting simultaneities, containing traces of wider issues. The locating of culture is a process dependent on representation and enunciation, being recognisable by what is said or written about a culture or a nation, as collective identities. Bhabha de-essentialises "location" by underlining its constructed, invented nature. These three notions of location share their collective dimension, the necessity of enunciation (it is an invented, constructed reference, not an essence) and the perception that the micro-nodal-individual point of a system contains traces, hints, clues to understand wider, macro-frames. Because of my interest on postcolonial literatures, I pin down the notion of location to national or regional territories, which the corresponding literature attempts to represent, participating in the creation of the collective identity of each of these locations.

accommodated women characters, patriarchy seems invisible and a common-sense social practice.

The kind of literary criticism developed in this research, mostly concerned with geo-political literacy, history and women's issues, fits the current practice of literary criticism as a movement away from the traditional (pre-1960s) "aesthetic apathy"[5], which washed away the intervening, confrontational power of committed literature, reducing literary criticism to questions of form and style. In this dissertation, aesthetic discussion addresses the elements, stylistic and structural, which allow the text to expand on its ability to mean, making it more seductive and stronger in its impact. However, aesthetic judgement is only one of the many critical activities to be performed in the expert reading expected from the encounter between literary critic and text. This literary study is not confined to its ivory tower. It messes and mixes with worldly matters, from civil war to emigration, from post-independence dictatorships to the discussion of caste and class differences.

Even though literature is fiction, the dialogue that goes on between critical reader and the arguments offered by a writer address real issues, because the aesthetic nature of literature as a work of art does not deny the fact that it also carves content - ideological, philosophical, historical and ethical - out of the subject matter the writer decides to address. Some writers evade the world, inviting you to share the intimacy of their imagination through writing; other writers analyse the world critically, inviting the reader to share their acute perception and their lucid intelligence. I opted for the company of the latter kind of writer in this research, and I followed the six selected feminine voices to very different geographical co-ordinates, across some recent decades, to look at one same process: the consolidation of postcolonial societies after independence from colonialism, and the accompanying process of self-confrontation implied in the management of challenges and possibilities in a new-found freedom.

The conclusions of this study distil some concrete theoretical answers, together with a summary of the main topics put forward by each of the writers either in terms of feminist agendas or regarding critical representations of particular postcolonial contexts. Nevertheless, the awareness and insights to be acquired while reading these texts cannot be summarised, which amounts to say that the offered itinerary between different postcolonial literatures is as important as the conclusions. In this dissertation, the reader is invited to a mental journey, with me as guide, across these literary pieces, which are maps into the comprehension of certain patriarchies and postcolonial contexts.

The structured guidelines offered by the two theoretical models considered here, provide a platform to compare these writers, but they also constitute an invitation to consider wider historical and socio-political processes represented in the texts. In part, that is the reason that led me to postcolonial theory and feminism, as these two theoretical debates allow you to relate critically to current reality, thinking about the world, and looking for better ways to integrate conflicting ideas and aspirations, across genders, cultures, classes and races, in the one planet we do have to share.

The feminist point of view shaping this study determined some of the choices and objectives presiding over its organisation. Since I was interested in women's particular perspective on postcolonial locations, permeated by their awareness of the discrete articulation of double forms of oppression, bodily and territorial, gendered and racist, I

[5] Actually this expression is a fortunate comment by Bart Moore-Gilbert on Spivak, which I appropriated as a short reference to a certain type of literary criticism that does not consider the historical and socio-political issues of the text as a relevant part of a literary study. Bart Moore-Gilbert, Postcolonial Theory, Contexts, Practices, Politics, Verso, London, 1997.

picked a set of women writers, creating a small gendered genealogy of postcolonial literatures.

What is special about women's perspective (embodied in women's writing) is that it exposes particular histories of oppression, usually invisible in official accounts that forget private dimensions of lived collective histories. Individuals are often powerless to interfere with public, collective processes ruled by hegemonic summits, but they certainly experience the effects of these processes, sometimes in painful ways. Micro-universes intersect with wider issues, as the 1960s feminist argument that "the private is political" clearly stated. The choice for studying texts written by women is a choice for a particular point of view, sensitive to both patriarchies and the threat of neo-colonialism as two concentric dimensions of power and oppression. Studying the symbiosis between these dimensions of social oppression will constitute a source of extra knowledge on both of them.

The selected women writers may not claim their feminist awareness explicitly, but they are concerned with women's position in their own postcolonial communities, exposing a heavy social heritage of 'subalternisation' and aggressive misogyny, often made all the worse during colonialism because its bureaucratic organisation suppressed alternative, compensatory forms of power.

It is true that material circumstances and cultural references are certainly shared by men and women living in the same society, but since the role models appointed to each of them are not identical, nor do they imply a symmetry of rights and access to power, women will be affected by these circumstances differently. The logic consequence of the enhanced risk to exploitation and abuse is that women have been finding alternative solutions to cope with the constrains reserved to their gender, and the creative and resourceful mapping of these, may be extremely enlightening and inspiring to conceive future reforms. Consequently, there is also a visionary dimension in these texts, as far as the selected texts present tentative solutions, unfold negotiation strategies, and design new inspirational myths or role models. In this way, these writers are suggesting ways of bringing about something of a better world. This study will discuss the suggested alternatives and solutions as a tentative set of liberated role models.

The choice for six women's voices, from three different geo-cultural contexts, India, Cape Verde and Mozambique, is a means to contribute to a more aware and sensitive approach to diversified feminist agendas, comparing different representations of women (and their struggles) across diverse social backgrounds and positions. Through the texts of these writers, one will also develop insights on some of the social problems affecting the lives of women in these three places. Finally, this research is equally relevant to draw genealogies regarding women's contribution to their own national (or regional) literary systems.

This study focuses on literature that was not written in the Western world, though it addresses north/south and East/West international relations. Nevertheless, the critical eye surveying these literatures is Western trained. As the epigraph quoted above wisely points out, in the process of discussing such complex processes as history, culture and politics, through fiction, it is easy to forget one's own situatedness. But soon, the awareness that theoretical thought is practical knowledge on a pragmatic reality makes you accountable for your position. You can be contributing to promote established prejudice, if you are not willing to confront the bias in the tradition that educated you.

I start from the fact that I am trained by Western patterns of thought, bred through postmodern self-reflection, perceiving the world through deconstructive practices and feminist awareness. I belong to the Western "post" generation, which may be "*disloyal to a*

culture of origin[6]" because we have learned that "*a narrow view of ourselves tends to encourage an even narrower view of the other*"[7]. Only by shrinking to the awareness of its own situatedness, will Europeans/Westerners[8] be equipped to realise that things look differently when assessed from different angles. What stands out as a priority mutates, what seems irrelevant may become an obstacle. By looking at the texts of three Indian women writers and three of their African colleagues, this research defends the necessity of adjusting one's theoretical frame of analysis to situated contexts, acknowledging differences, contradiction and fragmentation.

The fact that postcolonial literatures are circulated and discussed in Europe is part of the current process of decolonisation, in synchronisation with a greater Western interest for ethnic differences and diversity (ironically, at the same time that xenophobia is rampant, and fortress Europe tries to close its doors to emigrants). With this study, I compare a set of critical points of view, framed by their situated cultural context, assessing their contribution to current postcolonial discussions. For the ex-colonised cultures, Western reception and circulation of postcolonial literatures is equally important, as a means of self-assertion (through the recognition and praise of their cultural products) and as a bridge of dialogue across international audiences.

The option for dealing with postcolonial literatures follows a certain evolution in the field of literary studies, which started in the Anglophone world with the reviewing of literature produced in Africa, India and the West Indies. The study of postcolonial literatures started to emerge as a distinguishable research area in the 1960s[9], when these "new" literatures were gradually included in academic curricula, and publishing houses started to contribute to the promotion of these literatures by circulating writers from Britain's former colonies.

There were several problems inherent to the initial development of postcolonial studies from reviews to "commonwealth literatures": first, it was implied that British literature would stand as the model or norm to evaluate this new flow of literature in English. Secondly, the approaches to these literatures tended to prefer aesthetic evaluation to ideological criticism, which was, clearly and undeniably, a strategy to annihilate the assertion of national literatures (for that would erode the central position of British literature in academic debate and scholarly circles). Since it is old news that British colonialism always worked as much with the sword as with cultural products, it is understandable that political awareness and cultural de-colonisation were not the immediate aims of such studies. British critics actually tended to "*deplore any significant deviation from 'the great tradition*" of the established Western canon, rejecting anything "*too local in interest*"[10]. Because of this initial "misreading" of postcolonial literatures, Bart Moore-Gilbert[11] dates the mature development of adequate critical theories as a phenomenon of the 1980s, after two decades of consolidation. This critical debate kept evolving in the 90s, when it became clear that colonial approaches to postcolonial literatures in English were obsolete.

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[6] *Op. cit.* Sousa Santos 1995: xi.
[7] *Ibidem.*
[8] I refer to Europe and the West as the socio-political system that created the colonial network and its corresponding mentality, currently revised and deconstructed by postcolonial self-assertion. In this research, when I refer to colonial expansion, I am referring to European expansion from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries.
[9] Bruce King, The New English Literatures – Cultural Nationalism in a Changing World, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1980.
[10] *Op. cit.* Bart Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 27.
[11] *Op. cit.* Moore-Gilbert, 1997.

The field has evolved to recognise the worth of national/local literary traditions in the context of their particular identity politics, their cultural heritages and their own regional issues or interests. A more equitable international dialogue concerning the reception of literature is in the making, and a new interest on the intra-national dimension of postcolonial literatures is bringing to literary criticism a whole new political literacy. As a result, postcolonial theory is becoming a stimulating frame to read these literatures from a less Western-centric perspective. To the eyes of writers and critics involved in the creation of the diverse (modern) national literatures, which have emerged with the process of decolonisation, postcolonial criticism is a platform for insightful international dialogues, and one which is too valuable to be despised. This is the context of my interest in joining the postcolonial critical debate, believing in its importance and future potential.

As far as postcolonial theory is concerned, the aim of this research is to compare different instances of postcolonial literatures and assess the worth of postcolonial theories to account for the diversity of postcolonial literatures across a set of locations. What is at stake is a certain generalising effect of Western theories, a sort of academic imperialism, which tries to normalise approaches and impose global conceptual tools[12]. I will try to demonstrate the need for accountability and situatedness, while exposing the problems with universal categories, stereotypes and generalising concepts. The advantages of situated, flexible uses of theory, as a "survival kit" across diverse cultural landscapes, is that it may prove less aggressive, more flexible, and hence more adequate to deal with exuberant variety that evades classifications.

Since I wanted to keep an eye on the fragmentary nature of diverse postcolonial literatures to test and confront theoretical tools, I deliberately picked case studies that invoke the diversity of postcolonial literatures. That is the reason leading to the option for geographically distant postcolonial societies, which underwent different colonial processes and with different pre-colonial histories. On the other hand, to have more than one voice writing of the same postcolonial location and patriarchy allowed for an interesting resonance between the analysis of different texts. The single account of war from Mozambique provided, in my opinion, sufficient of an insight on that location, in terms of literary system and represented context. Extreme circumstances have a sharper geography, probably easier to convey and understand.

The diversity of cultural background in the considered instances of postcolonial literature also serves the defence of the necessity to think feminism across situated agendas, being this argument another of the targeted aims of the study.

The strategic relevance of "diversity" as a concept to think the structure of this research was equally important to react to the "excessive" visibility of literatures written in English. By dealing with women writers from Mozambique and Cape Verde, this dissertation offers the Anglophone reader a journey through the universe of postcolonial literatures written in Portuguese, mapping the Lusophone[13] dimension of postcolonial literatures, which encompasses five national African literatures and a population over 33.8

[12]In her study of colonialism, Elleke Boehmer detects a high level of repetition in colonial theories reproduced from territory to territory, from administration to administration. Boehmer interprets this pattern as a colonial strategy aimed at controlling otherness by homogenising it. A sort of cultural map, with Europe (or the West) at its centre was thus established, promoting the idea that the rest of the world was equally uncivilised, anywhere. All colonised cultures were the "other" of Europe, and that was the only relevant thing to consolidate colonial mentalities (Colonial & Postcolonial Literature, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995). I interpret the self-appointed centrality of Western theoretical discourses, in what concerns the reviewing of postcolonial literatures, as a similar gesture, not totally free from the same aims.

[13] "Lusophone" is a critical alternative to the expression "postcolonial literatures in Portuguese". For a more complete discussion see the introduction to Part III.

million[14] people. The study of three writers working in Portuguese inscribes another dimension to current cartographies of postcolonial literatures, beyond the canonised instances of postcolonial literatures in English.

The comparative structure of this research takes the selected Indo-English women writers as examples from the "star system" of postcolonial literatures, repeatedly studied within the Anglo-American academies, some of the most powerful centres in the promotion of normative theoretical discourse. From the set of most established names I chose such a famous writer as Nayantara Sahgal, one of the most celebrated Indian women writers. Among other literary awards like the Sinclair Fiction Prize and the Commonwealth Writers Prize, she won the Sahitya Akademi, the highest literary award in India, in 1986, with Rich Like Us (1985), the novel I have chosen to address in this dissertation. As for Arundhati Roy, world famous and polemic, she won the Booker prize in 1997, with her very first novel The God of Small Things (1997). She became the object of endless reviews, both in the Western academy (for being anti-establishment) and in India (where she created a social turmoil for portraying incestuous love, cross caste love affairs, and feminine desire). She was translated into 21 languages, got interviews in all the leading newspapers, and, although commodified as the expected icon of the beautiful exotic artist, she managed to keep her sharp tongue on serious issues. The third choice fell on Githa Hariharan, and her novel When Dreams Travel (1999), which is a re-writing of The Thousand and One Nights, from a postcolonial and feminist perspective. Her work could not fit the aims of this research project better.

As a second term in this comparison, Lusophone women writers have been almost invisible to Western critical eyes, outside of the Portuguese-speaking world. Although active critical reviewing of literatures in Portuguese is happening, this critical debate has remained too distant from the current international mapping of world literatures. By playing Lusophone women writers against the famous cases of three key Indian women writers, I intend to put out and promote the Lusophone dimension of postcolonial literatures. My choice fell on Orlanda Amarílis and Dina Salústio, from Cape Verde, for being the most achieved prose writers among the women who have contributed for the literary development of the archipelago. Local critics seem to have prized poetry above narrative, but both of these writers have a recognised position in the local literary system. From Orlanda Amarílis I analyse the anthology of short stories Ilhéu dos Pássaros (1982), while from the poet Dina Salústio, I picked her first novel A Louca de Serrano (1998). Finally, Paulina Chiziane, the very first woman to write a novel in Mozambique, is the writer who closes the studied set. From her work, the text that was chosen for discussion is Ventos do Apcalipse (1999).

Since Edward Said wrote Orientalism (1978), a foundational text in postcolonial studies, there has been a tendency to look at postcolonial literatures across an East/West division. The fact that some of the main names in the field like Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Aijaz Ahmad and Arif Dirlik keep referring to India in their writings certainly helps to keep India at the centre of postcolonial critical theories, placing Africa in a somewhat "secondary" position (with South America playing an ambiguous role given the canonisation of some token authors like Gabriel Garcia Marques, Carlos Fuentes and Clarice Lispector as postmodern or magic realist, and leaving the wider literary scene around them in a sort of limbo). I am deliberately making of this study a triangle, linking my Western trained perspective to women writers in India/East and in Africa. Triangles are good to break dichotomies, upsetting neat barriers of prejudice between I and "other". Just thinking that this "other" can take many forms cancels the credibility of stereotypical dichotomies.

[14] Official numbers from the CPLP (Comunidade dos Países da Língua Portuguesa): Angola 13.5 million; Cape Verde 400.000; S. Tomé and Príncipe 100.000; Guiné-Bissau 1.2 million; Mozambique 18.6 million.

This dissertation is divided in three parts. Part I is subdivided into two sections, one devoted to feminist theory and the other to postcolonial criticism. In this first theoretical part, I discuss established concepts and methods. This discussion is intended to provide a set of guidelines for critical analysis, relating these guidelines in such a way as to construct a double-headed critical model. I expect this model to be coherent enough to create a stable platform for the comparative approach, and, at the same time, flexible enough to be adaptable to each of the selected texts because different topics are relevant to understand different texts. Not all of the discussed categories and concepts have to be applied to all the texts. I will re-use the part of the model that is relevant for the case at hand**.**

Part II discusses three novels by each of the chosen Indo-English writers mentioned above. I start the analysis of the literary pieces from a postcolonial perspective and after exhausting this line of analysis, I revisit the novels from a feminist angle, which amounts to say that each text is the subject of two sections. At the end of part II, there is a moment of synthesis, comparing the three studied writers.

Part III follows the same procedure concerning the double reading of the selected pieces. The difference is that since I do not expect the Anglophone reader to be so familiar with the context of the literatures of Cape Verde and Mozambique, I include a survey of the development of these modern literatures in Portuguese. Introduction to Part III also tries to map the more general frame of postcolonial literatures in Portuguese. Finally, in appendix, the reader will find three summaries sketching relevant historical background, which should be read as a companion piece to the different sections. One of the appendixes concerns the last stage of Portuguese colonialism, while the second and the third introduce the reader to some relevant aspects of the geography and history of Cape Verde and Mozambique. Part III finishes with its own set of conclusions, just before the general conclusion to this study.

Postmodern affiliations

> "The definition of post-coloniality, it seems to me, took place in the face of the growing theoretical consecrations of postmodernism, but also because of the space created by post-modernism and its disruption of metanarratives. A number of scholars had felt a need to articulate transformational discourses: the presence of the literatures of decolonisation, resistance and self-articulation of non-Western peoples."
>
> Carol Boyce Davies, 1994: 81[15]

Although the theoretical background of this project is focused on the postcolonial debate and its intersection with feminist issues, there are some postmodern affiliations that are relevant to frame the starting point of the research questions under consideration.

In my opinion, one important outcome of the extensive debate concerning postmodernism was the awareness that a major revision of some of the dominant ideologies[16] shaping Western civilisation was taking place, on account of the corrosive impact of historical change and social mutations. The changing "spirit of the time", in the second half of the XXth century, in the Western world, was adequately represented by the corresponding artistic productions. "Postmodernism" may have started with writers,

[15] Carol Boyce Davies, Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject, Routledge, London, 1994, pp. 80-89.

[16] Take as examples of these dominant ideologies the Enlightenment's belief in the linear progress of mankind as the future of history, Cartesian reliance on reason and the conscious "self", the superiority of white race and Western civilisation as exclusive, the necessity of heterosexuality and a clear gendered division of the world.

architects, photographers and their critics, usually the vanguard in the process of "giving meaning" ("textualising" as Gayatri Spivak would say), but both artists and theorists only inscribed the change of mentalities that was dominant in the new society of consuming masses.

In fact, established ideas, values and hierarchies that, until the second half of the twentieth century, constituted undeniable references and guidelines, have been assessed under a new light, mostly framed by those points of view that until then had been considered irrelevant (working class, feminist and "black"). It is as if, in the West, new cultural dominants embodied a change of focus from hegemonic (conservative, modernist) discourses[17] to parodic, marginal and confronting voices. This shift was felt in several areas of scholarly debate and artistic expression, including literature, which is the subject that concerns this research.

The revision of ideas and patterns of thought hitherto dominant in the West provoked contradictory reactions among scholars. Some were certainly pessimistic. One just has to recall apocalyptic views of contemporary urban life[18], the announced loss of credibility in the project of the Enlightenment[19] and the diagnosis of an exhaustion of creativity in art (Jameson and his "pastiche" or "blank parody"[20]) to draw the genealogy of this negative attitude. Equally confusing for traditional literary criticism was the contamination of established *genres* (in literature, in architecture and in film) and the loss of clear borders between high and popular culture, (for instance on account of ironical quotation and intertextuality[21]).

My interest in this sketch of a postmodern crisis of established ideologies and dominant patterns of thought is due to the fact that it opens the way to think a reformulation of the logic presiding over two sets of marginalising practices which have been central to the consolidation of modern Western society: sexism and colonialism.

In contrast with the grim postmodern landscape that I have just invoked above, the emergence of self-assertive postcolonial literatures and the feminist project, with its innovative potential and social concerns, seem rather productive alternatives and inspirational directions to explore. This research departs from the erosion of Western myths regarding the superiority of the white race, the central status of Europe as model of civilisation and the domestic/subaltern status of women. This postmodern gesture of "clearing the way" of old ideas may seem very apocalyptic, or very cynical ("anything goes"), specially if the world order supported by these myths (imperial, patriarchal) happened to be dear to you. However, the crisis of these myths, allows room for new ideas and I am interested in exploring new literary and critical horizons sparkled by the development of feminist theories and the impact of postcolonial literature and criticism.

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[17] By "hegemonic discourses" I mean dominant, established, widely promoted and normative speech acts or written texts that repeat and validate certain ideologies and values. Usually, the promoted ideologies and values serve the power claims of a certain group such as a party, a movement, a religious organisation or established power institutions (in their effort to perpetuate themselves). This notion of hegemonic discourses is adapted from Foucault's definition of "discourse" (L'Ordre du Discours, 1970) and from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's genealogy of hegemony (Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, 1985).

[18] See Arthur Kroker and David Cook, The Postmodern Scene: Excremental Culture and Hyper-aesthetics, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1986. See also Jean Baudrillard, Fatal Strategies, Pluto, London, 1990.

[19] Jean-François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

[20] Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, Verso, London and New York, 1991.

[21] Umberto Eco, "Postmodernism, Irony, the Enjoyable" *in* Modernism/Postmodernism, Peter Brooker (ed.); Longman, 1992.

Feminist theories and postcolonial literary criticism are two examples of intellectual practices promoting the visibility of two kinds of margins[22] that have been kept away from the spheres of power and decision making. The new visibility of these particular margins does not mean that intellectually, politically and socially what is at stake is an exchange of places between colonised cultures or colonised bodies and the institutional centres of colonial/patriarchal power (keeping a binary logic which accepts the exclusion of some in the name of a few). Instead, the impact of postmodernism (undeniably a cultural dominant in the XXth century Western society) seems to have branded Western culture with desecration, deconstruction and contamination, leaving behind universal claims and static notions. I take the remaining fragmented, multiple and self-aware patterns of reasoning as an heritage of postmodernism, embodied in critical frames increasingly attuned to local circumstances, micro-contexts and situatedness, producing kaleidoscopic and provisional conclusions.

The postmodern shift away from universal (modernist/ colonial/ phallogocentric) models of reasoning, the most adequate to consolidate Eurocentric worldviews and colonial mentalities (as well as patriarchal privilege), seems to promote revisionist and deconstructive cultural dominants, which do not provide sound ideological pillars for centralising structures and global claims. This contrast between modernism and postmodernism is precisely what attracts me to postmodernism and its subversive facets. Nevertheless, the ideal of "*modernity*" as an "*inherently globalising*"[23] project "*building networks across the earth's surface as a whole*" has survived, at least as far as industry, business and communication systems are concerned, and never before have the "international" and the "local" been so dependent upon each other, as networks bring distant places together, on the exact proportion that this togetherness makes distant places concerned with events on the local level (since these affect one of the actors in the networking system).

Postmodern culture has inherited from modernism the impulse towards globalisation and homogenisation, while postmodern artistic practices promoted, as a reaction to modernist conventions, an aesthetic of fragmentation and contamination. Conceptually, postmodern practices depart from a corrosive self-awareness (a sort of inverted anthropology dissecting one's own Western culture), lucid and cynical enough to see through established

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[22] "Margin" has been defined in opposition to centre, being the centre equated with power. This geometric metaphor illustrates the peripheral, subaltern status of some social groups (like women and coloured people) which have been prevented from having access to institutional and political power. The binary opposition between centre and margins is seen as a changing historical process, not a necessary, fixed circumstance. See, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (eds.), Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies, 1998.
"Margin" or "marginal" are frequently replaced by the term "minority" to refer to oppressed social groups, not on account of their numbers (they can actually be the majority of the individuals) but due to their powerlessness. The definition of "margin" is a consequence of modernity and imperialism. "Modernity" is defined as an advance in cognitive and instrumental reason. This definition produces particular categories and systems to conceptualise historical development and social evolution, based on the notion of progress as a universal project. Consequently, "modern" nations think of themselves as the hegemonic culture, which is "central" and "superior", posing as a model of civilisation to be followed by other nations. By opposition, all alternative cultures have to feature as peripheric, marginal, inferior and backwards. To allow for a positive criterion to evaluate marginal cultures would cancel the grounds to claim the superiority of the centre, in this case, the West and its imperial project. (Nelly Richard, "Postmodernism and Periphery" *in* Postmodernism, a Reader, Thomas Docherty (ed.), Columbia University Press, New York, 1993).

[23] "Globalisation can thus be defined as the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. This is a dialectical process because such local happenings may move in an obverse direction from the very distanciated relations that shaped them. Local *transformation* is as much a part of globalisation as the lateral extension of social connections across time and space." Anthony Giddens, The Consequences of Modernity, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1990.

conventions in order to deconstruct them. The targets of what I will call a postmodern "ironical mode" have been the mechanics of power mechanisms at work in Western society, exposing their contradictions, flawed ethics and their contingent and relative status.

These differences between modern and postmodern patterns of thought, or points of view on the world, is translated, in the context of postcolonial societies, to the tension between globalisation and "localisation", or, as Arif Dirlik[24] effectively put it, "glocalisation" (i.e. local adaptation of international influences, producing hybrid cultural products and practices). What is at stake is a question of definition of collective identities in relation to a postcolonial world order that is in conflict with colonial (modern, universal) conceptions of civilisation, progress and culture. In terms of postcolonial self-assertion, the globalising impact of the surviving facets of modernity pose the postcolonial societies the choice between becoming like the West (allow globalisation) or asserting local[25] cultural identities preserving their difference from western ways. In fundamentalist terms, this is the choice between losing identity or mystifying difference, which has led, in the most extreme cases of the latter, to various degrees of fundamentalist oppression. At the other end of this spectrum (on the side of globalisation), the assimilation of the colonising culture has represented the most achieved form of colonial control, possibly, to be reproduced in neo-colonial environments. The third alternative (the one which applies to most postcolonial contexts) is embodied in the hybrid, re-invented postcolonial societies that have managed a successful fusion of disparate cultural references and influences. In this hybrid scenario, there is a positive alternative to balance the miscegenation of local cultures with international influences: nativist assertion appropriates international influences and globalisation "goes native", producing a unique "glocalised" combination that neither closes a society in a nativist, fundamentalist shell, nor promotes homogenisation.

Postmodernism and postcolonial critical theories also overlap around another topic: the revision of Western history[26]. The study of postcolonial literature plays a role in the revision of Western colonial history by disrupting the myth of the civilising mission of the West (colonialism as the white men's burden) since all the literature committed to the independence struggle reveals white presence as oppressive, abusive, and very much indifferent to the living conditions of local populations. Besides, postcolonial literatures that inscribe the colonised people's version of events deconstruct "colonial history" as the "official" version of the past, confronting the West with darker accounts (i.e. the cost in terms of human suffering) of celebrated myths of conquest and achievement. Consequently, postcolonial literatures and their increasing visibility in Europe constitute a serious blow on Europe's imperial nostalgia and its self-image as the product of a mythical, heroic past, without its flaws and abuses.

Another point worth taking into account in this brief discussion of some connections between postmodernism and postcolonial criticism is Linda Hutcheon's defence of

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[24] Arif Dirlik "Globalisation as the End and the Beginning of History: The Contradictory Implications of a New Paradigm" *in Rethinking Marxism*, 12.4 (Winter 2000): 4-22.

[25] I am using "local" to avoid the connotations of primitivism and backwardness associated to "native". "Location" is a term with different conotations. In this study it is mostly related to time/space co-ordinates. Location also implies awareness of power systems and socio-cultural processes active in the considered local context. "Local" also pertains to the national or regional sphere, by opposition to international influences or interference.

[26] For postmodern later (around the 1980s) concern with politics and history, see Douwe Fokkema, "The Semiotics of Literary Postmodernism", *in* International Postmodernism, Theory and Literary Practice, Hans Bertens and Douwe Fokkema (eds.), Utrecht University, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 1997. See also, Hans Bertens, The Idea of the Postmodern, a History, Routledge, London and New York, 1995.

historiographical metafiction[27] as the main "postmodern genre". Hutcheon's argument backs up my claim that history is equally central to both postmodern literary practices and postcolonial literatures. However, let's not forget that apart from all these similarities, the urgency and the political edge of many committed postcolonial literatures (especially at the time of independence when literature was often written to encourage the armed struggle) clearly define the line that distinguishes postcolonial agendas[28] from postmodern revisionist practices and ironic quotation of historical references. In this latter case, postmodern revision of history is important to erode established interpretations of the past, without suggesting, necessarily, a future project, commitment or course of action.

Identities and history are central topics for feminist theory as well. The revision of feminine role models imposed by past, historical habit implies a continuous dialogue between feminist agendas and established tradition, being tradition the materialisation of a set of social practices and moral values which have served patriarchy, and consequently are not in the best interest of women. At the same time, the search for alternative feminist subjectivities is directly dependent on the reformulation of available patterns of identity, either in terms of resistance to tradition or through the promotion of individual awareness and accountability.

In conclusion, I think the postmodern change of focus from established ideas to marginal perspectives (which are becoming mainstream) framed my interest for feminism and postcolonial studies. Secondly, the postmodern contradictory[29] celebration of differences and diversity, in a moment when globalisation is the dominant project in international relations, structured my critical challenge to some key concepts and categories in postcolonial theory, confronting their standard(ising) application with a type of textual analysis that tries to respect the complexity of each text and its relation to local, socio-historical contexts. For feminist theory, postmodernism has meant the same encouragement to think across differences and diversity instead of relying on universal ideas[30] which never amount to more than the projection of a sectarian, partial view. The impact of postcolonial literatures in the West also offers new points of view, more effective to think through a changing world order than obsolete colonial/Enlightenment discourses.

The theoretical connections established above are meant to trace a genealogy of thought leading to the elegant combination between feminist criticism and postcolonial theories as new bodies of thought to fill in the epistemological vacuum created by postmodern practices which eroded the credibility of colonial, Eurocentric and sexist metanarratives.

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[27] Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory and Fiction, 1988, Routledge, New York.

[28] On this subject see Linda Hutcheon's paper "Circling the Downspot of Empire" where she distinguishes postcolonial and feminist agendas from postmodernism. Hutcheon argues that postmodernism does not affirm any project. It only deconstructs existing social and political orthodoxies. However, Hutcheon also recognises complicities between postmodernism and postcolonialism on the grounds of a common "inward gaze" and a shared revision of history (*in* The Postcolonial Studies Reader, Routledge, London, 1995).

[29] Boaventura de Sousa Santos makes this same point, claiming that globalisation is a form of homogenisation combining the promotion of universal models and the elimination of national borders (through state of the art liberal legal/business arrangements in terms of international capitalism) with the assertion of local specificity, ethnic identity and the return of communal values and life-styles. As the outcome of this opposition one can interpret current socio-political conflicts as a "subaltern" counter-hegemonic reaction against globalisation and its hegemonic practices, aimed at keeping the core of rich countries of the world richer, and the poor ones, poorer. This widening gap is confirmed by the economic reports on the evolution of the north/south divide in the nineties. ("Os Processos da Globalização", *in* Globalização, Fatalidade ou Utopia, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (org.), Edições Afrontamento, Porto, 2001).

[30] See Linda Nicholson (ed.), introduction to Feminism/Postmodernism, Routledge, New York and London, 1990.

Part I

I.1 Postcolonial LiteratureS and Feminism

"Porque hoje quero dizer da crueldade.
(Só da minha?)
Irmãs, vos quero dizer da crueldade;
Daquela que utilizo, dia seguido de outro dia,
mesmo comigo, mesmo de castigo, de agasalho.
Crueldade serena, quotidiana, em que me dispo: com que me dispo; me visto, prossigo: de indiferença, de rigor."
Primeira carta V[31]

"Such practice (current feminist politics) is increasingly a matter of alliances rather than one of unity around a universally shared interest or identity. It recognises that the diversity of women's needs and experiences means that no single solution, on issues like childcare, social security and housing, can be adequate for all. Thus, the underlying premise of this practice is that while some women share common interests and face some common enemies, such commonalities are by no means universal (...). This, then, is a practice made up of a patchwork of overlapping alliances."[32]

I.1.1 From Feminist Awareness to FeminismS

In the Western world, the existence of literature written by women, focusing on the experience of being a woman within a certain social environment (with its rules, ideologies and habits) was used by feminist scholarship, during the 60s and 70s, to raise consciousness and create public awareness in relation to established social disadvantages. What these writers and literary critics were denuoncing was a patriarchal scheme that relegates women to a secondary and dependent position within the patterns of social organisation that characterise Western society. It is in this sense that "private lives", represented as the

[31] "Because today I want to tell you of cruelty.
(Mine alone?)
Sisters, I want to tell you of cruelty;
the one I use, day after day,
even to myself, even in punishment, even in comfort.
Serene cruelty, daily, in which I undress myself, with which I
undress myself, dress, and move on: in indifference, in accuracy." (my translation)
Maria Isabel Barreno, Maria Teresa Horta, Maria Velho da Costa, Novas Cartas Portuguesas, Editorial Futura, Lisboa, 1974: 97.

[32] Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson, "Social Criticism Without Philosophy: an Encounter Between Feminism and Postmodernism", *in* Postmodernism, a Reader, Thomas Docherty (ed.), Columbia University Press, New York, 1993.

particular experiences of characters inside the plot of a narrative, came to be seen as political, because the representation of certain forms of marginalisation and misogyny exposed the politics behind social practices that were considered neutral. The identification[33] between reading audiences and characters in textual plots proved to be an effective way to raise awareness of women's oppression. What one might privately interpret as random, personal problems emerged as a definite pattern of social segregation and a huge subsequent work of diagnosis and exposition of sexual segregation was effectively carried out by feminist thinkers.

The legacy of the feminists from the 60s, 70s and 80s, is that feminist issues became a pervasive reference in contemporary academic life, mostly in terms of the humanities, although they are reaching for the ethics of the technological/scientific sphere. Secondly, the articulation of scholarly debate combined with activism has produced innovative ideas for improved policies, more attuned to social realities and needs. Thus, a growing political intervention is within the expectations of feminist activism. Finally, on a more popular level, feminism is provoking a major shift in representational practices, especially in what concerns advertising, film and video, because of feminist discussions regarding the body and the ideologies behind bodily representation.

Feminist theories based on "gender" structured the shape of the feminist debate in the Anglo-American world, in the 1980s. The major shift in the notion of gender was the change from universal categories (taking for granted that all women share an oppressed condition in sexist, patriarchal societies) to the perception of the importance of axis of differentiation between groups of women, like class, race, education, sexual orientation and life-style (among others). To think in terms of gender means to analyse social codes and socially accepted patterns of behaviour that consolidate and promote a set of sexist stereotypes distinguishing men[34] from women. The promotion of these differences works as a form of social pressure to make women conform to certain roles and behaviours, according to what is expected of them in sexist social structures. Feminist theories based on "gender" identify and deconstruct these stereotypes, create resistance to the ideologies promoted by them, and encourage women to seek alternative ways of life. However, different cultures organise themselves in different ways, establishing particular types of patriarchy. Similarly, the problems working class women have to face are not identical to those confronting middle class women because material circumstances of life are different. The corollary of these two examples of relevant differences between women is that the adequate feminist agenda for each of them is partially coincident and partially different. From here, it is obvious that feminist theories had to become more multiple and varied, instead of attempting universal synthesis. Thus, "gender" theories had to evolve towards related variants and situated approaches, in order to be able to account for the different priorities of different groups of women.

The positive reformulation of feminine/feminist identities, outside of the binary logic that has defined women as the inferior/deviant "other" of men is a current challenge for

[33] I mean "identification" as a form of self-recognition sparkled by affinities and coincidences between one's personal experience and the experiences of a set of characters in a narrative plot. In the case of feminist writing, the plot is deliberatly structured to invite reflection on women's position in the represented society. It is in this sense that it is said that "through representations we shape our identities", being literature a powerful provider of representations of lived experience. (Maggie Humm, "Feminist Literary Theory" *in* Contemporary Feminist Theories, Stevi Jackson, Jackie Jones (eds.); Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1988).

[34] This dissertation deals with masculinities via the reconstruction of represented patriarchies. Sometimes, social role models concerning masculinity are addressed to explain why, for example, political or economic disempowerment has led to remarkable increases in domestic violence.

feminist thinkers. However, this creative and inspiring line of work owes more to the impact of French feminism[35] (and its focus on language, subjectivity, psychoanalysis and the symbolical) than to the Anglo-American "gender" approach, which has tried to identify sexist social structures and expose its articulation with dominant ideologies. Once the necessity of liberating women was put out by feminist thinkers, the necessity of conceiving new models and inspirational myths to materialise liberated identities was obvious, and…open ended.

Hélène Cixous[36] has written experimental texts where she uses the feminine body and the act of giving birth as sources of inspiration to represent a specific feminine imagination. She suggests the exploration of woman centred fantasies, searching for new forms of self-expression. Indirectly, she is making a strong point to encourage women's independence from available cultural references, opening a creative agenda for women's dreams and desire, under-represented or diminished by a male oriented language and a male oriented artistic expression. Two of the fantastic writers to be studied in this research (Githa Hariharan and Dina Salústio) seem to have achieved something of this agenda. In their writing, they create new feminist myths, beyond the representation and deconstruction of patriarchies, and in aesthetic terms they also follow Cixous, exploring sexuality and desire to compose new images and metaphors. Finally, both these writers change the archetypes of family life, one by writing about lesbian love and the other by imagining a matriarchy. By changing the symbolical system of these worlds, women characters end up finding themselves in unexpected and interesting positions. As a working definition of sexual difference theories, I would summarise Cixous' ideas as a strategic change of focus, from the assertion of the equality between men and women to the re-discovery of an alternative women's culture, with its own myths and complicities, providing encouragement and self-awareness. If individuals are nurtured to resist accommodation to a patriarchal society, they are already causing confrontation, debate and social change.

From sexual difference theories, and thinking along the way Rosi Braidotti conceives them, this research takes a line of work more concerned with the construction of liberated forms of subjectivity. That is precisely what feminist thinkers and artists, who have been searching for ways of embodying/becoming these liberated subjects, are writing (or painting, performing, filming) about. Consequently, the type of literary criticism performed in this research from the point of view of sexual difference theories, expects to identify and analyse liberated role models embodied in some of the deviant and heroic characters put forward by the selected writers. However, I also work with other concepts inspired by Rosi Braidotti's version of sexual difference theories.

In Metamorphoses[37] Rosi Braidotti elaborates on her notions of "identity"[38], "figuration"[39] and "location"[40], and the potential ways their articulation can be productive to

[35]See the work of Luce Irigaray, Ce Sexe Qui n'en Est pas Un, Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1977 and Speculum, de L'Autre Femme, Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1974; See also Hélène Cixous, The Hélène Cixous Reader, Susan Sellers (ed.), Routledge, London, 1994, especially the text "The Newly Born Women" where the necessity of breaking with patterns of thought hierarchically arranged to recover the expression of feminine sensitivity is convincingly and seductively argued (pages 37-45).

[36] See Hélène Cixous, "Angst", *in* The Hélène Cixous Reader, *op. cit.* 1994: 71-79.

[37] Rosi Braidotti, Metamorphoses, Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2002.

[38] Individual "identity" (like certain senses of "figuration") is a mental map of one's position in a given society or group, in a time/space context. It is also the narration of our "self" as a form of self-awareness. Identity also refers to the identification of the self with cultural norms and social normative models. *Op. cit.* Metamorphoses, 2002: 40.

[39] "Figuration" is an image or character that stands for alternative feminist subjectivity "like the womanist, the lesbian, the cyborg, the inappropriate(d) other, the nomadic feminist, and so on, (but figurations) differ from

think feminist theories. I will start by addressing the connection between notions of individual and collective identity, considering their potential for feminist agency. Later, I return to the other two notions.

According to Rosi Braidotti, one's individual identity is ex-centric with one's consciousness. This notion is a consequence of the major impact of psychoanalysis in contemporary philosophy, establishing the existence and interference of (un)conscious desire, drives and impulses in the complex process of individual self-definition. The recognition of these dimensions of the self, beyond the limits of reason, eradicates the credibility of forms of self-knowledge that exclude irrational dimensions of the mind, as for instance, in the traditional, Cartesian notion of the "mind", as opposed to the body, instinct and unconscious drives.

Within the feminist debate, this re-conceptualisation of individual identity led to more complex notions of the self, than the single, stable unit it was previously expected to be, for those who attained a normal, mature subject-hood. To understand that "the whole" can be fragmented and contain several functional "selves," does not condemn mankind to global schizophrenia. The fragmentation of notions of the self into diverse facets, articulated as a network, or a constellation of possibilities, only enhances one's ability to perform different roles and explore different aspects of one's routines (including the constant confrontation with new possibilities) from a more plastic and flexible basis. In other words, it amounts to a stronger subjectivity, with a higher degree of self-awareness, more able to travel across classes, cultures and generation gaps, relating to the demands of different groups of women. What is at stake in this argument is to replace binary patterns of thought by ex-centric, flexible, responsive reasoning. On the contrary, transcendental, rigid notions of the self cut you from sympathy across variation and difference. Epistemologically, you would only look at the world by its degree of coincidence with a promoted, normative model, unable to see the value of alternative points of view: that is how sexism, racism and Eurocentrism become credible, dominant ideologies. If one is more open to question one's self, trying to relate to context and situation, there is more room to flexibility and reform, and reform is a key issue for feminism. And how do you get from notions of the self to feminist agency while reading postcolonial literature?

I had to answer to this question only in terms of literary criticism, though I am sure many other applications of these mind-blowing theories are possible. This study offers two guidelines:

If, by accommodating to a patriarchal society, women are expected to suppress drives to perform other roles than the socially appointed ones, then, the recovery of everything that has been suppressed would offer a constellation of innovative worldviews and liberated perspectives. This study follows six writers in this same process of re-writing a situated worldview according to a non-patriarchal perspective, highlighting women's strategies of negotiation, resistance and survival. Through identification between readers and characters, these novels offer liberating role models for women, as an alternative to those that were offered them by patriarchy.

Apart from encouraging individuals to negotiate self-fulfilment (and for women in patriarchal societies, anywhere, this is a great move), the point made above also underlines the value of the insight on social problems felt from a gendered differentiated perspective. The relevance and the existence of women's particular perspective has to be culturally

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classical 'metaphors' (…) in calling into play a sense of accountability for one's location". (2002: 13). Figurations are linked to the social imaginary contributing to new structures of thought, conceptual change and new subjectivities. *Op. cit.* Metamorphoses, 2002: 173.

[40] "A collectivelly shared and constructed, jointly occupied spatio-temporal territory", including the awareness of active "(local) cartographies of power" (*op. cit.* Metamorphoses, 2002: 12).

sensitive and geo-politically integrated, and that is where postcolonial literatures combine with the political and social necessity of reading and listening to women's voices. It is vital for feminism to exchange insights across geo-political circumstances and cultural frames. If Western feminists want to have something relevant to contribute to women in other locations, they have to be able to walk out of their own prejudices, instead of looking down on (a projection of) "third world victims" as remarked by Chandra Mohanty[41] .

While re-thinking notions of identity, Rosi Braidotti strategically writes against the credibility of transcendental notions of the self in order to defend the vital necessity to hold on to material history. As a consequence, a greater degree of political awareness will come from a more worldly and situated perspective to think notions of identity. For example, to understand the agenda linking women activists in a demonstration against apartheid tells you more about what is at stake in that concrete situation than any role model of what women activists against racism should be. The obsession with certain normative and rigid models (white, Eurocentric, male, upper class) as the starting point to define individual identity, will only allow you self-esteem according to the degree of coincidence with the ideal model you are expected to replicate. This promoted process of self-definition, according to dominant Western ideologies, leaves most individuals (female, coloured, working-class) condemned to never attain subject-hood, and what is more, never demand more rights or feel entitled to be better treated by their government or upper classes. To evaluate what is "good", "true" or "beautiful" by comparing the coincidence of a concrete self with a transcendental, ideal norm is to ignore the determining effect of context and concrete circumstances. The "unlearning" of critical spirit is the consequence waiting on these dominant ideologies and patterns of thought. This is to say that the transcendence of any ideal role model, when compared to concrete, material individuals, keeps structural hierarchies stable, and perpetuates certain moral values and dominant mentalities. By contrast, to think individual subjectivity as a process in dialogue with worldly circumstances, through the assimilation of available cultural references and patterns of collective identity is a very effective method to understand "sense of position" (one's own mental map) and situated struggles going on in a concrete location. It is a more realist and critical way to understand the mechanics of a social world and the position of individuals or groups of individuals in it.

In terms of literary criticism, what is interesting in these notions of identity and "location" is that it is possible to "narrate" them, as time/space jointly shared co-ordinates, illustrating power systems that are active on the located society. In other words, locations can be represented. If writers can narrate certain postcolonial and sexist locations, articulating the simultaneity of both of these axis of oppression (among others), for subjects who share a certain spacio-temporal, politically charged territory, then, the potential of such feminist theories of identity, translated into a method of literary critical analysis is immense. This is how Braidotti's theories were adapted to this literary research on postcolonial locations and their own brand of local patriarchies.

While "gender" emphasised the interaction between "self" and social codes, sexual difference is more interested in individual awareness and forms of private resistance. This revolutionary view of identity departs from the notion that the individual subject is not the passive product of the assimilation of social codes or rules. If it were, there would not be any possibility of resistance or change. Since the individual has awareness and will, and may be committed to struggle against dominant mentalities and negotiate reforms, then, there is

[41] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses", *in* Mongia, P (ed.).; Contemporary Postcolonial Theory, a Reader, Arnold, London, 1996: 172-197.

room to count on the provocative impact of resistance, especially if resisting individuals organise themselves as groups. In any case, the future of feminist activism depends a lot on individual choices and commitments, which start with self-awareness as a woman and feminist political literacy. This is not to deny that, as Rosi Braidotti puts it, "*a lot of psychic space is willingly surrendered by the subject in the pursuit of social visibility and acceptance*"[42].

The ideal metamorphosis of sexist social models into fairer and less oppressive forms of organisation implies changes in both material conditions and mentalities (via a reinterpretation of the symbolic). In order to change the binary man/woman, where there is always the phallogocentric slippage into an hierarchy, bonds between women are defended by Braidotti as affective means to reconstitute a form of "primary narcissism" which has been "*badly wounded and damaged by the phallocentric symbolic*"[43]. This love for "self" and "same" is crucial to construct a basis for self-esteem as a woman, instead of replicating a phallic (hence misogynous and subsequently self-hating) sensitivity. If women want break with mainstream phallic discourses, which are perpetuating reigning patriarchies, they have to create their own positive representations of themselves, creating alternative figurations that, if current enough, can become a sort of new archetypes. In a way, I am thinking of a sort of decolonisation of women's self-expression, connecting the creation of new ideas to policies of reform and perfected ethic points of view.

Women's writing thus appears as an embodiment of the feminine imaginary, subverting the modes of phallogocentric representation. It represents women's experience and positions in a way that until now has been under-represented, obliterated and colonised by misogyny. This is very much the process colonised peoples had to go through: from alienation and self-hatred to self-assertion and liberation, by deconstructing, rejecting and transcending, assimilated colonial discourses (of course the two dimensions of oppression overlap all the time, but allow me this schematic explanation).

Thinking through sexual difference theories I also considered the appropriation of Rosi Braidotti's definition of "figuration" for literary criticism. She defines a figuration as an image or a character, positioned (or situated) in a certain location, exhibiting the marks of cartographies of power relations and defining strategic subject positions from where resistance and subversion can be launched, to pursue ethical, political, epistemological and cultural concerns. As I read this definition, it evokes a modern re-definition of myth. It shares with classical myths the possible popular currency of these images (or characters) as models to comprehend the world, establish certain ideas or values and promote references to attain both self-definition and (as part of this same process) a point of view to judge others. The main differences between modern and classical myths is that, on the one hand, the former no longer have a religious function as some mythological figures used to have. On the other hand, figurations imply a relation to certain geo-political co-ordinates, expanding a static image to include a political agenda in its definition. For example, Antigone[44] is a powerful classical myth that is becoming a current figuration in feminist theory. The importance of Antigone can only be assessed if you take the cartography of power, war, family bonding and the despotic behaviour of king Creon into account. Antigone's resistance to what she felt as an "unfair" law is very important from a feminist point of view (and this is only one of the several instances of subversion condensed around this figure). But not only classical myths can become feminist figurations. It is up to women's writing to invent or re-appropriate existing ones, for the specific purposes of feminist agendas.

[42] *Op. cit.* Braidotti, 2002: 40.
[43] *Op. cit.* Braidotti, 2002: 59.
[44] Sophocles, Mark Griffith (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999.

In the feminist approach to the selected texts both "gender" and "sexual difference" theories will be used. "Gender", that is, "the social, cultural and psychological meaning imposed upon biological sexual identity"[45], is a critical tool that allows you to assemble the main gender stereotypes available in the selected texts, compiling traces of the patriarchal logic presiding over the represented societies. A gender approach also detects the active forms of "tradition" in the invoked locations, making explicit which collective cultural codes and values determine what a woman should be, and how she should behave properly. The strength of these codes as forms of social pressure is proportional to their widespread credibility and their connection to notions of honour, identity and the cultural survival of the community.

By looking at the evolution of women characters along a narrative plot, I will also assess how powerful and disturbing the weight of tradition can be for those who feel at odds with the social pressure to accommodate to the expected patterns. The degree of deviance from gender norms, which are felt as oppressive by resisting characters, will illustrate forms of feminist awareness represented in the texts under analysis. Similarly, the negotiations and alternatives found by women characters will be examples of a successful change, even if it only amounts to a slight modification of constraining codes.

Thinking through gender theories, this research also diagnoses women characters' emotional stress and psychic undecidabilities as effects of patriarchal oppression. The description of the norm (tradition) defines the shape and extent of the confrontation between individual desire, aspirations, interests and everybody else's (normative) expectations. Given the fact that individual sense of identity is deeply dependent on collective identity, on the recognition of the "I" in the eyes of "other(s)", often loved and looked up to, it is easy to envisage deviance as a stressing, difficult process. On the other hand, patriarchal hegemonic discourses tend to offer women only a disavowal of identity (since women's main flaw, the one which prevents them from aspiring to certain roles and fulfil certain desires is, precisely, not being men). Consequently, the uncritical acceptance of traditional gender norms may lead many women to a dependent, uneventful routine that, for a more energetic character, may be simply maddening.

If the product of the interface between individual identity and collective cultural codes is not one of quiet assimilation, then, something new and unexpected emerges as the mature individual (in this case, character) consolidates her own (more liberated) subjectivity, and the corresponding life project. Sometimes, only a subtle negotiation or discrete adaptation is made, but the selected texts also offer more radical forms of resistance. In any case, the illustration of ways to change and improve one's position as a woman in these societies, amounts to an implicit feminist agenda, and these characters embody examples of the search for models of (more) liberated women.

The negotiation and definition of alternative feminine identities, after the previous stage of identifying the mechanics and effects of patriarchal traditions, is a step beyond the descriptive, more static notion of gender, and it is closer to sexual difference theories. Rosi Braidotti has theorised extensively on this subject in Nomadic Subjects[46] where she emphasises "the shift", in contemporary feminism, "away from reactive criticism, into the affirmation of positive counter values", which assert new and creative feminist identities, beyond the negation of complicity/consent with patriarchal discourses and its gender norms.

During this research, I was confronted with heavily coded societies, like the Indian one, where ritual and religion play a very important role, and where communal allegiance

[45] Elaine Showalter, Speaking of Gender, Routledge, New York and London, 1989: 1,2.
[46] Rosi Braidotti, Nomadic Subjects, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994.

may be stronger than individual self-definition. Given the subtleties and the complexity of the represented social life, it was necessary to recover gender, as an adequate tool of analysis. Still, the analysis of the subjective, internal processes that make some of the women characters deviate from expectations and social norms, becoming something of unexpected dissidents for everybody around them, grants these figures exemplary value, affirming positive counter values to assemble women's subjective identities. Sexual difference theories also imply, in terms of literary criticism, looking at sights of joy and gestures of support between women. These positive forces and alliances are to be contrasted with the oppressive influence of women (especially the older generation) who accept patriarchal values as the authoritative frame to define women's identities and behaviours, thus becoming agents of patriarchy.

The combination of these two critical perspectives, taken from gender and sexual difference theories, provided a method to outline the feminist agendas suggested by each of the texts, comparing the set of answers the selected women writers put forward, as a reaction to their analysis of their own regional social structure, and the key problems that women have to face at these particular locations.

I.1.2 FeminismS, Identities and Literature

In the 90s, the fragmentation of feminist theories from universal arguments into situated perspectives is a consequence of a gradual recognition of the importance of "difference" as a concept to recognise variation and non-coincidence in the agendas of different groups of women. The materialisation of differences in terms of class, age, life-style, education, sexual orientation or socio-cultural environment (and the effects of these differences on women) can be assessed by considering individual identities, at the centre of a network of circumstances and wider social frames.

Literary narratives are very effective in illustrating the experience of living, that is to say, in representing "how it feels" to be at a certain location. But this personal focus of narratives never stops at the private level. Through the representation of the individual experiences of a set of characters, the reader gets, for example, the writer's set of arguments concerning views of history, social criticism and political analysis. The construction of individual characters always criss-crosses with a critical understanding of the bigger frames around this centred micro-universe. Among the literary *genres*, the novel is considered the most adequate form to represent the symbiotic links between individual and collective dimensions of identity. In part, this fact justifies the choice for narrative texts as the object of this research since one of its aims is to compare different notions of "being a woman" inside a set of diverse cultural locations.

The feminist critical approach I am developing here takes the selected literary texts as fictional arguments, meaning, as ideologically motivated demonstrations of the intricate intersections between individual subjectivity and the community, emphasising the power and the urgency of the issues waiting on individual awareness and choices. Consequently, after close reading, the conclusions of this comparative literary analysis will extract a sort of feminist agenda from each text, according to the suggestions of the writers, following their responses to the position of women in each of the represented societies, their denunciation of the mechanics of local patriarchies and the suggested alternatives.

The above paragraphs make "culture" a central notion for this literary research. My working definition of culture is taken from sociology and it refers to the complex product of knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired

by the individual as a member of society[47]. This definition implies a process of individual development in a continuous dialogue with available cultural patterns and references.

It is within the frame of the shared cultural references of a community, acquired through interaction with others, that gendered role models are defined. From generation to generation, these role models have solidified into habits and norms, which are received as "tradition". From a feminist perspective, "tradition" (that is values and ideas that are represented as historical heritage and proved wisdom) is very important to understand which role models patriarchy offered to women, and why. An analysis of traditional feminine identities is the key to assess the dependence of patriarchies on some particular principles of social organisation which determine patterns of family life, the hierarchies of power/authority, the distribution of property, the access to education, and, even common-sense notions of value and worth (as for instance attached to male sons in a system of lineage). Each working definitions of tradition and patriarchy will be dependent on each text, according to the social scenario recreated by the writer.

At this stage, I would like to recall one of Homi Bhabha's[48] theories, which proved to be particularly helpful in this research (see sub-section 1.2.3, from part I, for an in-depth discussion) because it gave me two guidelines to identify the promotion of sexism and the constitution of tradition. Homi Bhabha defends that the individual subject acquires a notion of cultural identity through a set of performative and pedagogic strategies, supposedly shared by all the members of a community. The assimilation of pedagogic strategies, through a whole set of narratives (like myths, religion, great epics, folklore, teachings from older generations) makes intelligible certain values, ideologies, notions of common-sense, aims in life and sets of priorities. That is to say that the individual is brought up to adjust to a certain way of life, adapting her/his private impulses to the dominant ideologies and social expectations. At the same time, the performance of certain routines and habits, and the experience of living within certain rhythms and schedules, materialises the assimilated ideas and values into patterns of behaviour. These pedagogic and performative strategies inculcate in the individual a sense of collective cultural identity. Thinking through this scheme, I followed reading guidelines attuned to the internal dialogue of an individual character with available patterns of collective identity (either in terms of assimilation or, by opposition, in terms of struggle and resistance to these patterns). On a second level, the behaviour (performance) of the characters, and the interaction between them, is equally important to deduce from routines and habits a set of coded expectations concerning gender roles.

The existence of narrative mechanisms of social control (embodied for instance in myth, law, legend and tradition) explains the coherence of traditional patterns of collective identity (from feudal, aristocratic realms to modern nationalism) and their intolerance to difference. An awareness of the mechanics of forms of social control will be important later on to understand conservative manipulations of communal/ethnic rivalry in postcolonial societies, and the use of the feminine body to mark borders between different communities. Consider, for example, that the control of women's sexuality prevents "outsiders" from mixing with the group, "polluting" the purity of the race or caste. Secondly, the respect for traditional ways, including the allegiance to the group/community, is inculcated first and foremost, at home, in an inextricable relation to one's affective life and daily routines. As such, it is very important that women themselves are made to belief in the worth of tradition, since they are responsible to pass it on.

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[47] See A Dictionary of Sociology, Duncan Mitchell (ed.), Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1968; see also Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology, Seymour Smith, Charlotte (ed.), London, 1986 and The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, Gordon Marshall (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1994.

[48] Homi Bhabha, "Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation" in Nation and Narration, Routledge, London and New York, 1990, pp. 291-323.

In the organisation of colonial structures of power, patriarchal traditions integrated forms of colonial hegemony. For women, who had to endure both forms of oppression, resistance against one of these systems of power would surely expand into a conflict with the other, as well. This guess made postcolonial women writers doubly interesting. Likewise, the representation of happy cases of accommodation to domesticity or/and complacence towards colonisation would constitute a source of confusion and pressure for resisting characters, often young and isolated in their doubts. This reasoning led to the definition of one of the main guidelines of this research: the discussion of narrative plots as cartographies of a confrontation between individual subjects and gendered social codes, or colonial and postcolonial historical processes, both of them exposed as abusive and unfair.

I.1.3 Intersecting Epistemes

Postcolonial literature(s) brought to the feminist debate a greater awareness that different cultural contexts lead to different senses of identity, with specific self-assigned aims and priorities, unsettling any essentialist interpretation of one's position as a woman in society. That is why Fraser and Nicholson (quoted in the epigraph) see recent developments in feminist theory as a shift from universal theories to a strategy of provisional and mutant alliances, across geo-political networks. In agreement with this view of current feminist agendas, Rosi Braidotti[49] also underlines the importance of learning to manage differences between groups of women, changing the century-old habit, encroached in Western systems of thought, that consists of equating difference with inferiority. Such a pattern of thought, that structures the definition of identities upon sets of opposite pairs to be organised hierarchically, relies on the concept of "difference" to determine what is negative or inferior, turning the positive member of the binary pair into the universal model and the norm. The conclusion of such reasoning is that to be "different from" the norm (the firstly established white, Western feminism) is to be "less than", "deviant", and this would be a wrong and impossible basis to form strategic alliances between feminisms across different geo-cultural contexts.

Rosi Braidotti thinks that the notion of "difference" has to be re-appropriated by feminist theory, but in a positive sense, devoid of exclusionary aims. In fact, she sees "difference", either between the sexes or among women, as the basic pre-condition to think diverse feminismS, more effective to account for the priorities and the variety of issues put forward by groups of women in different geo-cultural contexts. This is the point of intersection between Braidotti's thought and this study on postcolonial literatures.

Within the frame of this research, a positive awareness of "difference" is necessary to account for the specific problems and claims represented in each of the texts, by the selected women writers. There are certain similarities among their diagnosis of the forms taken by women's oppression, and they may coincide in the solutions they envisage, but both problems and alternatives are embedded in particular socio-cultural frames, intersecting with class and age (among other possible axis of differentiation which were not so relevant in the selected texts). With these complexities in mind, I subscribe to the strategic necessity of designing a critical point of view that is sensitive to circumstances, and does not hide the particular behind the partial coincidence with a general pattern. It is in this sense that feminist thinkers are using flexible frames of reference in the so-called "politics of location" or "situated" feminismS[50], as more effective than universal claims to handle a multiplicity of geo-political circumstances and their respective possibilities of improvement.

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[49] *Op. cit.,* Braidotti, 1994: 148, 149.
[50] *Ibid*, 1994: 163.

The impact of postcolonial literature on feminist theory is adequately framed if you bear in mind that by representing the living conditions and aspirations of, say, African, Muslim and Hindu women (and mind you that this is not a "minority group" but a very substantial part of the feminine population of this planet), Western feminist thought had a clear measure for the extent of its limits and bias. This does not mean that feminist debates within Western academies have not been valid. What has been missing is enough sensitivity to contexts and circumstances so as to break free from "*stereotypes of the third world woman*"[51] as a victim to be rescued by enlightened Western feminists.

The advent of postcolonial literature has precisely prompted an "*internal critique of hegemonic 'Western' feminisms*", advancing the need for "*autonomous, geographically, historically and culturally grounded feminist concerns and strategies*"[52], which are able to recognise agency and resistance as they are, within the frame of local constrains. Without the proper background, Western scholars cannot understand that, what may seem insignificant steps, can actually demand a lot of courage from the women who took them, for instance, in fundamentalist contexts.

On the other hand, for women in non-Western societies, the problem with the reception of Western-centric feminist theories is that, when viewed within the frame of other cultural contexts, these theories could only be dismissed, either as being imperial (in the sense of imposing Western culture) or as being too detached from local life experiences to be taken into account. As a contribution to abridge these communication gaps, postcolonial literatures have had the merit of providing effective ways to call the attention of feminist intellectuals to the necessity of translating theory and agendas across geographies. Secondly, postcolonial literatures highlighted the particular importance of cultural context as a multiplicity of factors which determine the sense of identity of a woman, her perception of her own position, and the changes she views as desirable in her life, clearly encouraging feminists to study socio-cultural variations and their implications for feminist agendas.

For me, as a Western based thinker, the critical encounter with postcolonial literature written by women developed my awareness of current feminist struggles taking place in other contexts, improving my insight on differences between groups of women who are living in different places and confronting specific tensions, problems or possibilities. This experience further confirmed the necessity of a continuous exchange of ideas between feminist thinkers working across diverse geographies and circumstances, especially because we cannot afford the lack of strategic awareness in the co-ordination of efforts, projects and policies.

From a theoretical point of view, the complicity between feminist commitment and postcolonial theory is obvious. During colonial regimes women were doubly colonised: as the object of racist, abusive behaviours carried out by colonisers, and, at the same time, by traditional sexist role models that tended to assign to women subaltern positions inside their own family and local community. The fact that countries were decolonised does not mean that women's position as marginal figures in relation to power and hegemony has changed, nor is their position as members of a dependent, impoverished society necessarily altered. In both the colonial and postcolonial processes, women have particular histories of oppression and appropriation, which can only be acknowledged by a combination of feminist and postcolonial research topics.

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[51] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses", *in* Contemporary Postcolonial Theory, a Reader, P. Mongia (ed.), Arnold, London, 1996: 172-197.

[52] *Op. Cit.* Mohanty, 1996: 172-197.

This is not to say that postcolonial theory will necessarily take up gender issues. In her seminal paper "Can the Subaltern Speak?"[53], Gayatri Spivak considers the difficulties in retrieving subaltern, popular, anonymous histories within the frame of traditional historical methods. Indirectly, she makes a relevant point for literary studies, as well. While the West creates a set of theories to review and discuss the literary production of its previous colonies, it is recreating a binary opposition between the West and the rest, which, due to the institutional weight of Western academies, re-inscribes the West as centre of knowledge. If one considers (as Spivak does) that the power to regulate systems of signs and institutions of knowledge is the power to design and impose dominant ideologies, then, the politics involved in the practices around postcolonial literary criticism can have a direct effect on the promotion or suppression of certain topics, such as gender and sexual difference. In other words, postcolonial criticism can contribute to bring women's issues to the frame of intellectual and political discussion or, on the contrary, make women "transparent", invisible subaltern subjects, leaving them on the shadow.

The isolation of women's issues from other forms of theoretical criticism only makes feminism more marginal and less powerful. Hence, one's choice of research objects should contribute to break this invisibility or these silences. If gender/sexual differences issues have not been properly addressed by history and postcolonial criticism, one can always try to change that. This research is a contribution to promote this change.

Obviously, when Spivak wrote "Can the Subaltern Speak?" she was concerned about more things than the retrieval of subaltern voices. She was denouncing the complicitous position of the diasporic scholar working from within Western academies. As concerns this part of her argument, I think Spivak's lucid awareness is necessary and relevant to keep the critical edge on the study of postcolonial issues. As Benita Parry[54] points out, Spivak is deliberately polemic because she is intent on exposing the "*fabrications and exclusions in the writing of the archive (...) challenging the authority of the received historical record and restoring the effaced signs of native consciousness"*[55].

Productive intersections between feminist theories and (post)colonial issues are extensively documented by fertile works such as Ania Loomba[56] and Jenny Sharpe's [57]. Ania Loomba's discussion of Renaissance representations of the new continents, personified as women offering themselves to European "discoverers" (a word which invokes itself, nakedness and exposition to a male gaze since sailors, pirates and explorers are, primarily, masculine images) denounces the sexist and racist bias in representations of the process of colonisation in gendered terms. But there is more. Ania Loomba concludes that "*thus, from the beginning of the colonial period till its end (and beyond) female bodies symbolise the conquered land*"[58], while the "*Oriental male was effeminised*" as a degenerate, weak opponent. As for the black male, he was represented as excessively sexualised, saving for "*the virile but courteous European*" the heroic task of saving black, brown and white women from these less deserving males. Popular narratives, paintings, newspapers and films have repeated this same story *ad nausea*. As an instance of one of these highly current references,

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[53] Gayatri C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", The Post-colonial Studies Reader, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (ed.), Routledge, London and New York, 1995.

[54] Benita Parry, "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse", *in op. cit.* The Postcolonial Studies Reader, 1995.

[55] *Ibid*, 1995: 37.

[56] Ania Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism, Routledge, London, 1998.

[57] Jenny Sharpe, Allegories of Empire: the Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993.

[58] *Op. cit.* Loomba, 1998: 152.

Ania Loomba has in mind Phileas Fogg, the prototypical hero of Jules Verne's Around the World in Eighty Days (1873) who not only manages to win his bet, completing the tour around the world in time, but also, and without "*wasting his precious time*", saves an Indian (Parsi) princess from being immolated by her barbaric country men. The joke, according to Loomba is that, actually, Parsis never practised *sati*[59]. The political point here, in relation to colonial ideology, is that the propagation of a racist stereotype of native (African, American, Asian) men as barbarians, justifies the necessity of colonisation as the means to civilise these peoples, saving them from themselves. As for (African, American, Asian) women, they were repeatedly understood as "*libidinally excessive and sexually uncontrolled*"[60], which, again, amounts to say that they also needed to be under the authority of Western civilisation. Loomba's study is, in my opinion, one of the best applications of combined critical frames, shedding light on both colonial hegemonic discourses and the effective capacity of gendered images to spread such ideologies.

On her turn, Jenny Sharpe analyses the narratives of rape of white women by Indian men as a metaphor for the crisis of British authority, since this rape scene invokes colonial fears of mutiny and racial contamination. On the other hand, "*when articulated through images of violence against women, resistance to British rule does not look like the struggle for emancipation it is, but it rather features as an uncivilised eruption that must be contained*"[61]. These two examples expose, clearly, the connection between colonial propaganda and the manipulation of feminist agendas, in this case, within the frame of Indian politics.

The above instances of a productive combined approach, integrating feminism and postcolonial criticism, address colonial texts from a postcolonial perspective. I am rather looking at postcolonial literature written after the post-independence euphoria, when the mood is rather self-reflexive and critical towards current postcoloniality itself. Still, in spite of the difference of research focus, these two cases prove the productive advantages of such a combined approach.

Even during colonisation, feminism and the postcolonial assertion of an independent nationalism had certain interesting (though tense) connections, which make of feminist issues a relevant means to understand certain aspects of the mobilisation processes for the independence struggle. A famous and widely known example concerns the movement to improve women's status in India, in the nineteenth century. British colonisers took the elimination of *sati* as a campaign with obvious political gains because the protection of women's basic rights represented an opportunity to prove the importance of the "*progress brought about by the empire*"[62], re-activating racist stereotypes against brown men and their civilisation. To Indian princes, a change in ceremonial ritual would amount to a public recognition of British power, an insult to Indian traditions (as unfair, backward and barbarian) and a risk on the preservation of their own lineages and structures of power. From a proud nationalist perspective, promoted by these same high castes, any progress in improving women's condition was equated with an assimilation of Western culture, and a further loss of India's independent identity. In spite of the fact that the whole issue of social reform was initiated by an Indian prince, Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1771-1833), the status of

[59] Widow immolation, usually on her deceased husband's funeral pyre.
[60] *Op. cit.* Loomba, 1998: 155.
[61] *Op. cit.* Sharpe, 1993: 7.
[62] I am not denying that some responsible British authorities could be really concerned with the victims of *sati*. For the above discussion the point that matters is the political chess game using women as the object of a campaign that apart from humanist intentions had very serious political consequences, contributing either to consolidate imperial presence as necessary, or to demoralise British colonisers as no more than invaders.

high caste Hindu women remained a site of contest between imperialist and nationalist India[63] until independence[64] (1947). Recently, these debates have gained new currency because of isolated, but highly mediatic, revivals of this lethal tradition (I shall return to this issue).

In postcolonial contexts, the worth of a feminist perspective is proven by the unexpected and subtle matters it illuminates. For example, in Mozambique, after independence, women feel the party that encouraged them to join the liberation fight (FRELIMO) has mistreated them. They were told the emancipation of women was part of the socialist project for independent Mozambique. But once the Portuguese were expelled, husbands do not let women take wage earning work and there is strong pressure to return women back to the domestic sphere. A case in point is that Helena Zefanias, the foreign affairs secretary of the Mozambican Women's Organisation (OMM) was sacked...because of adultery[65], an official act that displays a pitiful distortion of legal notions and professionalism due to social prejudice and sexism.

Currently, in postcolonial contexts, the problematic appropriation of women's bodies and women's purity by nationalist rhetoric constitutes again, an important strategy of political propaganda and control. It is a general problem, affecting women in several societies. Once more, "culture" has become a site of resistance and self-assertion, "*a site of conflict*"[66], not only to dispute the threat of Western influence, but also (probably mostly) in relation to internal communal/caste rivalries. The problems between Hindu and Muslim communities are a blatant example of this issue, turning to fundamentalism and tradition as means to assert community identity (in the process rape becomes a means to assert the 'inherent immorality' of the rival community)[67]. In terms of textual analysis, this discussion is translated into reading guidelines attuned to the complex connection between traditional feminine roles and the construction (and preservation) of a set of discourses which distinguish the nation or, on another level, the community, from rival groups or external interference.

The association between feminism and Westernisation created a false opposition between feminism and nationalism, as if, an improvement on women's condition or status would seriously question the hold, or the survival, of the postcolonial nation state. The reason for this crazy twist in what is, quite often, a feminist appeal to greater state responsibility and wider welfare intervention has its roots in the transitional process to postcolonial independence. Cultural self-assertion, quite often through nativism and a radicalisation of ethnic/cultural differences, was one of the basic strategies to win popular support for the struggle for independence. Consequently, nowadays' politicians manipulate hegemonic discourses concerning the preservation of certain traditions, and the "purity" of women, as a matter of national self-definition. Hence, the tense co-existence of independence movements and women's claims, although women certainly participated in the independence struggle in great numbers, either in India or in the liberation processes of Africa. Susan Stanford Friedman[68] calls the position of activists caught between on the one

[63] Teresa Hubel, Whose India?, Leicester University Press, London, 1996.
[64] Another documented case is the polemic around the Age of Consent Bill, in 1981, when Sir Andrew Scoble tried to increase the legal age for sexual intercourse from ten to twelve years old. Balwantrao G. Tilak, orchestrated popular riots to raise opposition to British presence in the name of tradition.
[65] Joseph Hanlon, chapter 15 "Women Must Demand Their Emancipation", *in* Mozambique, the Revolution Under Fire, Zed Books Ltd., London and New Jersey 1984, 1990.
[66] *Op. cit,* .Loomba, 1998: 41.
[67] Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (eds.), Women & Right-Wing Movements, Indian Experiences, Zed Books Ltd., London and New Jersey, 1995.
[68]Susan Stanford Friedman, "Feminism, State Fictions and Violence: Gender, Geopolitics and Transnationalism", *Communal/Plural*, vol. 9, N. 1, 2001.

hand, the fight to improve women's position, and, by opposition the exclusive priority of nationalist self-assertion, as one of "*divided loyalty*", that is to say, "*a painful splitting, a double consciousness based in both association and disassociation*"[69] which is typical of many postcolonial contexts. Geraldine Heng[70] adequately summed up the current stage of the problem by underlining the priority of surviving strategies over more daring feminist agendas, for many local activists in postcolonial transitional contexts. Conservative political frames would explain a certain apparent complacence from local feminist activists:

"(...) To counter the charge of antinationalism - the assertion that feminism is of foreign origin and influence, and therefore implicitly or expressly antinational - the strategic response of a Third-World feminism under threat must be, and has sometimes been, to assume the nationalist mantle itself: seeking legitimation and ideological support in local cultural history, by finding feminist or protofeminist myths, laws, customs, characters, narratives, and origins in the national or communal past or in strategic interpretations of religious history or law. That is to say, through the glass of First-World feminisms, Third World feminisms may appear wilfully naive, nativist, or essentialist in their ideological stakes."

(1997: 34)

Heng is underlining the necessity of working within the limits of the political and material circumstances that surround you, in any project for social improvement. However, she takes her argument further by advocating the urgent need for Western awareness concerning situated cultural contexts and the way they affect groups of women working in distinct geographies.

The wider theoretical point concerning all of the above examples of relevant feminist research for the study of colonialism, postcolonial self-assertion and nationalism prove that the study of feminist issues in relation to situated (colonial and) postcolonial contexts is an effective and precious alternative to highlight the subtle appropriation of women (as symbols, borders and means of self-assertion) by alternative forms of patriarchy, in competition for power. Moreover, because the context of hybrid postcolonial societies usually encompasses disparate cultural references, identities are a frequent site of dispute and contention, adequately manipulated by ethnic, party and religious leaders, and, somehow, women end up repeatedly burdened with the responsibility of preserving the identities of various communities from corruption or loss.

As Deniz Kandiyoti[71] points out:

"It may well be argued that there is no particular reason to single women out as prisoners of a discourse they share with men. However, their gender interests may, at times, dictate their own demands and produce divided loyalties with men of their class, creed or nation. Women may choose to either openly express or to suppress such divergences of interest, which they generally do at their own cost in both cases.

There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that, for women, the "modern" is always perilously close to the "alien", particularly when contemplated codes of behaviour can be identified as an outright betrayal of the expectations of their own communities." (1996: 313)

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[69] *Ibid,* 2001: 113.

[70] Geraldine Heng, "A Great Way to Fly': Nationalism, the State, and the Varieties of Third-World Feminism" in Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures,, Jaqui Alexander, Chandra Talpade Mohanty (eds.), Routledge, New York and London, 1997.

[71] Deniz Kandiyoti "Women, Ethnicity, and Nationalism", Ethnicity, Hutchinson, John; Smith, Anthony D. (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1996, pp. 311-316.

Kandiyoti rightly represents women walking carefully, as acrobats on a circus wire, between opposite discourses (in this case, between modernity and tradition) as a suitable description for what has frequently been women's lot in the hybrid socio-cultural context of postcolonial societies. In any case, it has been left to contemporary generations the task to make adjustments between these rival orders of values, and this has proved to be a very confusing and painful task. Apart from nationalist self-assertion and its conservative, rigid projections of gendered roles[72], on the intra-national level, any deviance from tradition becomes impossible when ethnicity, or religious differences, are turned into the arguments for more or less open forms of social tension and civil disorder. The choice to address Indian (part II) and African women writers (part III) will make me return to these topics later on. In any case, the point here is to acknowledge the necessity of designing cartographies of a frequent tension between women's struggles and the local establishment of certain political (male) platforms trying to reclaim (or remain in) power.

The definition of agendas for feminist reform in traditional non-Western societies poses the problem of the conceptual slippage from "reform" to "modernity", indirectly suggesting that non-Western societies, while pre-modern, are "wrong". This research explicitly refutes such idea. Then feminist reform would be no more than an agent of globalisation, as if the improvement of women's position in any society could only be achieved if that society became Westernised. More liberated societies may or may not take some inspiration from Western models, however, what is implied in projects of feminist reform is a transformation of local cultural references and role models from the inside, re-interpreting myths, recovering minor figures, adapting old philosophies to technology and contemporary life-styles. Chandra Mohanty[73] has long been writing about the need to acknowledge the intersection between regional/ethnic identities and private subjectivity as a pre-condition to develop insightful feminist theories, which are manageable within certain social constrains. Having learned my lesson from her sensible arguments, I realise emancipatory role models have to be negotiated between the will to change and the respect for ways of life which are dear to the addressed women. The subsequent intellectual demand, implicit in this principle, is that current thinkers and activists have to make a greater effort to study, research and acknowledge the special nuances of situated agendas. It is from this perspective that I considered the relevance, as a feminist thinker, of carrying out this research on postcolonial women writers.

[72] See Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for "Indian Pasts'?" *in Representations*, Winter 1992, University of California Press, n° 37, winter 1992.
[73] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses", *in op. cit.* The Post-colonial Studies Reader, 1995.

I.2 On Postcolonial Theory

> "O Colonialismo é um espelho deformante onde todas as motivações suspeitas se podem branquear e vice-versa."[74]

The independence movements that led to the creation of several nation states in Africa and granted self-rule to the Indian subcontinent finished a long period of European imperialism. This historical change does not mean the world was cured from neo-colonial enterprises, but, undeniably, a new world order reigns. Europe had to re-think its imperial identity (and post-modernism is more than obviously the intellectual and artistic search for new epistemes and new patterns of Western identity) and the postcolonial states had the challenge to become a functional reality (some have been struggling for decades, which testifies to the complexity of such processes).

Some of the territories colonised by European nations had an ancient written literature, but its modern form was born under colonialism: firstly, as a replica of the coloniser's culture, encompassing the local contributions to colonial literature, but, gradually, as the means of expressing an emergent postcolonial awareness which took momentum during the nineteenth century. As this second trend grew stronger, the birth of an autonomous canon, which the postcolonial nations claim as their own modern literature, took a distinctive shape.

My working definition of postcolonial literature is complex and I will return to it, in the following subsections. However, three elements of it can be established from the above paragraphs. It is related to the historical process of de-colonisation, it contributed to the assertion of an independent national identity and it consolidated as the local brand of modern literature, regardless of previous traditions.

Two factors were fundamental to mark literary difference, and mind that in a postcolonial context, difference was the measure of the correspondent cultural autonomy from European imitation in the making of autonomous literatures. This was achieved, basically in two ways: by subject matter, resisting colonisation and projecting a model of identity for the future of the (post-independence) nation; in aesthetic terms by re-discovering, praising and promoting one's culture, one's non-Western life-style, local ways. Both of these strategies amounted to what I call "territorialisation" of the text, linking literature to a society, a culture (or a set of cultures in these multi-ethnic societies) and a landscape. What is special about postcolonial literature is that this normal gesture of taking inspiration from one's culture implied the effort of resisting the assimilation of Western civilisation, in a colonial context where the education system, if there was one, would be state oriented, meaning, oriented in agreement with colonisation. Taking this state of affairs into account it is easy to understand the political commitment of these emerging literatures to the struggle for independence, and the vital contribution of writers in the assertion of postcolonial national projects.

Note that I am not denying neither the existence nor the importance of exquisite literary heritages from pre-colonial cultures, either in its written form or as oral literatures. What happened is that during colonialism these literatures were partially destroyed, corrupted, or at least, marginalised by Eurocentric governments. Hence, a huge work of

[74] Colonialism is a deforming mirror with the ability to white-wash all unclear motivations and vice-versa." Eduardo Lourenço, "Retrato (Póstumo) do Nosso Colonialismo Inocente", revista *Critério*, nº2, ano 1984: 8.

recovery, and even re-creation, has been taking place in many postcolonial societies. Anyway, apart from these ancient, surviving manifestations of local literatures, the raising of nationalist awareness and the struggle for independence were fundamental sources of inspiration for the consolidation and growth of local, modern, literatures, which have been received in the West under the name of "postcolonial", linking their visibility to the historical and political circumstances of their birth. In this research, I am only dealing with written literatures, but I should add I recognise the wealth of modern songs of praise or of story telling as fundamental actors in the local literary systems, for instance in Mozambique and also in Cape Verde. Nevertheless, I feel the adequate development of critical tools to address these literatures from a more internal, aesthetic point of view still is quite tentative (i. e. usually these texts are approached from a cultural, sociological perspective, while its literary form, in terms of *genre,* narrative structures and aesthetic values are not addressed), though Brown and Sidikou[75] have been quite successful in framing the function of such literary forms, stressing their interactive, performative qualities.

As far as postcolonial written literatures are concerned, I take resistance to colonialism and the self-assertion of an independent (national, ethnic, regional) identity as two of the main sources of motivation for many writers who took the pen in colonised territories. Naturally, decades after independence, postcolonial literatures have evolved and diversified[76]. Nevertheless, because of such link between writing and activism, I see the worth of such a concept as "postcolonial" to refer to an historical frame that indeed had a foundational influence on these (modern and postmodern) literatures. "Postcolonial", though it invokes a historical change that affected both colonisers and colonised, is a Western concept, framing the reception and reviewing of the diverse literatures flowing from former ex-colonies.

Since the 1960s[77], the quality and fecundity of the so called "commonwealth literatures"[78] prompted a critical reaction from the British and American academies. The concepts and categories developed by these institutions as a response to the new objects of study soon had a normalising impact world-wide, influencing European academies in the study of other postcolonial literatures written in French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Dutch.

To the eyes of artists and thinkers in postcolonial states, like Cape Verde, Mozambique or India, I doubt this "postcolonial' label is as equally meaningful and practical. Local intelligentsia may use it to dialogue with an international audience, but is it not their own writers and literatures they are referring to? Would they not prefer to call them national or regional literatures, depending on the frame of collective identity they relate to?

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[75] Duncan Brown, (ed.) Oral Literature & Performance in Southern Africa, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000. Aissata Sidikou, Recreating Words, Reshaping Worlds, the Verbal Art of Women from Niger, Mali and Senegal, Africa World Press, 2000.

[76] Still, these two features, namely, resistance (to both foreign homogenising interference and internal exploitation) and self-assertion of national/regional identities (the recovery of local traditions, and the management of differences and divisions) are central issues for the literature I claim as postcolonial, including the literature currently written to resist neo-colonial threats. The transition from formal colonialism to neo-colonial practices (like the globalisation of transnational capitalism) was correspondingly accompanied by 'cultural warfare" as a form of resistance (evolving into most subtle and refined forms), and a continuous necessity of repeating self-assertive gestures. These continuities, in old threats of old dichotomies, reclaim "postcolonial" as a relevant concept to keep a critical perspective on current postcolonial literatures.

[77] *In* Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, Routledge (eds.), London and New York, 1998.

[78] In the 1980s, Bruce King already calls these literatures "New English Literatures", instead of, "Commonwealth literatures". He confirms that the beginning of a more serious critical reviewing of literatures in English started around the 1960s, either for Africa, the West Indies or India. *In* Bruce King, The New English Literatures – Cultural Nationalism in a Changing World Order, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1980.

Still, international acknowledgement of postcolonial literatures fulfils a cultural dialogue that is vital to promote these literary universes abroad. In this sense, local critics and writers may accept the relevance of the label on the grounds of its positive potential.

International cultural dialogues across the reading and writing of postcolonial literature pose the risk of promoting a few writers as the representatives of a national culture that is much more complex and multifaceted. In the essay "Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist"[79], Salman Rushdie comments on the development of such Western critical labels as an ontological impossibility since you cannot name and divide literature according to the passport of the writer, as if she/he were going to stand for the exotic national culture of her/his non-Western country.

Though critical labels, as systems of classification, can be misleading and hide amazing variations from sight, they are equally useful, and they structure the first attempts to create room for new areas of knowledge. In the case of postcolonial critical debates, the problem is that the point of view that is legitimised through these concepts is mostly the Western one, where all these labels were coined in the first place, and the subsequent canonised, current, one-sided perspective on, for example, African and Indian literatures, may be incomplete or distorted, and can be resented by writers whose aesthetic perspective and cultural references do not coincide with established critical views in the West[80]. The problem of applying limited models (postcolonial critical theory) to an extremely polymorphous object (postcolonial literatures) is that, as Rushdie points out, the gain in knowledge may amount to no more than a distortion of reality, taking a part for the whole (hence the ontological impossibility of a referent for such a thing as Commonwealth literature). Yet again, I would say, it depends on how you use theory and what kind of knowledge you seek. If one inscribes this awareness of variation in the research object as an extra source of knowledge and insights, instead of reading it as a factor upsetting the credibility of the theory, then this tension disappears, …but so do universalising classificatory systems. This research went around this problem by dismissing the relevance of a classificatory table. Rather, the study is structured as a set of situated approaches "talking back" to a set of guidelines that may or may not prove the adequate conceptual tools to answer each text. Please accept this statement for the time being, suspending your disbelief that a sound theoretical conclusion can come out of such an open, flexible frame.

Salman Rushdie's problem with "Commonwealth" is also a matter of power. A de-centred, nomadic approach as the one I am developing does not establish certain institutions and theories as being in control of the direction of postcolonial studies. I just offer a perspective of theory as "a kit" or "set of tools", which I think is important to keep the openness and translatability of this critical frame across cultures. The discussion of this point, comparing ways of looking at theory as "school of thought" versus "mind travelling", shows once more that when talking about "postcolonial literatures", there are historical and political susceptibilities to be handled with care, and that the same old struggles for power go on. The contribution of such critical voices as Salman Rushdie's is extremely important

[79] Salman Rushdie, Imaginary Homelands, Essays and Criticism 1981-1991, Granta Books in association with Viking, London, 1991.

[80] Biodun Jeyifo defends that there is a whole set of positive possibilities in the cross-fertilisation between local/ situated approaches to literatures and their international reception. The only problem may be the difference of reviewing patterns between local critics (for example more concerned with nationalist and political priorities) and Western reading perspectives, more dependent on theory. Jeyifo commends a clearer theoretical definition from local academies and, for Western scholars, a sounder awareness of the implications of reading and writing in particular, situated contexts. Biodun Jeyifo, "The Nature of Things: Arrested Colonisation and Critical Theory", *in* Padimini Mongia (ed.), Contemporary Postcolonial Theory, Arnold, 1996.

to correct Western-egocentric points of view, and increase one's ability to communicate across different cultural landscapes, minding difficult historical memories that may divide us.

To counterbalance the prominence of the Western perspective and its normalising effects (which may imply generalisations, distortion, simplification) one of the possible solutions is to advocate, as I am doing in this research, the greater relevance and adequacy of situated, context bounded approaches, which combine established theory with a greater concern for local history, politics and socio-cultural issues addressed by specific texts, shifting from a more abstract, post-structuralist perspective towards a more material and concrete approach. The tension here, between situated approaches and self-referential uses of theory springs from the influence of Derrida, Lacan and Michel Foucault through the works of Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak[81] mostly resented by Marxist critics[82], who see the influence of French theory as a loss of the revisionist potential of postcolonial literary criticism (because of the interruption in the process of ideological de-colonisation implied in certain forms of a-historical, disembodied knowledge). A greater attention to local context and recent socio-historical processes is fundamental to link art forms to the "*multiple material and intellectual contexts which determine its production and reception*"[83]:

> "In related fashion, postcolonial criticism has challenged hitherto dominant notions of the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere, helping to gain acceptance for the argument, advanced on a number of fronts since the 1960s especially, that 'culture' mediates relations of power as effectively, albeit in more indirect and subtle ways, as more public and visible forms of oppression."
>
> (Moore-Gilbert, 1997: 8)

The important connection established by Moore-Gilbert is that self-referential critical theories are very convenient to wash away the power of literature and other works of art as forms of political intervention and ideological reflection. In the case of postcolonial literatures, consolidated through the struggle for independence, appropriated by nationalist or Marxist lobbies in the post-independence period, and currently committed to social criticism and post-euphoria reactions to current realities, the importance of power relations and historical processes is fundamental to understand the reach, aims, particular forms and meaning of postcolonial literatures, such as they have been evolving in the nineties.

In this research the contribution of high theory is not taken as a "system of belief" (which would close as many mental doors as it opens). On the contrary, the set of theories I offer below makes explicit to the reader the kind of journey she/he is invited to join, having me as serviceable guide and fellow-traveller companion. It is a journey in terms of imagination, reflection and acquisition of insights. The chosen narrative texts will become a sort of road or map to know a bit more of a set of particular postcolonial locations.

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[81] Bart Moore-Gilbert, Postcolonial Theory, Contexts, Practices, Politics, Verso, London, New York, 1997, 1998.

[82] Aijaz Ahamad considers "postcolonial" an empty category because of its theoretical generalisations which amount to a loss of "analytical power". In order to counterbalance such abstractions, Ahmad suggests the necessity of concrete historical frames of reference. The problem with rampant, abstract theory is that it denies all possibility of political agency outside of the rhetorical game, ("The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality", 1996: 276 – 291); Arif Dirlik, reduces postcolonial criticism to "marketing strategies" by third world intellectuals to promote themselves in Euro-American universities, claiming to be experts on areas the West wants to know, analyse and control, as part of the project of globalisation, (The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism", 1996: 294 –321). Both papers *in* Padimini Mongia (ed.), Contemporary Postcolonial Theory, Arnold, London, 1996.

[83] *Op cit*. Bart Moore-Gilbert, 1998: 8.

The aesthetic dimension of literature will be read as the set of techniques that refine and expand the ability of the text to mean, by interfering with emotions, pleasure and feelings, beyond the rational set of ideological arguments presented by the text (I believe a great piece of literature is the one that seduces you, while provoking thought and intellectual development).

On each location, I will follow the invited set of guidelines from the set of possible lines of work which I have assemble in these two theoretical critical models. They do not offer a method, but an alternative set of multiple possibilities. In the end, this study will be able to conclude which categories were more operative, providing some explanations for that fact. This means that this theoretical section establishes a provisional starting point (actually a multiple starting point, because it will include a simultaneous set of possible alternatives) to think within a postcolonial model of literary analysis. Not all the same steps will be followed. Criticism has to respect the differences of different texts.

I will focus on the main socio-political issues affecting each of these locations and I will also analyse the available constellation of cultural references (including interpretations and discussion of local collective history) that provide the experience of living on these postcolonial universes with meaning and value. This comment on current societies works for both local and international readers, but obviously, a local reader has a richer set of references to dialogue with the text than I have. My limits are compensated by critical theory. Others have tried this same journey before. The set of guidelines suggested by the model of postcolonial critical analysis I assembled from the research of an extensive set of experts will help me to get solid points of reference, a sort of technique to find one's way in the desert, by reading certain signs, following certain clues.

I chose to look at the particular position of women, and their relation to men, on these locations. This apparently private dimension of social interaction has proved a straight road to look at wider issues. For example, it tells of patterns of distribution of power, establishes recognised markers of status and privilege, identifies forms of social segregation and exclusion, detects power/political alliances and it also enables you to assess the importance of religion and tradition. Hence, just as micro-politics can affect international relations and macro economic models affect micro family business, in the same way, colonial histories, de-colonisation, nationalist mobilisation, postcolonial crisis, international capitalism, all of these encyclopaedic, worldly issues can disrupt life in a small village in "the middle of nowhere". What happens in small, private universes, contains wider questions, and deserves proportional attention.

Apart from the tension between abstract theory and situated approaches to postcolonial literature, I would like to recall the importance of positive notions of "difference", meaning "diversity" and "wealth", instead of "deviance from the (European) norm", to deal with postcolonial literatures. This is an important strategy to demonstrate the individuality of postcolonial literatures and underline the provisional and partial status of the explanatory abilities of theory. To opt for a comparative study, which handles the extra knowledge provided by "differences" as a measure of success, is to avoid homogenisation.

It is because of my interest in difference and diversity, as a challenge to critical theory designed to think beyond the particular, that I have chosen such disparate case studies as India, Mozambique and Cape Verde: India is in Asia, the other two in Africa, India was eventually dominated by the British, Mozambique and Cape Verde were Portuguese until 1975. Besides, the pre-colonial cultures of these countries were themselves very different, and Cape Verde is a special *Creole* case since it is a hybrid society from the very beginning (the islands were not inhabited and both slaves and white colonisers were de-territorialised when they moved there). With such choice of research objects, I will be straining the

effective hold of postcolonial critical theories across diversity, while engaging in a situated reading of different instances of postcolonial literature. I will follow each text as a sort of "window" on a local postcolonial society, as a fragmented glimpse of the local atmosphere, accepting the worth of the insights contained in the fragments to learn about the whole. Remember that micro-universes intersect with and contain traces of wider realities.

Apart from differences among postcolonial literatures, there are several similarities grouping these texts, which enable me to define them as cases of postcolonial literature. Basically, postcolonial literatures are the national literatures of post-independence nations, still branded by the experience of colonialism and the challenges of autonomous self-definition and self-consolidation. But…there are many angles to a definition of postcolonial literatures. Below, I will look at a set of themes, linking perspective and subject matter to historical and political circumstances, in order to structure a working definition, which is neither an easy nor linear task. In other words, say, a love poem that can refer to a couple anywhere in the world is not necessarily postcolonial literature only because it is written in a former colony. It is not a matter of the physical contingencies surrounding the author (or the passport, according to Rushdie). It is a matter of the content of the text and the inscription of local atmosphere, the marks of a certain position or set of co-ordinates. For example, the creation of the three postcolonial literatures of India, Mozambique and Cape Verde was deeply dependent on the particular process of nationalist self-assertion and the subsequent independence struggle (naturally, the precise decades one might refer to, depend on the concrete liberation process of each of them). However, generations after independence, nationalist projects seldom remain the main force inspiring local literary trends. Similarly, the deconstruction of colonial discourses as a sort of "answering back" to colonialism also seems to have lost its central appeal. Moreover, during the nineties the situation has evolved and diverse literatures have matured in differentiated ways, according to specific intra-national problems, recent historical events, and cultural context. It is this stage, a few decades after independence, that I am going to address, looking at current representations of national/communal identities, after the initial euphoria of the independence moment. This postcolonial critical frame will run on a parallel line with the feminist research topics discussed in the previous section.

I also want to clarify that since I am dealing with social critique and the (re)construction of collective identities in postcolonial contexts, I am not addressing the diasporic dimension of the postcolonial debate, more centred on the emergence of emigrant sub-cultures in Western cities, expressing their own split identity between a culture of origin and a host culture. I find the increasing visibility of emigrant literatures and their representation of cultural hybridity (by exposing the mixed identities of emigrants divided between segregation and partial assimilation, mobility and rootlessness) as an important source of new ideas. This part of the debate has brought about powerful self-reflexive discourses to address the changing identity of post-imperial Europe. However, I am looking at what his happening in postcolonial locations. I am travelling in the opposite direction.

All these considerations bring us back to the question of settling my working definition of postcolonial literature and clarify my position in relation to the main themes and categories I will use as guidelines to organise my thinking and reading.

I.2.1 Chronological Undecidabilities and Elusive Geographical Borders

The advent of postcolonial literatures can be mistaken for a subject that refers exclusively to the post-independence period. This is a limited, chronological view of postcolonialism, which collapses the moment you want to apply it to concrete cases.

The prefix "post", as formulated by Lyotard[84] does suggest the idea of "a simple succession", but in order to note the succession, something has to change, and be identifiable as a new direction, a different stage: the advent of the "new" implies the definition of what is left behind, starting "a procedure of analysis" that marks rupture and discontinuity through the distance to think 'outside', 'after' what has been. Consequently, the postcolonial stage starts the moment you can think beyond and against colonial logic, not when you reach formal independence.

According to Sandra Ponzanesi[85], "postcolonial" is a state of awareness, and not a legal/chronological term referring to the strict historical moment when different colonial societies became independent. Ponzanesi argues convincingly that all the literature linked to the struggle for independence, or connected to the promotion of national self-awareness, is already postcolonial because it instigates the definition of the postcolonial ideal and defines the identity of the colonised people outside of the discourses of the colonial regime.

Benita Parry[86] and Ania Loomba[87] also extend "postcolonialism" from "after" the independence moment to a previous stage, including the struggle for independence and the rejection of colonialism. This is also my position since all the deliberate practices against colonialism were forms of resistance that already had the postcolonial stage as aim.

Another important element in this working definition of postcolonial literature is that both the modern literature being produced in ex-colonies and the literature of diaspora, representing the experience of emigrants living *within* the borders of the Western world, are regarded as "postcolonial". The corollary of this state of affairs is that the classification of postcolonial literature is not determined by rigid geographical references, either. This amounts to say that chronological and geographical borders cannot be settled in theory, *a priori*. On the contrary, each concrete study has to define the locations it is considering, clarifying why would a text be considered postcolonial and why to think through postcolonial critical theories is deemed relevant to approach that text or set of texts.

In spite of what I have said in the previous paragraphs, I admit the postcolonial debate may be framed as an epochal discussion in the future, concerning a specific transitional period. What a writer would consider his/her own contribution to national or regional literatures is still received in international terms as "postcolonial" literature because of the recent and powerful impact of independence. However, as these (national or regional) literatures mature and diversify I wonder if such a label will be the most relevant reference to approach them in the coming decades. Still, postcolonial critical theories will certainly hold for these first decades of consolidation of modern literatures in former European colonies. Yet again, self-assertive practices, resistance to globalisation and neo-colonial international politics will probably keep postcolonial theories a useful frame of analysis in future ideological debates ("post", implies, after all, an "after" on which some continuities with the "previous" may live on).

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[84] Jean-François Lyotard, "Note on the Meaning of 'Post-", *in* Postmodernism, a Reader, Thomas Docherty (ed.); Columbia University Press, New York, 1993.
[85] Sandra Ponzanesi, Paradoxes of Post-colonial Culture, Ph.d dissertation, Utrecht University, 1999: 11.
[86] Benita Parry "Resistance Theory/Theorizing Resistance or Two Cheers for Nativism", *in* Contemporary Postcolonial Theory, Padimini Mongia (ed.), Arnold, London, 1996, pp: 84-109.
[87] Ania Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism, Routledge, London, 1998.

In this research, the integration of the selected texts in their historical, cultural and socio-political context will indirectly fix their respective geo-chronological co-ordinates. As for the conceptual leap beyond a colonial worldview, it is tackled by the analysis of the narrative plots as ideological arguments represented through fiction. For example, anti-colonial resistance is one of the forms of postcolonial self-awareness, while the wish for the advent of the new (to paraphrase Lyotard) can be materialised in the struggle for independence, or the presentation of a project for the postcolonial nation.

I.2.2 Revisionist Practices in Postcolonial Critique and Literature

An overview of the current postcolonial debate immediately reveals that there is scholarly disagreement concerning basic issues like the adequacy of the word "postcolonial", its political implications and the range of its application.

The term "postcolonial" seems to be taken as a chronological reference to the end of a historical period[88], as a frame to discuss the presence of emigrant communities within Western states, and, as a "*methodological revisionism*" following post-structuralist theories and their deconstructive drive. In this last sense of the word, "*Western structures of knowledge and power*"[89] are the object under revision, due to the critique of history and politics carried out through postcolonial theory and literatures.

The form taken by this "*methodological revisionism*" is suggested by the works of Edward Said[90] or Homi Bhabha[91], who deconstruct colonial discourses as a deliberate distortion of the identity of other (non-Western) peoples so as to justify the interpretation of "difference" as "inferiority", not only to assert and protect Western-centric values and perspectives, but also to justify power claims over these peoples.

In critical terms, revisionist practices inspired by Edward Said carry out a re-evaluation of the responsibility of scholarly discourse, including colonial literature, in reinforcing racist prejudices by representing colonised peoples as unable to rule themselves. The perverse aspect of this staged misapprehension of Oriental[92] (or African, or Native American) identities is that it would be converted, in political/imperial terms, into a complacent justification for the exploitation and enslavement of these peoples.

The coherence of the racist stereotypes permeating colonial discourses created by the West to interpret and represent other cultures, be it through novels, anthropologic essays, biological studies, travel notes, antiquarian guides, painting, business relations or promotion of exotic commodities is further evidence of the ideological bias underlying all these "expert" productions.

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[88] The invoked historical period covers the European colonisation of extensive territories in Africa, Asia and America, from the XVth to the XXth centuries.

[89] Introduction to Contemporary Postcolonial Theory, a Reader, by Padimini Mongia (ed.), Arnold, New York, 1996: 2.

[90] Edward Said, Orientalism, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1978.

[91] Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, London, Routledge, 1994.

[92] Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) focuses on "the East" as a recurring image of "the other", creating an opposition between East and West which is thoroughly complicit with the dominating, imperial intentions of Europe in relation to India and the Middle East since the late XVIIIth century. Said also assesses Europe's discourses concerning the East as the articulation of an old rivalry between Islam and Christianity with sad, fundamentalist undertones. Orientalism thus amounts to an ontological and epistemological model to understand and perceive oriental peoples and cultures. This model has been mostly developed by French and British intelligentsia during colonialism, though the United States have currently taken the leading role in the production of derogatory and racist stereotypes to diminish other cultures (currently equating "Arab" with "Islam" and "terrorist"). Said's explicitly claims his work as "revisionist", with the central aim of "unlearning" the dominant mode of the West.

Colonial discourse is marked by a sense of superiority and purity, as if the Western, white race embodied the standard of civilisation and humanity[93]. Within the binary logic that has been central for Western thought, the assertion of the myth of white superiority implied the suppression of positive Eastern or African identities, annihilating assertive aspects of these cultures. In Orientalism (1978), one of the foundational texts for postcolonial criticism, Edward Said deconstructs several colonial fallacies which prevented serious knowledge of oriental people, denouncing them as a sort of "*energising myths*"[94], to borrow Elleke Boehmer's fortunate formulation. As forms of promotion for ideologies that became dominant, these myths had a very useful impact on public opinion: they hid the violence of imperialism from sight, promoted urgently needed racist myths (and their corresponding ego/Eurocentric delusions), and thus, legitimised a fundamentally capitalist enterprise as a civilising mission to "improve" other cultures. Colonial literature, more specifically, compiled a set of metaphors "*to represent the degradation of other human beings as natural, an innate part of their degenerate, barbarian state*"[95], screening out from metropolitan awareness the acknowledgement of achievement, resistance and agency among indigenous peoples.

Homi Bhabha - who has been concerned with the self-articulation of minority cultures in Western cities and their deconstructive impact on monologic, homogenising concepts of "the nation"[96] - also wrote several papers on the colonial encounter, and the exchange of gazes between colonised and coloniser's eyes. For the discussion at hand, his paper "The Other Question"[97] is quite useful. In it, Homi Bhabha exposes the political importance of creating and promoting racist stereotypes to stir prejudice against other peoples. The fact that "difference" was represented as "degeneration" instigated racist fears to the extent of a phobia (that is, an unbearable repulsion for those that did not conform to the Western norm) because it made "difference" stand for a threat of contamination and corruption. Any possibility of dialogue and mutual respect was safely prevented, since to treat the "other" as the same would put white superiority (and mankind's best hope of global progress) in jeopardy. The revision of these racist phobias, linked to the threat of miscegenation, has been particularly addressed by feminist researchers working on representations of the white female body (in need of protection from contamination) *vis a vis* stereotypes of native men as rapists[98].

In fact, within the frame of colonial mentality, dark and brown men tended to be conceived of as the "primitive native", of Africa and the Americas, or, the decadent barbarian of Asia. Since the opulent and urban civilisations of Asia could not be called "primitive", and since the despotic, egocentric construction of the white, imperial self could not contemplate equity with those it intended to dominate, Asian men were perceived as degenerate and decadent. In both stereotypes, the idea that Western civilisation is better and superior is established: the first were accused of "*a lack of civilisation*" and the latter were to blame for "*an excess of it*"[99]. Simultaneously, dark and brown women were often used to personify conquered territory, as willing and complicit lovers, a trope which promotes the idea that colonised land, had it a choice, would prefer to be ruled by white men. The extent

[93] On this subject see White, Richard Dryer, Routledge, London, 1997.
[94] Elleke Boehmer, Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995: 23.
[95] *Op. cit.* Boehmer, 1995: 23.
[96] Homi Bhabha, Nation and Narration, Routledge, London, New York, 1990; See also, Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, Routledge, London and New York, 1994.
[97] Homi Bhabha, "The Other Question", *in op. cit.* Mongia, 1996.
[98] See, for example, Sara Mills, "Post-colonial Feminist Theory", in Contemporary Feminist Theories, Stevi Jackson; Jackie Jones (eds.), Edinburgh University Press, 1998 and *op. cit.*, Teresa Hubel, 1996.
[99] *Op. cit.* Loomba, 1998: 108, 110.

of the impact of postcolonial revisionist practices is materialised in the distance between the credibility of these racist stereotypes and current notions of cultural relativism, which have made mainstream Western culture see racism as "wrong" and "politically incorrect", in the last decades of the XXth century: take postmodern literature and its emphasis on relativism, the erosion of established ideas and the playful revision of history (usually re-written from the margin or from below) as evidence to support this claim.

The above discussion claims the work of Bhabha, Said and Loomba as revisionist, in so far as they are writing to unleash a conceptual change in Western mentalities, through the deconstruction of racist and imperial myths. In this way, they are creating new patterns of thought to perceive different cultures. This is, for me, one of the most seductive promises contained in postcolonial studies, embodying the innovative potential of the discussed revisionist drive in postcolonial studies.

Now, I would like to turn to the same story, but on a different scenario. In colonial contexts, very far away from Western academies, long before Said's foundational attempt at renewing the Western view of Eastern societies, the struggle for the independence of colonised territories had led to the emergence of self-assertive, postcolonial awareness, among colonised peoples. Without the dream of a nation free from European rule, the fight for independence would never have taken off. Thus, from the point of view of the colonised, postcolonialism starts with the first attempts to think "after colonialism is over", when "white foreigners" are made to leave.

In order to assert national consciousness, the intellectuals committed to the freedom fight had to start, (like Said) by deconstructing white men's racist discourse and denounce it as false and deliberately humiliating for the colonised. The next (or simultaneous) strategy was to promote ethnic pride to create a sense of national identity worth to fight for. Hence, it is important to connect the development of national ideals to the activist revision of colonial discourses and their subsequent loss of credibility to the eyes of the colonised. The role of literature in the formulation and promotion of both of these processes is an essential one.

If the whole enterprise of forging national identities to fight back colonialism was, in part, dependent on an inversion of racist, colonial discourses, then, it is necessary to expand postcolonial revisionist theories to include acts of appropriation, self-assertion and subversion on the part of the colonised, which is a different kind of revisionist practice than the ones aimed at deconstructing colonial discourses (like Said and Bhabha's). The difference is that self-assertion does not have to "answer back" to colonial discourse. It reconstructs and praises local cultures.

The negative representation of colonial settlers, revealing the wrongs, the deviousness and the pathetic in their behaviour, is a frequent anti-colonial move, which works as a revisionist practice to assert nationalist pride and overcome the political apathy of colonised peoples. The difference between national self-assertion and postcolonial revisionist practices is that while self-assertion turns to local culture and its history to stir postcolonial awareness, the revision of colonial myths depends on colonial discourse to define its opposite identity. One thing is to confront the West and revise colonial mentalities, promoting a world order less permeated by racist notions. Another thing is to fight back racist colonial discourse.

Although I do not deny the strategic importance of re-writing racial identities through the eyes of the colonised, I doubt that at fundamentalist extremes, the nativist dimension of "answering back" to colonial rhetoric and mythologies will ever deliver innovative ways of thinking the relation between the West and the new states, outside of old colonial binaries. However, postcolonial literature can be critical or ironical towards colonial

ideologies and memories, without being necessarily trapped within a reversed (nativist) logic.

On a more general level, one has to consider the impact of postcolonial revisionist practices on current notions of history. New points of view on past events mean that the perception of established narratives of European glory and conquest have changed, revealing a less biased and complacent picture. New insights on the human cost and the unforgivable facets of the imperial enterprise have replaced self-flattering, Eurocentric accounts of our collective past.

To conclude, I would recall Stuart Hall's[100] wise suggestion to look at the "postcolonial" not only as a national category but also as a transnational one[101], referring to both ex-colonised and ex-colonisers. This formulation of postcolonial studies provides an episteme to think through the post-imperial age, after the formal ending of European colonialism. It encompasses a basic revision of national identities and collective discourses reflecting the challenges created by the event of independence.

The literary pieces analysed in this research include both intra-national social criticism and international dialogues, aimed at exorcising colonial history and resisting neo-colonial threats. The existence of these two dimensions prove the worth of Hall's argument.

I will assess the contribution of the studied pieces to revise Western prejudice from several angles. The representation of the white settler through postcolonial eyes, and the alternative interpretation of the colonial encounter is, naturally, a possible guideline of analysis. Secondly, to acknowledge miscegenation and hybridity as productive and creative processes is a step beyond Orientalist and colonial practices. The study of a Creole culture, like the case of Cape Verde, will take this discussion further. Finally, one can discuss the inscription of local historical resistance and the assertion of local cultural heritages as a means to "diminish" the exclusive status of Western culture, deposing its aura of model of civilisation. In this way, postcolonial writers are diluting the hold of Orientalist or "Africanist" views. Obviously, by reading these novels through a postcolonial critical frame, I am trying to prove colonial, Eurocentric perspectives inadequate, and in this way, I am offering a revisionist dissertation.

I.2.3 Self-assertion and Nativism

Above, I said that the revision of Western structures of knowledge and power was, in part, achieved through the self-assertion of cultures that had been suppressed during colonialism. I also mentioned nativism as a version of anti-otherness, similar to colonial racism. However, the two practices are very different and served different purposes in the consolidation of postcolonial literatures.

Nativism was an important strategy to promote anti-colonial resistance. Activists turned to the strategic necessity of constructing a motivating sense of national identity, opposed to colonialism, as a vital step in the process of mobilising popular support for independence. This amounts to say that as an anti-colonial movement, nativism appropriated and inverted racist colonial discourse, sanctifying local cultural traditions and demonising white influence as corruption and enslavement. People would only take up the independence

[100] Stuart Hall, "When Was the Post-colonial?' Thinking at the Limit", *in* The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons, Ian Chambers; Lidia Curti (eds.), Routledge, London and New York, 1996: 242-260.

[101] The postcolonial is, obviously, an intra-national category, as well. It depends on the frame one is considering to develop one's argument.

fight if they felt they were, say, Mozambican people, oppressed by Portuguese colonisers. Hence, racial slogans, combined with "class" references and nationalist rhetoric created two clearly opposite sets of identity references like white/ capitalist/ bourgeois/ foreigner, and, black/ proletarian/ working-class/ patriot. A specific set of cultural traditions (including language and religion), and a genealogy of past history were equally important discourses to claim the right to a concrete territory, making of the respective national project, a credible idea. This is the logic explaining why the independence struggle relied a lot on nativism making of culture a site of war, the very basis for a sense of national awareness.

Although effective, the problem is that nativism took the revival of local cultures to a fundamentalist extreme, becoming a sort of inversion of European xenophobia by nativist hatred, which is not a healthy basis to reconstruct the subjectivity of liberated black peoples.

Frantz Fanon understood this clearly. In his Peau Noire Masques Blanks (1952), he wrote about the split, self-hating identity of the assimilated subject, posing the problem of asserting a positive black identity as a matter of self-confrontation, awareness and resistance. Fanon interpreted colonialism as a psychopathological disease that annihilates the sense of selfhood in the black/colonised men. The antidote for this disease is a sense of pride and allegiance to African histories, which would break alienation and self-denial. This positive turn towards an affirmative re-evaluation of the "coloured" self should transcend the simple inversion of racist discourses, otherwise, the narcissism that makes the black subject deify African cultures is still trapped within the unhealthy logic that made colonised people aspire to be white and white people aspire to stand for the universal norm[102]. As a concrete example of an advisable alternative, Fanon defended the necessity of creating a national literature to consolidate a sense of national consciousness and heal the wounded self-esteem of a colonised ego by revising colonial mythologies. Following this same line of resistance**,** self-assertive strategies, aimed at reviving ancient cultural heritages (pre-colonial), seem a more balanced alternative to enable non-Western people to recover, consolidate and strengthen a sense of collective identity, linked to a history, a place and a community. In this way, postcolonial societies can nurture the feeling of "belonging" that will make up for a traumatic history of abuse and dispossession.

Self-assertive strategies have other advantages as healthy basis to negotiate the consolidation of postcolonial societies (often multicultural). Firstly, self-assertion is not cancelled by hybridity or contamination because the recreation of local identities is compatible with current processes of modernisation and international exchange of influences. Secondly, self-assertion does not demand the suppression of internal cultural variants. On the contrary: this cultural heterogeneity constitutes an extra source of inspiration and knowledge, to consolidate a multiple and articulated account of local cultures and local histories. Thirdly, it may include certain forms of (contained) nativism, imbuing certain traditional mythological figures or rituals with enhanced meanings and a more dramatic popular appeal (the recovery of a traditional culture that may have been disfigured beyond recognition has been a process of "mending" and gluing together the remaining pieces). What is at stake is a strategic platform to provide postcolonial societies with a distinctive voice and identity, enacting a claim for more "room" to co-exist outside of globalising influences, and that gesture is very important. In this sense, self-assertion does not have to be translated into negative or aggressive political acts (though it surely remains a political act), meaning that in spite of the threat of nationalist appropriations, not all celebrations of tradition or nostalgia for myths of origin are reactionary.

[102] Frantz Fanon, Peau Noire, Masques Blancs, Éditions du Seuil, 1971 (1952): 9.

Nativism made a lot of sense at the moment of the liberation struggle, but once independence is achieved, practices of resistance and (national, collective) consolidation stand to earn more from the concern for cultural self-assertion.

Benita Parry[103] claims residual re-enactments of tribal life as a means to reach for empowerment, since self-representation of one's cultural references is a way of rejecting colonial/imperial attempts to speak for/represent the culture of the ex-colonised people. Parry is making an important distinction between the negative retrograde value of nationalist cultural revivals and cultural manifestations which are "*imaginative reworkings*" of cultural memories, with no other aim than to recognise and articulate constitutive elements of one's hybrid and fragmented cultural identity.

The crux of the matter is that both nationalist propaganda and self-assertive strategies may turn to a positive re-evaluation of local cultures, but they are not the same thing. Although there is something of a shared agenda between them (both attempt a reversion of colonial discourses, changing the terms of the diminishing comparison between European cultures and their African or Asian counterparts), the exaggerated and aggressive dimensions implied in nativism as a form of inverted colonial racism are not constitutive of self-assertive cultural practices, rather focused on the valorisation of local culture *per se*.

Since this research deals mostly with second generation, post-independence postcolonial writers, nativist practices, associated to the independence struggle, no longer are very inspiring for the considered texts. As for explicit self-assertive discourses (by writing, the studied authors are already asserting the national or regional culture represented in their texts) embedded in the analysed texts, they vary according to location, cultural heritage and recent developments in local circumstances. It is premature to guess the forms any self-assertive strategy may take. Close reading of each case study in parts II and III will answer this topic.

I.2.4 We All Live in a Postcolonial Age, But You Do Not Disseminate Before You Consolidate

> "(...) One cannot deconstruct a subjectivity one has never controlled. Self-determination is the first step of any program of deconstruction."[104]

Historically, the ending of colonialism meant a new beginning for ex-colonised peoples. This beginning was about building a new nation and organising an independent civil society. However, social tissue is something that cannot be created through law and bureaucracy. It requires bonds between individuals, agreed patterns of life style, shared references. It requires, in a word, a sense of unity, and that is something many of the states inherited from colonialism did not have. There was a certain consensual unity around the necessity to fight for independence, but, when it came, the post-independence government seldom represented more than the interests of a fraction of the population. Different cultures, different languages and different religions have kept rival groups apart, both in India and in most African countries.

One has to understand that the process of creating a nation-state in postcolonial contexts is neither easy nor quick (and probably, the nation-state is not the best model to organise power in these contexts). European nations fought internal and international wars

[103] Benita Parry, "Resistance Theory/Theorising Resistance or Two Cheers for Nativism", *in op. cit.* Mongia, 1996: 84-109.
[104] Rosi Braidotti, Nomadic Subjects, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994:117.

for centuries, until the complex mosaic that is now Europe gained stability. This amounts to say that the end of the imperial age has left colonisers and colonised with very different processes to settle. Currently, the modern Western states are discussing multiculturalism and the emergence of emigrant communities as active sub-cultures disseminating homogeneous, centralised notions of the state, while postcolonial states are still struggling for an adequate solution to consolidate (as a nation, or federation, or set of nations, or city states) to their concrete realities and priorities.

Here, I would like to take a detour to discuss the way Homi Bhabha sees possible processes to narrate "the nation", so as to promote it in the mentalities of the people whose allegiance it seeks. Although Bhabha addresses the presence of emigrant communities in Western cities (and not the construction of the postcolonial state), he discusses a set of socio-cultural strategies for the definition of a sense of collective identity, which I find very interesting.

According to Homi Bhabha[105], the cultural landscape of contemporary Western cities is definitively "multicultural", due to the presence of diasporic emigrant communities, the massive number of which has started a process of dissemination of national references, scattering the homogenising model of the modern nation across diverse minority cultures. In order to clarify this process, Bhabha talks of minority cultures at some length and reflects on the ideological mechanisms which create homogeneity and inculcate in the individual a certain willingness to conform to the rules of the group, managing, in the most successful cases, a serious commitment to uphold the distinctive identity of the community. This argument is developed according to some principles that are worth quoting in detail[106].

Bhabha sees "the nation" as a metaphoric construct ("*a form of social and textual affiliation*") whose foundational references are more dependent on ideology and discourse than on territory and history. This move is quite logical, since Bhabha writes against an essentialist concept of nationalism, exploiting the narratives around the definition of "nation" as a set of "*complex strategies of cultural identification*"[107]. In order to clarify how these complex strategies work, Bhabha analyses narrative structures as a rhetorical device to build cultural identity, by "teaching" people to recognise and identify with certain social habits, rituals or values that represent the experience of living within, and according to, the nation/community. People assimilate collectively shared values by becoming familiarised with them, through everyday routines and interaction with other people of the community. But in order to be conceptualised, the social lesson to be learned has to be specifically talked about or written (by religious or legal texts, or literature for example), in a network of ideologies and values that provide it with meaning. These cultural references, usually presented as the heritage of tradition and history, consolidate "the nation" or "the community" as an authoritative principle, providing the cohesion of the group. This is what Bhabha calls "the pedagogic dimension" of the rhetoric strategies of social reference.

Together with the set of pedagogic strategies to narrate collective/communal identity, Bhabha has defined "performative strategies" as the enactment of assimilated ideologies. That is to say that by behaving according to a set of principles shared by the members of the community (and which constitute a notion of "tradition" and "common-sense"), one is performing a repetition of the assimilated cultural references, reinforcing the cultural identity of the community and one's integration in it. For Homi Bhabha, the ultimate effect of this double narrative strategy is the ability to implement, in the individual, a strong

[105]Homi Bhabha, "Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation" *in* Nation and Narration, Routledge, London and New York, 1990, pp. 291-323.

[106] There is a previous reference to this same theory by Homi Bhabha in the section "Feminisms, Identity, Culture". See above section I.1.2.

[107] *Op. cit.* Bhabha, 1990: 293.

emotional response to the idea of belonging to a certain community. If nations are territories of the imagination[108], then, the fact that an emigrant community is living within a "foreign territory" does not annihilate the survival of the particular cultural identity of that community, kept alive by certain habits and life styles, according to the mentalities and values inherited from a place of "origin".

I fully endorse these views but, at the same time, I have a serious problem with these theories. Let us go by parts. The anatomy of the mechanics inculcating national/communal allegiance in individuals is simply brilliant. But, the hold of a sense of community in diaspora, and its importance to the individual, varies greatly according to social class. Bhabha seems to turn a blind eye to the different position of cosmopolitan nomad élites, of which he himself is a member, and that of his less educated, proletarian compatriots. As Robin Cohen said in his study on diaspora[109], labour diasporas keep strong communal ties, and protect the distinctive aspects of their cultures like language (which they use at home), religion and family organisation. They also keep a mythical connection to their homeland as the focus of their emotional investment so that this sense of a geographically distant "home" compensates the high levels of social exclusion in the destination society. As Cohen suggests, social mobility is the first factor in a more successful integration in the host country. From above, "being different" does not make you feel excluded from a sense of home in your host country.

Secondly, there is a problem in Bhabha's too optimist shortcut from the emergence of minority cultures to the hypothesis of multiculturalism. I think it may be true that cultural diversity challenges the exclusivity of a single pattern of civilisation, but, if you consider the case of emigrant communities as the ultimate example of such a process, I doubt that minority cultures are competing on an equal basis with the Western norm, when it comes to determine priorities in the life of cosmopolitan cities. There are serious contradictions between the proclaimed dissemination of the modern liberal nation and the obvious dominant role of the host culture towards the gift of cultural diversity proposed by underclass, underpaid emigrants.

Yet, Homi Bhabha's theory concerning the mechanisms to narrate the nation or the community, as powerful references for collective identity, articulated through capillary, omnipresent, (pedagogic and performative) strategies, responsible for promoting social conformity and perpetuating hegemonic values and ideas, was absolutely inspirational for this research. It provided me with the adequate tool to track down different patriarchal traditions, their emotional hold on the individual and the political implications of encouraging certain types of collective identity, for instance ethnic, patriarchal and nationalist, instead of others, less fixed and hegemonic. Since my study on postcolonial literature is concerned with processes of self-consolidation and self-articulation taking place in postcolonial societies, Bhabha has addressed a topic that is very relevant for this study.

Through the narrative strategies defined by Bhabha one can assess patterns of collective identity available on the considered locations (for example communal tradition, religious allegiance or ethnic self-assertion) settling the way a specific literary piece negotiates its thesis on the history of a location, its mechanisms of hegemonic power and the position assigned to women in the represented social world. Furthermore, by making explicit pedagogic and performative codes of affiliation to patterns of collective identity it is possible to determine deviation and resistance in the behaviour of some characters. The internal

[108] Benedict Anderson "Cultural Roots" and "The Origins of National Consciousness" in Imagined Communities, London, Verso, 1991: 9-37.

[109] Robin Cohen, Global Diasporas, an Introduction, University of Warwick, UCL (University College London) Press, 1997: chapter 3.

conflict of deviating characters is very important for the postcolonial writer as it opens a narrative dimension to carry out social criticism, by exposing how, and in which ways, a society is oppressive for certain groups of individuals (like exploited classes, segregated ethnic groups, women). On a more general level, the representation of a given postcolonial society will map the direction of the post-independence process, including its tensions, contradictions and undecidabilities.

Between the effective hold of more or less functional postcolonial locations, and the social critique of their problems, there lies a path that has a lot to settle in terms of consolidation before it can afford comfortable dissemiNations and adjustments. I will return to these issues in parts II and III.

I.2.5 The Fabrication of Collective Identities

A helpful theory to approach current notions of collective identity in postcolonial societies was provided by Stuart Hall[110] who argued that, for both ex-colonisers and ex-colonised, the relevant political frame to analyse postcolonial contexts is not exclusively dependent upon national units or international relations (and the change from the colonial system to international corporativism). Instead, one should look at internal conflicts and tensions, such as the ones embodied by hybridity, syncretism and cultural undecidability. These problematic features of postcolonial cultures unsettle a neat distinction between "local" cultural references and "foreign" contributions since these simply co-exist, together with colonial memories and pre-colonial rivalries between local subcultures.

Stuart Hall[111] writes about a concrete case, that of Caribbean cinema, to address the possibility of representing cultural identity as fragmented, contradictory and hybrid. In this case, he identifies the co-existence of differences and continuity among the diverse and contradictory elements of Caribbean culture (the distinctive influences of Africa, Europe and America). By recognising the lack of homogeneity in cultural influences, Hall suggests that essentialist representations of Caribbean identity could only be untrue. He is certainly not generalising the form taken by Caribbean hybridity, which is the product of particular circumstances. What Hall suggests is that purist representations of cultural identity will be disregarding history and the complexity of the concrete experience of social life. In short, Hall defines two possible views of cultural identity:

- As a sort of "collective self", embodied in the idea of a common experience "branding" those who share a time, place, culture and history. This is a static category, an ideological projection, which has been used by nationalist propaganda to uphold myths of unity and purity.

- As a sense of "position", the intellectual subjective experience of improvising a sense of identity in relation to circumstances and local context. This is a creative, dynamic process in dialogue with available cultural references. Hall is more interested in this second strategy because it provides ground to understand cultural identity as the mixed, hybrid product it is.

Kwame Anthony Appiah[112] echoes this distinction: he interprets purist constructions of collective identity as a logical strategy in a foundational stage, promoted by nationalist writings in the 1950s and 1960s, when high rates of popular mobilisation were necessary to make the independence struggle "take off". However, to keep obsessively attuned to

[110] *Op. cit.*, Chambers and Curti (eds.), 1996.
[111] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", *op. cit.* Mongia, Arnold (ed.), London, 1996, pp: 110, 121.
[112] Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Is the Post- on Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?"; *op. cit.* Mongia, Arnold (ed.), 1996, pp: 55 - 71.

nostalgia for pre-colonial purity (i.e. "nativism"), in search for a past golden age, is out of touch with the reality of postcolonial contexts, failing to meet the actual experience of living in all its mixed complexity.

As a viable means to understand the articulation of individual and collective identities in postcolonial locations, Hall suggests that instead of departing from nationalist projections or international relations one should turn to the study of individual experiences, which embody one's "sense of position" in current fragmented/ hybrid postcolonial environments. In other words, by looking at individual characters in the process of negotiating their choices and obligations (and their own marginalisation or integration) with the laws of their community, one gets a picture of the wider social world on a certain geo-historical location.

The narrative mode, as the representation of the evolution of events in the life of a set of characters moving in a social background, provides access to exemplary individual experiences, since the writer constructs characters as terms in an argument she/he is intent on defending. The problem with the claims to make fiction stand for truth is settled by the fact that I am not, obviously, taking the particular "life" of these characters as the final horizon of my thought. I am interested in the way the events in the life of these characters present a set of wider points about, for instance, cultural self-definition, interpretations of history, active patriarchies, national or communal self-assertion, social tension, distribution of power and dominant mentalities in the represented location.

Ruth Frankenberg and Lata Mani[113], like Stuart Hall, suggest a "politics of location", as an effective research strategy to reach an insight on what it means to be postcolonial in a certain context. The analysis of particular subject positions, in its junction with class, race, gender, private allegiances and socio-political context, allows for an insight on the distinctive nuances of current postcolonial conditions as exemplified in the identities of "South Asian Muslims in Britain" or "African Americans in the USA", to use the diasporic examples put forward in their text. Obviously, this same strategy applies to the study of identities integrated in other postcolonial contexts, such as, within the frame of this research, different generations of women in Kerala or rural households in Cape Verde. Although all these positions are "postcolonial", they are not postcolonial in the same way, and the only way to understand what "postcolonial" means in these different circumstances is to look at available representations of subject positions in the considered postcolonial locations.

What Hall, Frankenberg and Mani suggest is that by approaching micro-universes one understands the mechanisms of macro socio-cultural structures, crystallised in available codes and models, as a form of collective identity.

I.2.6 Postcolonial Hybridity

According to Robert Young[114], the concept of "hybridity" springs from notions of race and "difference", being as it was at the centre of long pseudo-scientific discussions on degeneration and the possibility of mixing the white race with Black, Hindu and Asian people. The origin of the word "hybrid" comes from biology, where it is used to describe the offspring of different animal species or plants. In the human case, it was applied to the offspring from parents of different races. The existence of children of mixed racial origin generated diverse intellectual reactions ranging from the "*amalgamation thesis*" (which

[113] "Crosscurrents, Crosstalk: Race, 'Postcoloniality' and the Politics of Location", *in Op. cit.* Mongia, P; Arnold, London and New York, 1996, pp: 347-364.

[114] Robert Young, Colonial Desire, Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race, Routledge, London and New York, 1995.

accepts the "new" products of interbreed as a normal fact) to racism, which relates interbreeding to human degeneration since "mixing" makes the races lose their "*vigour and virtue*"[115]. From a colonial point of view, the problem with miscegenation and other forms of cultural hybridity is that they mixed "self" and "other" when the distance between these two concepts was of extreme political (and economical) importance to keep certain scruples and moral problems at bay.

Nowadays, within the frame of postcolonial theories, "hybridity" is used to describe a cultural phenomenon[116] namely the co-existence of diverse cultural elements that, through history, underwent a process of long and close contact, creating a new, mixed social environment. This mixture does not sort out contradictions, nor does it imply successful fusion. Both colonialism and postcolonialism (including its diasporic dimension through massive emigration movements into Western cities) are privileged instances of such cultural hybridity.

When one refers to cultural hybridism, one should be aware of which individual systems of cultural reference contributed to create current hybridity. In my case, as a Western-based critical reader, the colonial references will be more easily recognisable against the background from elements of local culture.

The notion of "cultural hybridity" implies a discussion of the meaning of culture. Robert Young lists several meanings for "culture". It has been a word associated to intellectual life, in the sense of "high culture", refinement and education; it invokes "civilisation" by opposition to "wild" or "barbarian", and, in colonial and postcolonial discussions, it is used to describe the ideological and material systems of any society as the product of a particular history and cultures. Within the frame of colonial politics, "culture" meant the norm established by European civilisation, which was to be assimilated by the colonised. Hence the importance of schools and universities to bring the elites of colonised countries to agree with European views assimilating Western culture as the model of civilisation (colonies as clones *avant la lettre*...). Obviously, part of this "European" view, implied the assimilation of "the nation" and its bureaucratic apparatus as the proper pattern of organisation for progress and modernisation, keeping colonialism as a necessary situation for the development of local colonies[117].

In this research, I will use "culture" to refer to the set of references, moral values and mentalities, habits, social codes and life-styles which provide mental maps for the individual, granting him/her a sense of position within a certain social environment[118]. In certain cases, culture may mean "tradition", and, in other cases, it may invoke hybridity and cultural undecidability. Contrary to "tradition", mostly represented as a neat, coherent whole inherited from past experience, cultural hybridity exposes undecidabilities and diversity within the system of available cultural references, turning the process of individual (and collective) self-definition into a more difficult and, possibly, more liberating one. The reason for this liberating potential in cultural hybridity is that it implies a mixture of references that never attempts to replicate either original. It creates something new, and, in this sense, already subversive, because out of control in relation to any previous norm or model. Naturally, when discussing a hybrid you can trace the different origin of some of the mixed elements, but, at the same time, there is also an unsettling element of ambiguity about hybridity, for even though you can recognise its constitutive elements, the borders between the different sources that produced it are no longer clear or fixed.

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[115] *Op. cit.,* Young, 1995: 18.
[116] *Ibid,* 1995: 6.
[117] *Ibid,* 1995: 51.
[118] A more complete working definition of "culture" is mentioned in the section "Feminisms, Identity and Culture", See above, section I.1.2.

Hybridity proved the right category to assess successful instances of appropriation and indigenisation[119] of international influences, which is to say, instances of "glocalisation" (i. e. of adaptation of international influences to local culture). Hybridity was equally relevant to identify some of the after-effects of colonialism.

Robert Young's exhaustive genealogy of "hybridity" is helpful to deal with language, as well. In linguistic terms, "hybridity" is used to describe the integration of elements from different languages in a unique linguistic system, like in "Creole"[120]. But, on a second level, linguistic hybridity is more than an organic feature recalling the diverse origin of linguistic elements. The mixed nature of hybrid languages can be made political and confronting (intentional hybridity) if one opts for exploring the double-voiced echoes in hybrid discourses as a form of subversion, making "*one voice unmask the other*"[121]. This is an extremely interesting idea to approach postcolonial literatures because the colonial heritage is, undeniably, one of the key elements in double-voiced uses of language. The re-appropriation of the ex-coloniser's language, within a postcolonial frame of mind that neither denies the past nor is imprisoned by it, has become a key point in terms of style for many postcolonial writers. I will discuss the use of an "appropriated" language by the selected postcolonial writers along these lines of thought.

I.2.7 The Appropriation of European Languages

In the context of the use of a European language as the current language among the people of an ex-colonised country, one has to discuss a scenario of linguistic appropriation and renovation, which goes on after the formal ending of colonialism. In fact, Robert Young[122] considers that together with mixed progeny, language is one of the best examples of material hybridity.

In the realm of literature, contemporary postcolonial writers contribute to assert and consolidate local variants of Portuguese, French, Italian and English. When these writers disrupt "proper" English and Portuguese norms, bending them to fit the rhythms and the tones of local languages, they are expressing the fact that European languages are no longer playing a normative role. Particular linguistic hybrids, improvised across geographies, have reached full maturity. It is within this state of affairs that I think of the study of postcolonial literatures as literatures that happen to be written in Portuguese or English, and which have their own identity. This view, which acknowledges the worth of any situated literary system for its own sake, and, as the product of its own cultural genealogy, is a conceptual progress in relation to the traditional colonial view. Linguistically, any "incorret" use of European languages was perceived as a degeneration of the European norm; aesthetically, the literary texts produced in the colonies were evaluated by comparison with their European counterparts; politically, this comparative criticism was convenient because it annihilated any independent sense of cultural/political identity:

"For Europe was regarded as the great Original, the starting point, and the colonies were therefore copies, or 'translations' of Europe, which they were supposed to duplicate. Moreover, being copies,

[119] See Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy", Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory, a Reader, Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), Harvester Wheatsheaf, London, 1994.
[120] By *Creole* is meant those who are descendents of settlers yet who are indigenous to their land of settlement in the sense of being native born. A *Creole* is also a mixed language that has formed as a result of cultural contact. The specific meaning of the word "Creole" varies according to the society one refers to. In Brazil it meant "negro slaves born locally", and in Louisana it stood for the "white franco-phone population." See *op. cit.* Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies, 1998: 57, 58.
[121] *Op. cit.,* Young, 1995: 21.
[122] *Ibidem.*

translations were evaluated as less than originals, and the myth of the translation as something that diminished the greater original established itself."[123]

The challenge, from a postcolonial perspective, was to assert one's culture so that you stop being regarded as a copy of something else. In this context, together with the deliberate effort to write a literature that is aesthetically autonomous, postcolonial writers have tried to make visible their appropriation of the coloniser's language by creatively manipulating the linguistic system, disregarding metropolitan usage.

Some of the marks of linguistic hybridity in postcolonial texts are the borrowing of words from local languages, mixing them with the inherited European language; another possibility is to write as if you were reproducing oral speech directly (the "oralisation" of written language) and to use different patterns of sentence structure that resemble the speech patterns of local languages. In any case, the aim of all these strategies is to claim room for an "intervention" on the part of current postcolonial cultures, changing the use of the European language from a process of simple assimilation to a process of hybridity. When analysing the selected texts, I will come back to these issues, and I will try to identify particular strategies used by the selected writers to negotiate their appropriation of a former European language.

Usually, the former colonial language has kept its urban, "Westernised" aura on postcolonial territory. During the colonial period, translation and bilinguism were essential steps to promote and establish an effective network of power, employing local citizens in the colonial bureaucratic apparatus. This meant that the education of colonial subjects was carried out in-between languages, where the European language stood as the means to have access to a colonial career. Hence, since the colonial era, the part of the population who tends to be more familiar with a European language is urban and has some formal education. Due to the continuous investment in European languages as part of the educational system, their influence is far from decreasing, especially because many postcolonial governments take the European language they have at hand as a factor of unification and cohesion between regional cultures.

The nativist reaction to this tendency has been to reject European languages thoroughly, because of their colonial precedence. This is, for example, the position of Ngugi wa Thiong'o[124], who defends that African literature should only be written in African languages, in order to assert and enrich African local cultures, and, secondly, to break with the unavoidable colonisation of the mind that comes with the acquisition of a language branded by a colonial, European and capitalist worldview. By opposition, African writers like Chinua Achebe[125] have no problems in defending the appropriation of European languages by African writers, "*speaking of African experience in a world-wide language*"[126]. Achebe is thinking of the gains in reaching an international audience as an advantage to promote the coveted self-assertion, in more effective terms than isolated practices.

From a political point of view, most governments of Africa think that to rejected the available European language is not a very practical move because it goes against a concrete state of affairs in which former European languages happen to be current, frequently providing the necessary *lingua franca* for translations between local languages. Besides, as I

[123] Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, "Of Colonies, Cannibals and Vernaculars", Post-colonial Translation, Theory and Practice, Routledge, New York, London, 1999: 124.
[124] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "The Language of African Literature", *in* Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: a Reader, New York, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994: 435-453.
[125] Chinua Achebe, "The African Writer and The English Language", *in op. cit.* Williams and Chrisman, 1994: 428-434.
[126] *Ibid,* 1994: 433.

just said, these “general languages” are a powerful force of integration and homogenisation, which is not only a practical argument but also strategically important to counter ethnic intra-national tension.

Part II

In the next stage of this research, I am going to use the categories and concepts discussed in part I, in relation to feminist theory and postcolonial literary criticism, to carry out an in depth analysis of three Indo-English novels written by women. This part of the research applies the discussed theoretical frames to the first of the terms in my comparative study (the three Indo-English case studies). The same procedure will be repeated in part III to deal with instances of Lusophone literature.

Apart from testing two powerful critical models, my ideological dialogue with the themes and arguments of each of the selected texts will enable me to assemble the suggested agendas to improve women's position in the represented patriarchies. Finally, I will discuss the represented postcolonial locations as politically charged contexts, critically represented by a committed literature that invites public awareness on a set of serious and urgent issues.

I call the selected novels "Indo-English"[127] because they are part of Indian literature, although they were originally written in English (these texts are not translations). In terms of form, this "bilingual" label is equally adequate: as a *genre*, the novel is, partially, a heritage of the establishment of British schools and colleges in India. However, the ancient cultural heritages of India, which created several of the regional literatures, are very much alive, shaping current writing in the subcontinent. For instance, the writer Nirmal Verma sees no contradiction between the themes of modern life and the (literary) traditions of India from where he gets inspiration to create a particular atmosphere and the cultural references to shape his point of view on the world[128]. Nevertheless, Verma concedes that "*La présence de ce patrimoine classique est beaucoup plus sensible chez les écrivains d'esprit traditionaliste et chez ceux qui sont en contact avec les populations rurales don't la vie quotidienne est imprégnée par les anciennes légends, les myths et les récits religieux*"[129]. On the contrary, he goes on to add, the influence of other European and Latin-American literatures reached India via the English language, in urban environments, which are more open to foreign influences.

On this subject, R. K. Dhawan[130] claims that the novel is a recent *genre* in India, consolidated during the nineteenth century. However, Dhawan expands the causes for the emergence of the new *genre* from the educational politics of British colonialism to the general influence of Western modernism. In fact, Dhawan considers the consolidation of the novel as a current literary form in India, the product of a process of cultural hybridity that mixes an imported narrative structure with Indian literary tradition, being the latter deeply shaped by philosophy, religion and poetry.

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[127] According to Aparna Dharwadker during the 1960s and 1970s, the "rather inelegant term 'Indo-Anglian", assumed forms such as "Indo-English", "Indian-English" and "Inglish" (!?) (1999: 161). I opted for a less creative version like "Indo-English". Aparna Dharwadker, "The Exercise of Memory and the Diasporisation of Anglophone Indian Fiction" *in* Arundhati Roy, the Novelist Extraordinary, R.K. Dhawan (ed.), Prestige Books, New Delhi, 1999.

[128] Jean Baptiste Para, "Tradition et Modernité - Entretien avec Nirmal Verma et Sunil Gangopadhyay", Littératures de L'Inde, 79 année, nº 864, Centre National du Livre, Paris, 2001.

[129] "The presence of this classical heritage is more visible among writers with a traditional mentality and among those that are in contact with rural people whose everyday life is embedded in ancient legends, myths and religious narratives." *Op. cit.* Littératures de L'Inde, 2001: 26.

[130] R.K. Dhawan, in "Indian Women Novelists", vol. I, Prestige, New Delhi, 1991.

Another critic who deals with the hybrid roots of the contemporary Indian novel is Meenakshi Mukherjee, who actually calls her book Twice Born Fiction[131] to underline the mixed, hybrid nature of modern Indian literature. According to Mukherjee, the Indo-English novel was one of the last to develop, in comparison to the writing of novels in other Indian languages. Mukherjee dates the impulse to start writing systematically in English around the 1930s, with the emergence of nationalist propaganda. The search for a wide pan-Indian audience encouraged authors to write in English, appropriating the novel as the best *genre* to promote political thought. After the Great War (1914-1918), there was an increase in the rate of publications, and the Indo-English component of the *genre* was definitively established. The writing of novels was used to promote the struggle for independence, and this commitment to political awareness steered the genre away from romantic historical narratives (closer to the influence of India's epic Vedas) to realism and social analysis. Eventually, when the canon of Indian literature was consolidated around the 50s and 60s, nationalism was the important topic to distinguish "real literature".

None of the two above mentioned critics goes too deep into the political implications attached to the teaching of English literature in India, though they recognise that through these colleges, literary influences (as is the case with the novel as a narrative form) were put out in the subcontinent. For that matter, I will take up the words of Gauri Viswanathan who has worked extensively on the subject, although here, I am going to rely only on her paper "*The Beginnings of English Literary Study in British India*"[132], which is enough for the point I want to make. For the British Raj, the political gains of making Indian higher classes familiar with British culture was a matter of turning them into anglophiles[133], willing to accept colonisation as an improvement on Indian civilisation, and thus, alienated from sharper political awareness and a strong sense of (independent) national identity. According to Viswanathan, "*humanistic functions traditionally associated with the study of literature – for example, the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking – are also essential to the process of socio-political control*"[134]. Since British education in India tried to promote representations of Western literary knowledge as objective, universal, and rational, it was easy to envisage that the promotion of such knowledge was meant to present British culture as good and wise, and consequently, as truly deserving the role of intellectual and moral leader of India. Together with military conquest and bureaucratic administration, culture was of key importance to gain, in a subtle way, the consent of Indian higher classes to accept British rule. The limit in the efficiency of this hegemonic strategy is that educated Indians soon saw through the English literary text as a "*surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state*"[135], which had no counterpart on standard political practice. Literature was not strong enough to hide from sight "*the sordid history of colonialist expropriation, material exploitation, and class and race oppression behind European world dominance*"[136]. Once this awareness was

[131] According to Meenakshi Mukherjee, the name "Twice Born" has a Hindu religious connotation. Brahmans are said to be born a second time when, after a series of rituals, they become entitled to full spiritual regeneration, attaining a superior purity in relation to other people. The gentle suggestion implied in the title is that twice born fiction would then be, a blessed, superior fiction.
Meenakshi Mukherjee, Twice Born Fiction, Heinemann, New Delhi, 1971

[132] Gauri Viswanathan, "The Beginnings of English Literary Study in British India", *in* The Post-colonial Studies Reader, Ascroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (eds.), Routledge, London, 1995, pages 431-438.

[133] On this topic, see Thomas Macaulay, "Minute on Indian Education", *in* The Post-colonial Studies Reader, Ascroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (eds.), Routledge, London, 1995, pages 428-430.

[134] *Op. cit.* Viswanathan, 1995: 431.

[135] *Ibid,* Viswanathan, 1995: 437.

[136] *Ibid,* Viswanathan, 1995: 428-436.

achieved, its literary expression marks the beginning of local postcolonial literatures, either Indo-English or in any other of the languages of the subcontinent.

In current India, Indo-English literature is a minor case among the flow of literary activity. This is an important point as a matter of intellectual awareness: the window postcolonial studies have on Indian literature, always addressed as a stronghold of postcolonial literary achievement, is but a pale reflection of the whole literary picture. Actually, Indo-English literature is read by 10% of the Indian literate population[137] (those who know English). The research carried out here will certainly not attempt to have any claim in describing the universe of a subcontinent where 1600 languages and dialects are spoken, though only sixty are formally taught at school. I will only focus on case studies from Indo-English women's writing, which is a way of saying that I am invoking cosier co-ordinates to place myself in this overwhelming universe. The roots of Indo-English literature, a section of modern Indian literature, start in Calcutta, the capital of the Raj, where Fort William College and the Calcutta Hindu College were built, respectively in 1800 and 1817, and, in 1818, the first public English library was opened. As a reflex of the nurturing impact of these institutions, the modern component of Bengali literature was one of the first to develop, becoming one of the most productive literatures of India (together with modern literature in Urdu) until the 1950s.

In postcolonial critical discussions of world literatures in English, Indo-English literature is a star case in The United Kingdom and America, where postcolonial critical models started being developed in the first place. Hence, India embodies a very clear postcolonial reference, more visible in the academy and in the media, than others. Consequently, this choice for Indian women writers as one of the elements in this comparative study seemed adequate, since a widely known case makes the grounds for a comparison clearer, moreover if the second element in this comparison is more obscure to the Anglophone world (as it happens with the postcolonial literature of Mozambique and Cape Verde, written in Portuguese).

Women writers represent a segment of contemporary Indian fiction, which is focused on the enlightenment, education and improvement of women. These writers have tried to encourage the assertion of feminine identity and self-esteem, while promoting social acceptance of a more complete and diverse set of social roles for women. The political and committed dimension of the modern Indian novel as a *genre* is completely taken up by women's writing, and it is embodied in the three selected novels that I am going to discuss in detail. However, the nationalist ideology which determined the consolidation of the *genre* as committed literature (around the 50s and 60s) has been replaced, or, at least expanded, by other struggles and issues which are currently more relevant to postcolonial India. For example, Nayantara Saghal writes about the Emergency Period (the first post-independence crisis of India as a nation-state under the leadership of Mrs. Gandhi) while Arundhati Roy addresses the negative effects of Anglophilia, the caste system and traditional patriarchies in current India; on her turn, Githa Hariharan deals with representation practices and symbolical constructions, claiming a women's tradition of story-telling as a form of resistance and subversion.

This discussion will run on two levels, according to the double critical frame exposed on part I. Some sections will be mostly concerned with postcolonial theory (sections 1, 3 and 5) and others with feminist criticism (sections 2, 4 and 6), thus proving the relevance of each of these critical frames, and also the surplus of insight to be gained with this fusion.

[137] *Op. cit.* Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, 1999: 11.

Nayantara Sahgal

II.1 Gin, Evening Parties and Cockney Accent

As Teresa Hubel pointed out in her clever analysis of the complicitous connection between writing activities and the consolidation of certain forms of power, both "*Rudyard Kipling and Jawaharlal Nehru (...) stake their claim to the ownership of India by the very act of writing about it*"[138]. Certainly, to link a colonial writer and the architect of India's self-definition as a social democracy would displease both, but the point here is the political implication of writing as the means to communicate one's project for the community, claiming knowledge and authority over it[139]. After the independence of India, in 1947, writers had the challenge to "stake their claim" on the newly born state, projecting their hopes, ideals and fears into it. Nayantara Sahgal certainly did her part.

Nayantara Sahgal is the most conventional case of committed writing among the three selected Indian novels, but her realist and chronologically linear novel is not the least interesting to read, when compared with the baroque creations by Arundhati Roy and Githa Hariharan.

The fact that Sahgal was a niece of Jawaharlal Nehru had an influence on her interest in politics and on her firm commitment to the socialist ideal for India. That she is a brilliant writer is a lucky coincidence for someone who was in a privileged position to look at political developments in post-independence India.

Rich Like Us (1983) is a daring novel about the Emergency Period (1975-77), a controversial moment in Indian politics. Sahgal's open disagreement with the Emergency regime of Mrs. Gandhi (actually, her first cousin) is partially framed by the fact that Sahgal, a committed socialist, is writing against the capitalist invasion of India. Another point that opposes Sahgal to the Emergency regime is the subtle transformation of the latter into a clear dictatorship, the excesses of which Sahgal intends to denounce. This political tension is translated into a fictional argument constructed around a sense of deep crisis, which is the way Sahgal represents the 1970s India.

In an economic essay on "India's Public Sector", Baldev Raj Nayar[140] provides important background to understand what socialism meant in the Indian political scene of the eighties, around the time Sahgal wrote her novel. After independence, Nehru dominated India, and he saw socialism as the only way to fight back both imperialism and mass poverty. Nehru's firm commitment to socialism left an ideological legacy that defined any opening to foreign investment as a "*betrayal*" of the national project for India, a "*sell-out to monopolies*"[141]. When Sahgal writes Rich Like Us, in 1983, Mrs. Gandhi has returned to power for a second term, and it is in this second term that she really parts with socialist views for Indian economy. While writing about the Emergency as a dictatorial regime disguised of democracy, Sahgal is criticising the beginning of the capitalist turn in Mrs. Gandhi policies, and beyond that, her abusive behaviour in 1975-77, regarding censorship, imprisonment of political dissidents and massive sterilisation campaigns. At the time of its release, this novel must have been quite a polemic text. Currently, it still shines for its style and intelligent reading of India's postcolonial politics.

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[138] Teresa Hubel, Whose India? Leicester University Press, London, 1996:1.

[139] Teresa Hubel means the appropriation of India as a territory of the imagination disputed by colonial/imperialist writers, reformers and nationalists: "whoever defines India, whoever speaks to and for its people, and whoever imagines its destiny with the hope of determining its future can be said to have a part in it." *Op. cit.* 1996: 1.

[140] Baldev Raj Nayar, chapter 3, *in* India Briefing 1992, Leonard A. Gordon; Philip Oldenburg, (eds.), published in Association with the Asia Society, Westview Press, Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford, 1992.

[141] *Op. cit.* Nayar, 1992: 77.

The Emergency period started overnight. On June 12, 1975, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was found guilty of charges of campaign malpractice by Allahabad's High Court. This conviction prevented Mrs. Gandhi of "*running for or holding any elective office for a period of six years*"[142]. Politicians and newspapers demanded that Indira gave up her post as Prime Minister, organising a huge demonstration against her on the 25th June. In that same dawn, on the 26th, Indira's elite force arrested the opposition political leaders. Hours later the Prime Minister proclaimed the state of national emergency, which included the suspension of basic civil rights and tight censorship over press. Thousands of students, journalists, lawyers and activists were summarily arrested. By the twenty-eight and the twenty-ninth amendments to the Constitution, Indira retroactively exonerated herself from impending legal charges, declaring this amendment immune to Supreme Court review. This autocratic behaviour revealed Indira Gandhi as the dictator she was, and a climate of fear and subservience determined the behaviour of those who wanted to stick to power and remain away from prison. Favour and nepotism replaced normal democratic procedures and caste aristocracies and regional identities took precedence over citizen's rights and legal arrangements. This is the political background for Nayantara Sahgal's novel, framing the representation of political violence as a very real issue. For the local intelligentsia, who had invested in a socialist project for India, the Emergency meant bitter disappointment and a sense of hopelessness.

Sahgal wrote a book about her cousin Indira Gandhi's rule over India[143] in such a way that makes clear their divergence of views concerning what the nation should be. It is worth quoting the introduction to Sahgal's book on Indira Gandhi, to settle their divergence in point of view, as Sahgal herself phrases it:

> "The essence of Indian politics before her (Indira's) time had been diversity of opinion, institutes and channels for its expression, and a wholehearted acceptance of the nurture of these diverse strands as essential to the democratic faith and system (…). With Mrs. Gandhi, this atmosphere, along with the political structures it involved, the climate of debate and dissent it had encouraged (…) began to be eroded. A simple formula of for-and-against, either-or replaced it."
>
> (1978: 1)

Through her novels, Nayantara Saghal writes her own project for the postcolonial life of the subcontinent, "writing" the nation in the sense Homi Bhabha meant it, that is to say, as the promotion of a set of pedagogic discourses defining collective identity. According to Indira Gandhi's formula you are expected to conform. In contrast to such "*simple formulas*" as the ones defended by Indira Gandhi's dictatorship, the plot of Rich like Us contains different points of view, and Sahgal constructs characters both for and against the Emergency. Through their disagreement a rich and complex picture of the Emergency Regime is composed.

The novel opens with a third person narrator following the thoughts of Mr. Newman, the Western businessman attending a dinner party offered by his new Indian partner, Devikins (Dev). Within the structure of the novel, it is logic to start with this "gentlemen's agreement" for the understanding between Mr. Newman and Devikins (some kind of illegal and extremely profitable business) embodies everything Saghal is writing against. The title

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[142] Wolpert, Stanley A., A New History of India, Oxford University Press, London and New York, 1989. All historical references were taken from this author. See also Burton Stein, A History of India, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1998.

[143] Nayantara Sahgal, Indira Gandhi's Emergence and Style, Carolina Academic Press, Durham, North Carolina, 1978.

of the novel itself is explained in two related passages connected to Mr. Newman's impressions of India. In the first of these passages, the reader follows his point of view of "happiness as profit", which is presented as the standard Western mentality:

> "The first thing those local elites do - not to mention their presidents or generals or whoever is at the top - is to get themselves the biggest, latest model foreign cars', he had been told in his briefing before the trip, 'and why not? We like the way we live. We can't blame them for wanting to live like us. Besides, it's what makes them ready to buy what we have to sell". (1987: 9) [144]

This paternalising, profit minded perspective expressed by Mr. Newman frames the attitude of India's postcolonial government under the Emergency as a late case of "Western-philia", where the ideology of the ruling class is a replica of colonial assimilation: they just want to be "Rich Like the West". The problem is that in order to allow a few to be rich like the West, ruling elites seem poised to sacrifice the rest of India, and Sahgal is not willing to go along with this project. She stakes her claim on another kind of India, shaped by a socialist project adapted to the realities of the subcontinent. The novel Rich Like Us is Sahgal's way of "writing the nation" composing, through her critique of capitalism, a resisting, anti-imperial argument against unmonitored foreign investment. Thus, the protective border Saghal envisages around India, is not necessarily aimed against "foreigners", but rather directed against corrupted political elites (home colonialism) without whose support, aggressive neo-colonial practices would never take hold of the subcontinent.

Devikins, a caricature of the new capitalist entrepreneurs, is totally lacking in character and skills, and were it not for his connections "at the top" he would hardly deserve being taken seriously. However, protected as he is by powerful people, he becomes very dangerous for those around him and under him, exactly as dictatorships are hurtful for the people living under them.

The novel is more or less a chronologically linear narrative, concerning Devikins' affairs with Mr. Newman, regarding the construction of the Happyola factory. The irony in the echo of "Coca-cola" suggests America as the partner of the Emergency project, and the suggestion is consolidated by the fact that Happyola is also a fizzy drink. The production of the fizzy drink is a cover up for an underground warehouse to hide imported car parts and engines. The connection between illegal business and the complicity of the government is established on two grounds: Devikins becomes extremely powerful and successful the moment he gets "*a contact in politics*", materialized in Ravi, the bureaucrat. Secondly, there are scattered references in the text to the pet project of Mrs. Ghandi's son, which is to build a car with "all India" components[145]... The novel is a narrative of the unclear and surprising way this business is put together and its effect on a handful of characters. In order to make her pro-socialist, anti-capitalist point, Sahgal tries to inscribe in her text the human cost, as discarded side effects, of business "at the top". Hence my claim that Sahgal portrays India as a state under a sort of home colonialism, whose freedom and borders still are at stake.

According to Devikins, the villain in the plot of Sahgal's novel, Emergency certainly "*is good for business at the top*"[146], since "*troublemakers are in jail*" and "*an opposition is something we* (Indian elite businessmen) *never needed*". This self-confident, "I know my business" rhetoric is in total contradiction with Dev's real abilities and qualifications. Ironically, through flash-backs (introduced in the narrative as memories of Devikins' wife,

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[144] I am using the page numbers for the Sceptre edition, British Library, 1987.

[145] Actually, this fact is a sort of national joke in India for it is widely known that Indira Gandhi's son, Sanjay Gandhi, was the top manager of India's automobile manufacturing industry…which took five years to produce its first car (*op. cit*, Wolpert, 1989: 394).

[146] *Op. cit.* Sahgal, 1987: 10.

Nishi), we learn that Devikins is totally incompetent as a manager, letting the standards of quality drop and being despotic towards his workers. In fact, it has been Nishi who keeps trying to save the family business (RoseRam Fashions), which Devikins has inherited from his father, and which Dev dismisses as not profitable enough. As a type of the modern Indian entrepreneur, Dev wants nothing less than being "really" rich, in the Western, capitalist way, so, he disregards small profit, hard working, traditional manufacturing industries. In stark contract with this mentality, the defence of traditional Indian business is, actually, an important sub-theme in the novel, being one of its anti-neo-imperial arguments.

In comparison to the kind of postcolonial literature written at the time of the independence struggle, the postcolonial literature written a few decades after independence, as is the case of Rich Like Us, has this feature: its main anti-colonial arguments no longer are directed at the (now, absent) colonial state. Through social criticism, second generation post-independence writers are rather resisting the current corruption of the independence ideals and the behaviour of their governments. This is a line of argument that I encountered in other postcolonial novels, for instance from Mozambique and Angola. What is at stake is the accusation, formulated by a critical, committed writer, that India was being managed for the advantage of a capitalist class, breaking with the direction and the ideals of Nehru, who was determined to ease poverty in India. Through the socio-political analysis of India offered in the plot of the novel, this study encountered a new role for postcolonial literature and settled one of the forms of evolution in these new literatures, as more mature social criticism replaces the nativist or nationalist euphoria of the literature written to support the independence struggle. This new function, gives new breath to the range and relevance of such a critical frame as the postcolonial one.

The motto of Sahgal's villain, Dev (Devikins) the arch-capitalist, is that "business is business". This matter-of-fact attitude, justifying corruption or irresponsibility as a matter of necessity, works as an excuse to disregard the negative social consequences of profitable business, as, for instance, when the perfect piece of land to build the Happyola factory happened to be a "*rural belt* **requisitioned** *from the villagers*"[147]. The business agreement settled during the evening party (first scene) sets the tone for the rest of the novel, for a competition is established between two rival orders of values, namely, profit and humanism. The gravity of the choices impending from the outcome of this contest gives the novel its depth and relevance.

Aesthetically, Sahgal balances her quite blatant political criticism with literary elements that make of the novel an interesting artistic piece, thoroughly weaved with structural rigour and deep sensitivity. Probably, the greatest asset of the text in terms of style is the caustic irony in Sahgal's tone, which makes the text thoroughly enjoyable and effective, while the risk of sounding moralistic or too overtly pedagogic (the problem of texts too dependent on political propaganda) is avoided. Another striking element in Sahgal's narrative technique is the masterful construction of complex, three-dimensional characters. Devikins is the only type/typical character, and that is a statement in itself concerning the superficiality and banality of the elite businessmen. Even Devikins' closest ally, Ravi, the bureaucrat, is much more developed as a sort of anti-hero, and he is kindly given centre stage from the first scene. Sahgal does not refrain her admiration for his skills:

"Across the table from him (Mr. Newman) sat the latecomer, a bureaucrat of importance in the current set-up (...). Experience had taught Newman that key figures were never to be underestimated. They had to excel at something, if only at the art of survival through changing times,

[147] *Ibid,* Sahgal, 1987: 15.

directing the beheading of queens, the guillotining of aristocrats and entire revolutions, and when the pendulum swung, ushering in imperial pomp and dynasty with the same superb savoir-faire."

(1987: 15)

Ravi supports Mrs. Gandhi ("*imperial pomp and dynasty*") with the same vigour he had displayed in his commitment to Marxism while studying in England. He is a key piece in the chess game opposing socialism and capitalism, and his choice of allies will have direct consequences for the other characters in the novel, a fact that makes him directly responsible for unfortunate events. This is a stern point. Yet, the plot of the novel includes a moment when Ravi is given the choice between helping friends (Sonali and Rose) and keeping his state of grace in the eyes of "the top". At this stage, Ravi chooses to risk (at least) a delay in his career, and this choice partially redeems him. Such episode is relevant because it inscribes the possibility of a halt in the complacence or complicity of bureaucrats towards a regime that is becoming destructive and damaging.

I take Ravi as the best example of Sahgal's ability to construct complex and enticing characters because he is not one of the main characters, he features in few scenes, and his "presence" is remarkably strong, exactly as it had to be, since Ravi embodies the presence/absence of the regime, always discretely, transparently "there". Though Ravi is a sort of cynical mastermind, shifting his allegiance from socialism to capitalism so as to adjust to the dictatorship, Sahgal manages to make him equally seductive and surprising for the reader, who will certainly fall for his/Sahgal's "*superb savoir-faire*".

Narrative control is equally very clear in the way Sahgal unfolds her plot. This is a well-told tale, albeit along traditional lines in terms of narrative structure. The way the first scene holds all the sub-themes developed later, is evidence of this structural control and narrative skills. For example, in order to illustrate the problematic situation of India during the Emergency, Sahgal introduces, still in chapter one, two essential elements in the construction of her resistant/anti-imperial argument: the socially concerned citizen and, secondly, a tradition of respectable businessmen who traded with the West without "selling India" (that is why I said above that Sahgal is not defending the economic isolation of India). This last argument shows Sahgal leaves room for private initiative and individual entrepreneurs, but respecting "India's ways". First, let us consider the socially concerned citizen.

In chapter one, in the evening party offered by Devikins, the reader is introduced to Rose, old, "*hair dyed a peremptory scarlet*", one too many glasses of gin, a strong cockney accent, the reigning "mother-in-law", since she is the second wife of Devikins' father. A few months before this evening-party, Ram had a stroke, and he has been in a sort of coma, leaving Devikins to ruin the family business. Rose's position as reigning "mother-in-law" is uncertain. The moment Ram dies she is not welcomed in her own household, without his protection. Devikins is the son of Ram's first wife, and he never forgave his father his preference for Rose. To make things worse, Rose has got an inconvenient sense of justice and a natural born talent to ask the questions no self-respecting capitalist wants to hear...

"Don't long-time-ago me. What you call enter-prenner-ship now, or however you pronounce it, is one minute you're nothing and the next minute you're an enter-prenner and a bloomin' millionaire. Where's all the money come from all of a sudden, I'd like to know? I like maharajas better.'

'Really, Mummy, what's the connection?'

'Least you knew where the loot came from."

(1987: 12)

Certainly, not the best comment while sitting at the table that celebrates a dubious agreement between a bureaucrat, a foreign businessman and a ruined misanthrope.

Rose's comments and questions are very important because her point of view voices the side effects of the business agreements being settled. Note for instance that it is Rose who leads the reader to consider what happened to the poor people who were living in the piece of land where the Happyola factory is going to be built. The fact that Rose has got a working class origin is presented as the factor making her instinctively aware of the point of view of the underprivileged, turning Rose in one of the most generous and aware characters in the social world represented by Sahgal. Furthermore, Rose's friendship with both the crippled beggar and Kumar (her servant) constitute unwavering evidence of Rose's ability to connect to people outside of the privileged social circle she is moving in, after her marriage to Ram. This awareness and concern make Rose stand in a clear contrast to the rest of her family: her step-son Devikins and his wife Nishi.

Rose not only points out the social cost of business at the top but she also introduces the second point in Sahgal's argument against capitalism, namely, the existence of successful "Indian" ways of making business. Rose's memories contain an alternative (masculine) role model to handle business and profit, in the way Ram (her husband), and in his father before him, did:

> "Take my father-in-law. 'E never saw a contract in 'is life. Couldn't speak a word of English. Wouldn't even have chairs and tables in 'is part of the 'ouse. 'E was a villager, that's wot 'e was, and that's wot'e stayed till 'is dying day. Anyone who wanted to do business with 'im came and sat on the floor, English people an' all, and did it 'is way."
>
> (1987: 13)

The self-assertion of India's identity implies a denial of India's colonial servitude to the West, hence, the importance of keeping Indian ways to create a frame of identity outside of the ex-colonisers ("*English people and all*") dismissive views of India's habits. This is a reversal of the typical colonial situation in which educated Indians wanted to be replicas of their British colonisers. By wearing only home-spun cloth, Gandhi was making visual a political idea, embodying it. The point was that India's elite had to return to Indian values. The necessary reversal of colonial Anglophilia (which in theoretical terms amounts to the revisionist, deconstructive dimension of postcolonial literatures) was the spirit of the "Swadeshi movement" started by Ghandi, the aim of which was to "*Indianize India*"[148], promoting "Indian made", buying "Indian", and boycotting British products. While instigating India's self-sufficiency, Ghandi was asserting an Indian national identity, creating distinctive borders between British citizens and colonised citizens. In short, Gandhi was creating the idea of Indian nation-hood in the heads of people. Significantly, Sahgal represents this return to "Indian culture" as a central project in the vision and hopes of the young (socialist) politicians of post-independence India: they were going to start a "*new tradition*"[149].

In current (nineties) Indian politics, this revival of Indian traditions is more identified with right wing, fundamentalist discourses concerning the assertion of regional and caste identities. But at the time (seventies), the echo of the Ghandi/Nehru project still had the leftist hedge inserted by the latter. Before independence, all the nationalist rhetoric leading to the demand of "self-rule" was heavily dependent on "Indian ways", Hinduism and Hindu life style, epitomised in Gandhi's clothes and austere life-style. The excessive focus on

[148] *Ibid,* Sahgal 1987: 25.
[149] *Ibid,* Sahgal 1987: 28.

Hindu culture was one of the reasons for the alienation of Muslim sectors of society, which led to the traumatic process of Partition and the birth of Pakistan.

The Emergency certainly shattered the socialist hopes of a part of the local intelligentsia when they realised that a different kind of "tradition" was about to be implemented by the Indian state. This perspective of the emergency is focalised by Sonali, the first person narrator, with whom Sahgal clearly identifies. Most of the narrative actually turns around Rose, Sonali, and their friendship, while the lives of these and other minor characters are set against the background of the Emergency as a crisis period.

Sonali, a socialist, secular minded character (and high caste, Kashmir, Brahmin) is the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Industry and she takes her job very seriously. According to Indian laws, she rejects the proposal to build a factory to produce a "*fizzy drink called Happyola*"[150]. The reader knows it is Devikins' factory, and that to produce the drink is not its real aim, but Sonali is not aware of the undercover bonds between this project and "the top" power. Since the project does not fit the directives of the Indian state she rejects it. A few days later, an amazed Sonali is suddenly fired, and replaced by no other than Ravi, the bureaucrat. Only when she is dismissed does Sonali have the courage to look back and take in the discrete dictatorship that is actually ruling the world's "*biggest democracy*". For Sonali this is the moment to wake up from the "*conscientiousness of civil servants*" which "*knows no bounds*"[151]. Her whole socialist ideology is shaken down, as a volatile dream, and the shock is made all the worse by temporary sickness and depression. By coincidence, Sonali, who had been dismissed for rejecting the Happyola project, ends up in the foundation stone ceremony with Rose. It is through Rose that Sonali suspects something else is going to be produced in the factory...

As a socialist herself, Sahgal narrates through Sonali her own cynical awakening for the reality of Indian politics. In the structure of the novel, the moment Sonali loses her innocent belief in the prominence of socialist ideals for the Indian state is a key scene. That is the moment she diagnosis the coming crisis in the post-independence Indian state as the deviance from an ideal agenda, previously set at the independence moment. Against this ideal, the Emergency features as a post-utopia regime, with no room for committed intellectuals like Sonali/Sahgal.

Like Rose, Sonali is a socially concerned citizen, with the ability to connect to other people outside of her privileged family/caste circle. The difference between the two of them is that Sonali takes in the crisis of the Indian state on another scale, as it fits her educated political awareness.

Sahgal represents the Emergency as a faceless, omnipresent power that inspires fear and awe (if you focus on the amazing possibilities open to those who change unconditional support for power and favour). "Madame" has a "club" of followers (that is how Sahgal puts it) who will get rich, but who have to stop thinking critically, actively, and morally. The dinner party at Kiran's home (Sonali's sister) is a typical example of this uneasiness with power. Several members of the "club" are gathered there, all of them with good prospects, if they do not dare to raise opposition or criticism. This makes conversation artificial and empty. Kiran carefully speaks, exclusively, of her cuisine and the ingredients that were used in the meal, while the professor, the editor and the lawyer (significantly nameless, for it is their function in the "club" that counts) only praise the regime, leaving Sonali to consider that "*the room should have swooped and spun with contradictions*"[152] but, India was ruled

[150] *Ibid,* Sahgal 1987: 30.
[151] *Ibid,* Sahgal 1987: 58.
[152] *Ibid*, Sahgal 1987: 94.

by a "*Mother Tsar whose ignorant little peasants were quite happy with mother's blessing*"[153].

One of the "little peasants" is Nishi, Devikin's wife, a contrasting character to oppose to Sonali and Rose. She is more than willing to do everything to please "the top", and, consequently, push her husband ahead. Nishi is thoroughly committed to pro-emergency activism since this will grant her social status and *Madame*'s sympathy. She wants to send her servants to sterilisation campaigns, take part in organised visits to display popular support for *Madame* and organise the movement of the "*New Entrepreneur's Wives' and their Twenty Point Programme*[154]. Underneath this very opportunistic attitude, Nishi turns out a more complex character than the simple "snobbish doll" she looks. A powerful fear moves her, fear for her father, who stubbornly wants to keep his independent mind and his political distance from the regime. Nishi is convinced that the regime will protect her from the poverty she knew in her childhood, and, through her husband's success and money, she will be able to protect her father from himself.

KL, Nishi's father, is another piece of evidence concerning Sahgal's very special talent to design characters. Old, tired, half indifferent to politics, half ironical to the banalities of life, KL sees his shop, where he sells bathroom equipment, as a bitter joke on Gandhi's supposed concern for untouchables. For centuries, untouchables have been cleaning toilets and other people's dirty laundry as it fits their polluted caste. Flush toilets are KL's personal revenge on the caste system and the definition of untouchability. The moment modern toilets step in, the activity that defines the occupation, and hence the polluted identity of untouchables, disappears automatically. Through this philosophical view of his toilets, KL is underlining how easy it would be to finish caste traditions and their definition of social borders if high caste people really wanted to change social differences in India. In spite of his sharp perception of the ironies of politics, KL is not an activist until the moment he is arrested and mistreated in jail, without any formal accusation. He so firmly believes in his innocence that he thinks his imprisonment is a mistake that will soon be clarified. However, a young, wounded, college student his brought to his cell. He had been summarily arrested and thrown into KL's cell, probably with a broken leg. The solidarity KL feels for his young companion awakes in him a new fighting spirit.

This part of the plot, when the reader is given a view of how the Emergency worked, arresting people without a formal accusation or proper trial, often with physical violence showered upon demonstrators, is a good piece of evidence to show how literature, in spite of being fiction, can open new doors to search for information from a more aware starting point, sensitive to possible facts, less innocent.

When Nishi manages to get KL's release from jail through her government contacts, KL suddenly breaks the logic of these repressive politics, becoming, at this moment, a model of fighting spirit for the readers. Instead of going home, thankful for being released and promising himself never to mess with politics again, he makes an unexpected choice:

> "He couldn't go home with them as there was a young prisoner with him in his cell whom he couldn't leave. Nishi would have to get the boy released as well and they would leave together. Rose discovered it was a student with a leg that may or may not be fractured but needed immediate medical attention. We'll make arrangements for him, she offered with a confidence she was far from feeling, but KL made no move to get up. I have this fear, he patiently explained, of the gates clanging shut behind me and the boy remaining here, perhaps for years, so I can't go till he can come too."
>
> (1987: 240)

[153] *Ibid,* Sahgal 1987: 95.
[154] *Ibid,* Sahgal 1987: 86.

The "illumination" that strikes KL in his prison cell, and makes him a heroic, exemplary model, becomes a firm commitment to teach and train younger people politically, which means that it is precisely the measure of repression KL was exposed to in the process of his imprisonment, that made a political activist of him. At the end of the novel, his situation is not solved yet, but Nishi will certainly not give up, and the release order has meant an immediate improvement on the treatment of these two prisoners, with obvious connections "to the top".

While Sonali is the reader's guide to the shift from democracy to dictatorship in Indira's government, the student and KL are important characters to expose the repressive facets of the emergency, and its damaging impact on people's lives. KL is the first character in the plot to reach a resistant, fighting awareness, though Rose and Sonali have enough critical spirit to become ones.

I have no claim in making Sahgal stand for actual history, but I can assess her view of history implied in her representation of events. In the above interpretation of the novel, I have been looking at plot and characters as terms in the construction of a perspective that frames a set of ideological arguments.

In relation to the category of national self-definition, as a set of discourses to define a collective project for the post-independence state, Sahgal's text suggests that the future of India should be an Indian version of socialism, combining Marxist ideologies and Indian production realities like the traditional manufacture of luxurious cloth, on small scale enterprises, run by a joint family.

The novel presents resistance to neo-imperialism/ globalisation as the main challenge to keep the government of India focused on the need to improve the living conditions of its own people. According to Sahgal, the degree of this resistance diminished dangerously during the Emergency period, a political tendency that led Sahgal to write a novel on the lack of responsibility of Indian businessmen and changing policies, since these are offering India to foreign exploitation. Sahgal leaves the reader wondering if India is reverting to a sort of colonised state, exploited for the advantage of a few, who exchange allegiance to foreign powers for personal wealth and privilege. While formal colonial history is, in this novel, a problem of the past, neo-colonial influence and home colonialism are current problems, taking a greater hold of India. As a form of resistance to this state of affairs, Sahgal promotes individual responsibility in the project of asserting Indian independence from international capitalism.

Rich Like Us provides several representations of cultural identity, as one of the strategies to make more concrete the above mentioned "Indian ways". However, there is a tension between a global socialist project for India and the defence of its traditional communal identities. The serious problem with the latter is that the self-assertion of India as a nation is cancelled by its fragmentation across regional identities, since caste and regional references take precedence over national or state issues. Next to kin, the community overlaps caste and ethnicity, invoking a territory and a history, a language, food habits, dressing codes, marriage possibilities, friendship and preferable business contacts. All these distinctive codes and borders define a real "club" to protect local aristocracies and the hierarchies under these. Hence, Sahgal would contradict herself if she were to endorse these privileged caste/communal identities at the same time that she advocates the importance of a national socialist project for India.

Being the writer she is, Sahgal found ways to go around these apparently irreconcilable aspects. One of them is to represent communal identities in an ironic, light

tone, as if not taking them seriously, while she is not really confronting them either. The obsession with the assertion of cultural identity and other markers of difference is portrayed as an exaggerated snobbery. Nevertheless, the sense of pride and belonging implied in the recognition of one's extended community prevents the development of a functional sense of citizenship which is necessary to inculcate a stronger commitment to the Indian state, and, according to Sahgal, to socialism. Thus, state and community are rival frames to define one's collective identity. Under the Emergency this contradiction is settled because being a Kashmir Brahmin means to be entitled to rule the state, making of the state one of the privileged properties of this aristocratic community.

Secondly, as a new concept to articulate Indian identities, Sahgal clearly opposes traditional communal references to a cosmopolitan India, embodied in Sonali, Rose and Ram, the new identity models for the modernisation of India on a competitive, but socially responsible, basis. The cosmopolitan identities she constructs are high class, however, these new subjectivities are hybrid products, of a particular type, and it is through this hybridism that Sahgal draws her path between self-assertion, nationalism and socialism. In order to illustrate this point, let's discuss... love triangles.

The love triangle Ram, Rose and Marcella is an important representation of hybridism, in which a cosmopolitan education brings together educated people in a way that deconstructs and revises colonial representations of white superiority.

Ram is a cultivated, refined Hindu, dealing with European imported articles, and later on (after Swadeshi and the "buy Indian" turn), exporting India's luxury manufactured cloth. When visiting England on a business trip, Ram meets Rose. A seduction game ends up in a more serious infatuation and Ram brings Rose to India with him and marries her.

Rose's life in India is a long process of partial assimilation, confusion and undecidabilities while Rose tries to manage a functional fusion between being British and Indian, white and Eastern. By the end of her life, Rose realises that even in her small everyday gestures a part of her has learned to be a Hindu wife: "*The last resistance of Rose's English legs eased and she found herself as relaxed as a yogi in her cross-legged posture, her thoughts beautifully clear*."[155]. More important evidence of Rose's integration in India is her friendship with Mona, the first wife, after years of rivalry. Their joint search for a bride for Dev, and Mona's mourning over Rose's parents (killed in an air raid during world war II) are two sensitive episodes, masterfully selected by Sahgal to illustrate the depth of their bond. The evolution in the process of Rose's adaptation and integration in her Hindu family is an example of possible negotiations between hybrid identities.

This subject is quite important in postcolonial literature, and has emerged more clearly after the independence struggle. In a first moment of self-assertion, the representations of the nation tended to project purist, homogenising images, denying internal fragmentation and multicultural rivalry. Eventually, history made these factors catch up with postcolonial self-awareness, unfortunately through civil wars in several countries of Africa and through riots and post-Partition[156] trauma in India. As a reaction to this rivalry and fragmentation, Sahgal presents love affairs, friendship, and intimate scenes from everyday life as evidence of the fact that people from different communities have taken pleasure in being together. This pacific co-existence is expected to cause reflection on the necessity of violence.

The first example of an attachment that transgresses communal and national rivalries concerns British, gorgeous, working-class Rose who marries high caste, educated, Hindu,

[155] *Ibid,* Sahgal: 1987: 248.
[156] Partition is the historical name referring to the division of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan.

Ram. The difference in their education turns out a source of pleasant teasing and, on a metaphorical level it also amounts to a revision of British colonial and racist discourses. Ram's education and refinement deconstructs the myth of white superiority, because it is education, and not race, that frames this difference between them. The reversal in colonial prejudice becomes more obvious since it is Ram who corrects Rose's English:

> "'Ow d'you mean, court me proper?
> '-ly,' he corrected.
> 'Oh you, teaching me my own language. What'll you be teaching me next?"
>
> (1987: 41)

Since Rose learns Hindu ways and Ram is constantly quoting Western cultural references from the Greeks to Henry VIII's table manners, Sahgal represents in these characters the possibility of an effective hybridism. While Rose is important to deconstruct colonial racism, Ram is an example of cosmopolitanism, and neither a British education nor a British wife did make of him "less Hindu"...

Sahgal thus surpasses race through education, and adjusts tradition to pragmatic politics, cutting short both colonial discourses and their reversal, sectarian obsessions (a sort of nativism). It is this same pragmatism, in the hands of socially responsible citizens that Sahgal envisages for India, parting with other forms of racial and caste allegiance in so far as these interfere with the best organisation of the Indian state.

However, there is a point in which her anti-colonial, pragmatic position is not tenable: Sahgal does not contain the inscription of a certain amount of Anglophilia and class snobbery in the construction of Marcella, Ram's great love. In this case, the characters' class affinities bring them naturally together, and working class Rose realises she cannot compete with a love that "is meant to be". Because of Marcella, the class difference between Rose and Ram eventually becomes a site of tension, which they only handle because of Marcela's departure and Rose's determined choice to stick to her Indian life.

The difference between Anglophilia and hybrid cosmopolitanism is, in my interpretation of this text, a matter of degree. Both Ram and Marcella are cultural hybrids, mutually fascinated by each other's world, but, the representation of Marcella as the perfect example of "*the civilization that had produced her, matchless in the Western world for its unbroken continuity*"[157] goes to the extent of an awed fascination for British culture. That is why Marcella, as an embodiment of British culture and history has to be a "larger than life" character, actually, a sort of mythical Guenevere:

> "Her face was the face on tapestries it took months to embroider in the Middle Ages. Its features had a clarity and purity human features don't often retain. All it needed was the medieval gown and headdress, sleek hounds and horses, chivalrous attendants and a flower-strewn foreground to make it a priceless Gothic heirloom."
>
> (1987: 262)

On the contrary, when speaking of certain aspects of Indian culture, Sahgal seems to suspend her defense of "Indian ways", suggesting that some aspects of dominant Indian mentalities should be reformed:

> "But why did you have to talk such rot about many-armed goddesses?' I said.

[157] *Op. cit.* Sahgal 1987: 264.

'Populism means using symbols the people understand. What's wrong with it?'
'And her father, and her son, a regular Holy Trinity?'
He shrugged impatiently. 'Why not? We believe in Family.'
'We believe in sati too. We've got to stop believing in certain things."

(1987: 173)

"'We're doomed for reasons like Rama's cruelty. We revere the Ramayana and worship a man who turned his wife out alone and pregnant into the forest. Not even ordeal by fire, proving her purity saved her. How am I supposed to know what's right for me to do - whose "side" I am on, as Rose says - if even what we worship needs second thoughts?"

(1987: 67)

Sahgal's defence of hybridism and reformed traditions as alternative elements to reconstruct a sense of collective identity in postcolonial India is meant to overcome India's internal fragmentation across a diversity of communities. This point is made most clearly in a small episode where the co-existence of Muslim and Hindu identities is represented through the friendship between two men. Even the physical description of Ram and Zafar makes them mixed and inter-changeable.

"What could possibly pry them apart? They could be blood brothers, she thought, tall and aquiline, unhurried, unhurriable, handsome, conceited, lovable and insufferable in all the same ways. (…) If Ram was a Muslimised Hindu, Zafar was a Hinduised Muslim. So what was all the shouting about?"

(1987: 72).

This question has got serious political implications since communal rivalry between Hindus and Muslims has repeatedly led to riots and bloodshed, especially at the time of the traumatic partition of India and Pakistan, in 1947. Jinnah, the ideologue of Pakistan, claimed that Hindus and Muslims belonged to two different religions, had different social customs, different philosophies and cultures, rarely mixed or intermarried and, undeniably, constituted two nations. His party, the Muslim League, welcomed the idea of a Muslim nation, and it is because of this lobby that, before independence from British rule, the one-nation or two-nation (partition) possibilities became the vortex of polemic political debate and social unrest. In fact, communal rhetoric touched on highly emotional issues, and, in the final year of the British Raj, Hindu and Muslim civil populations killed each other on the streets of the main Indian cities in such numbers that one can call it an "unofficial" civil war.

Sahgal addresses these painful memories in her novel, and she clearly states her disagreement with Partition. She sees it as an unnecessary trauma, affecting the lives of thousands of people who were displaced, leaving behind the gains and projects of a lifetime (not to mention those that were killed in riots along the border line). Sahgal cannot accept the cost of partition for common people (for instance for the character KL, in his shop, trying to earn a living after having lost his entire possessions back on what became "*another country*"), on behalf of an unsustainable rivalry that she completely erases from her representation of India[158]. Instead, she inserts in her text, scenes of friendship and unity between the two communities. Together with Ram and Zafar's friendship, an important detail to assert the possibility of unity, already at the stage of the struggle for independence, was the routine at Lalaji's[159] prayer meetings to support Indian independence: he read pieces

[158] In the nineties, news of communal violence still is frequent and horrifying. On this subject see "In Defence of the Fragment" by Gyanendra Pandey, *in Representations*, University of California Press, number 37, 1992.
[159] This character was Rose's old father-in-law, the father of Ram.

from the Gita, the Koran and the Bible. By mentioning this wise and eclectic attitude, Sahgal is, once more, signalling the existence of better ways to share the subcontinent among different communities. This respect for diversity is in total contrast with the spirit of the dictatorship.

Above, I said that there were two passages that explained the title of the novel. The second one will be useful to close this sketch of the postcolonial arguments in Rich Like Us. When Mr. Newman, the Western businessman, drives home after the evening-party just offered him, he almost runs over a beggar, a crippled, skinny figure looking "*more like an insect than a human being*". He breaks, frantically. Inside the stopped car, for the first time, Mr. Newman questions the human price India may be paying "to be rich":

> "If they'd do like we do, they'd be rich like us, his briefing had suggested. Eleven thousand miles distant it sounded (…) unbelievable in the monstrous heat."
>
> (1987: 16)

The reason why it is "unbelievable" is that capitalism in India is creating a system that will not bring about development, or better living standards. It is creating a second *Raj,* only this time the colonisers are not the British, but local elites. "*It is their Raj*"[160]. The reference to the "monstrous heat" invokes India's "otherness"/distance, its specific geo-cultural context, which makes a positive replica of Western policies totally unbelievable, as unreal as the beggar looks to Mr. Newman's eyes. How can India be rich while denying the pressing social problems (poverty, disease, social exclusion) it has to handle? It would be like denying India's unbearable and undeniable heat. Even Mr. Newman wanders about the legitimacy of his capitalist prospects.

Rich Like Us is a novel that falls into a line of writing described as realist and nationalist by Mukherjee[161]. In this case, India is already an independent state, but Sahgal is struggling for its definition as a socialist, modern democracy. Since the Emergency is a period of crisis, the definition of the Indian state is back to an open-ended, "after crisis" foundational moment. Hence, the realist aesthetic in Sahgal's writing. The centrality of such themes as history and economic processes fit a linear, realist time structure. Similarly, the most obvious choice would be for a kind of focalisation that is more centred around external spaces and events than on the internal lives of the characters. This is a major difference between this text and the other two Indian novels that I am going to discuss here. The texts of both Arundhati Roy and Ghita Hariharan are more dependent on internal psychological processes.

Another important reference to affiliate Sahgal's text to an Indian literary tradition is the Progressive Writers' Association, which resisted imperialism and fascism. The members of this association sent a manifesto to the second congress of the International Writers' Association, held in London, in 1936. This manifesto, which was signed by Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru (among others), defended a commitment of Indian literature to social critique, claiming that literature should "*deal with the basic problems of our existence today - the problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjection*"[162]. The influence of this important movement in the arts remained present after the forties and fifties, and it was affiliated to the left, to the cultural wing of the communist party. I think the discussed novel embodies the aims and the definition of literature implied in this famous manifesto, which contributed to the consolidation of Indian modern literature.

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[160] *Op. cit.* Sahgal 1987: 257.
[161] *Op. cit.* Mukherjee, 1971.
[162] Tharu and Lalita (eds.), Women Writing in India, Pandora Press, London, 1993, Vol II: 80.

II.2 Feminist Priorities

The choice for discussing here, from a feminist point of view, the work of such a writer as Nayantara Sahgal has got special implications. Sahgal is looked up to as one of the main feminist writers in India, and she has admitted her preference for focalising politics through the experience of living "as a woman", which is to say, through the construction of women characters in interaction with the private and political dimensions of varied systems of power[163]. The visibility of Nayantara Sahgal in the literary universe of India is only matched by Anita Desai, Sashi Despande, Rama Mehta or the poet Kamala Das. Recently, during the nineties, other new names have emerged, like Arundhati Roy and Githa Hariharan, but Sahgal is one of the leading names of an older generation. She was one of the few women to be awarded the Sahitya Akademi (1986), the highest literary prize in India, precisely with the novel I am analysing here, which testifies to the recognition of its relevance and impact inside India. Rich Like Us is Sahgal's eighth novel, and together with a critique of the Emergency regime, it addresses a very serious and urgent set of feminist issues.

Sahgal's representation of Indian society takes for granted the active role educated women are expected to play in politics, business, management and economy. However, Sahgal equates the possibility of women's professional participation in any sector of activity, and the corresponding possibility of liberation, with the accompanying development of a socialist project for postcolonial India. In this way, Sahgal links the historical processes set in motion with the transition to an independent India to a deep social transformation, which would naturally have effects on women's condition, as well. Indian postcoloniality thus amounts to an open project, where new roles for women should evolve together with a more general change in Indian mentalities. It is in this sense that one of the main characters, Sonali, remembers her father's vow of confidence on the dawn of independence: "*Women like you, are going to Indianise India*"[164], meaning, in this context, the re-creation of an independent Indian identity, free from British colonialism. But, it also means that educated, trained women were undeniably expected to have a role in the reconstruction of India's renewed identity, and one that was not contained within the domestic sphere.

On a meta-level, it is important to point out that the above "*vow of confidence*" for the future of post-colonial India is coherent throughout the whole novel. The confluence of colonialism and female oppression makes the formulation of the project for a postcolonial future the ground for the liberation of women. Nevertheless, this argument runs the risk of presenting postcolonial independence as a process of loss of tradition, often interpreted as a loss of cultural identity, especially under the light of nationalist mentalities. Apart from the influence of conservative sectors of society, nationalism must have been a highly inflammable subject in postcolonial India as part of the consolidation of its post-independence identity and, moreover, after the Partition of Pakistan and the emergence of the Sikh secession movement. How to defend a reform of women's roles, being critical of India's traditions, without seeming anti-nationalist? Sahgal is careful to specify in several passages of the novel, often through the two main women characters (Sonali and Rose), that she defends an adapted kind of socialism, integrated with India's ways. This leaves the negotiation of India's role models within the frame of political organisation. The link to the postcolonial context of India is made via the fact that historical changes imply transition

[163] This idea is the gist of Sahgal's presentation in the Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Literatures in English, Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly (eds.), Routledge, London and New York, 1994, vol.I and II.
[164] Nayantara Sahgal, Rich Like Us, Heinemann, London, 1983: 28.

moments, and these tend to be prone environment to try reforms. Within the frame of Sahgal's arguments, the contradiction between changing sexist traditions and the assertion of India's cultural identity would be settled by socialism because this ideology expects from women a modern, active participation in society, meaning the socialist "nation" would automatically settle women's issues.

But the socialist option does not correspond to the glimpse of postcolonial India represented in Rich Like Us. Instead, the Emergency holds on to traditional mentalities, and explains why India's fragmented social landscape will probably remain unchanged among high caste communities, like the Kashmiri Brahmins. The links between caste and power, being caste inherited by birth for males and by marriage for women, explains the strength of gendered codes. But first, and following Sahgal's guidance to learn "India's ways", let us look at the options open before high caste women.

Sonali is one of the main women characters in the novel. The construction of this character, an alter ego of Sahgal, is defined by contrast to traditional models of feminine identity. It is in relation to Sonali's unorthodoxy that the direction of the post-independence change regarding traditional feminine identities in India can be discussed. While following differences between Sonali and other women characters like Mona, Nishi and Kiran, one is settling the traditional gender norms that are expected to accommodate these changes.

Sonali is a high caste, Western educated woman, who used to be Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Industry. Her serious commitment to socialism has prevented her from sensing the change in the political climate around her, and only when she is dismissed, on account of unclear political influences, does she realise that she is out of tune with the new political priorities for those in power. Her brilliant career is presented in opposition to marriage, which actually is a very traditional prejudice on Indian culture, as if women had to give up on one of the two spheres. Still, what Sahgal seems to be saying in this text is that if that is the case, so be it: it is precisely because of the cultural logic opposing marriage to career, pervasive in more conservative views of Indian womanhood, that the moment young Sonali decides to study hard is the moment this same character senses she wants to "opt out" of marriage. The whole episode is presented lightly, as an anecdote, which confers to it an elegance it otherwise would not have had if it were to be engulfed by an exemplary tone. Yet, the "option" between being married by one's relatives or investing in one's personal projects is a key issue in the promotion of feminist awareness, especially in the context of high caste Hindu families who traditionally married their daughters very young, investing less in women's high education than they could afford.

Sonali recalls the wedding of her friend Bimmie as a moment of self-discovery, regarding what is expected of brides and women:

> "Kiran and I followed her into the room where the bride waited, looking like a tent. I couldn't see her face under the crimson and gold sari pulled so low over her forehead, (…) But I was hypnotized by Bimmie's nose ring, the sandal paste dots on her face, eyes downcast, and those manacled hands resting submissively in her red silk lap. This was never Bimmie. "Hey Bimmie!" I hissed. She looked up and it was her in the tent and the chains and the dots, nobody else. Wails welled up in me, erupting like claps of thunder into the room. "You'll get a good trashing when I get you home, Sonali, I don't know what's come over you."(…) The busybody bustled up. "Your turn will come, little darling, never worry," while other busybodies fussed around Bimmie, tilting her head, fiddling with her bangles and chains, stroking her cheek, praising her sweet, docile nature, which made it clear they new nothing about Bimmie and had captured and tented her by mistake. My wailing protest did nothing to keep Bimmie's future at bay."
>
> (1983: 54)

This passage is a good example of Sahgal's talent. One almost forgets that this is a construction of a bride stereotype. Sonali's hysterical reaction to this stereotype, spells out her refusal to conform. As for Bimmie, the bride, she is portrayed as a passive, submissive character, objectified as an ornate "tent", and expected to be docile and sweet. The fact that Sonali no longer recognizes her friend in the comments of other people around her, suggests a process of annihilation in the bride's identity. She is no longer Bimmie, an individual, but a bride-stereotype, with the adequate attributes: chained, captured, manacled. Sonali's tears are a mourning behaviour, mistaken by eagerness to play her part in the "natural" order of things. As a reaction to this destiny, Sonali was driven to "*frantic competition, to stardom in my studies, to deliverance from suitable "boys" and marriage, abroad*."[165]

"Running away" from marriage, and traditional femininity, can be considered a measure of luck for some (like independent Sonali) but it is a tragedy to the eyes of most traditional Indian families. However, even the most orthodox mentalities are willing to accommodate a husband-less relative, if there is a career, and power, to make up for that abnormality. My problem with the whole idea of "opting out" of marriage is that many women would not be allowed to opt, and one should not underestimate the power of family pressure, habit and social prejudice to make young women accept to do what is expected of them. Besides, in many cases, economic means to pay for an education are not available.

For the other Indian women characters of the novel, who are pleased with their wifehood and motherhood, Sonali is beyond their small world, and hence, beyond their sympathy. When Sonali is dismissed from her post at the Ministry, Kiran (Sonali's sister) is only concerned with finding a solution to get Sonali back to good terms with "the top". Kiran, like Mona or Nishi, stands for traditional femininity, and she has no thoughts to spare concerning the whole arbitrariness of this abusive affair. In Kiran's head, the world is the size of her caste and family, and "power makes for deity", which means that mature, critical socio-political awareness is replaced by allegiance. As long as the "club" stays tight around Madame (Indira Gandhi), nothing will hurt them, or those they care for. Like Nishi, Kiran only judges the world from the point of view of the convenience of her small family/caste circle. Any sensitivity concerning Sonali's professional pride and her ethical disappointment with the system is beyond Kiran's more domestic mentality.

Not much support in the male world either. In a well-intended effort to console a brooding Sonali (after her dismissal from office and hepatitis) her doctor voices a common-sensical misogynous notion, which I have encountered frequently in many of the Indian texts I have been reading. It is the praise of women's resistance and endurance, as the qualities that enable women to survive within the frame of their (female) condition. Being a woman, though ill and cut off from a brilliant career, Sonali is comparatively well off and she should be pleased with her luck:

> "When I was a child, I remember my mother getting up at 4 a. m. to walk with the other women to the well to fetch water. Then she got down to the housework, grinding spices and the rest. She had seven children, unassisted. Three of them died before they were a year old. I remember her after one of her pregnancies, leaning out of bed to stir the *dal* on the stove. The kind of life that makes for courage."
>
> (1983:34)

Sonali naturally does not have patience for this kind of comments. She knows very well she has suffered a great injustice, and it is the standard to judge what women can endure that is wrong. Survival is not a satisfactory standard to measure the respect of a society for

[165] *Ibid,* 1983: 57.

human rights, and women are not naturally entitled to less self-fulfilment and more hardship than men. By creating a character like Sonali, who is very critical towards established views concerning high caste (Kashmir, Brahmin) Indian femininity, Sahgal is suggesting new patterns of feminine identity, more attuned to citizenship, professionalism and social responsibility. These are the alternative notions of womanhood, which she opposes to the patriarchal/marriage/domestic discourses, felt as self-annihilation and imprisonment, within the frame of caste codes and family hierarchies, which make of women an "inanimate object"[166].

One of the most interesting aspects of Rich Like Us is Sahgal's crafty ability to establish links of necessity between traditional role models, social intolerance and the process of fabricating regional/caste identities ("*We were Kashmiris, and Kashmiriness is the more powerful for inhabiting a territory of the imagination*"[167]). Distinctive behaviour, disciplined by ritual, and its companion worldview (pedagogically inculcated from childhood), with a corresponding system of beliefs and values, is the material ground to assemble a sense of collective identity, and make borders between communities a reality. Kashmiriness is acquired by birth or/and marriage. Consequently, marriage agreements between lineage families are political contracts, on which the future of the community is gambled. It is a medieval system in which women are exchanged through the males of an allied group as means to strengthen collective solidarity and bonds. A side effect of these strong communal identities is intolerance and rivalry towards others. Sahgal tries to de-essentialise these identities by including in the social world of her novel affective transgressors like Zafar and Ram, respectively Muslim and Hindu, who, through their friendship, prove that the two communities can live together in deep complicity and affection. Ironically, the two friends claim the same historical forefathers as everybody else in India ("*You mean you're descended from the Greeks? And the Afghans, the Turks, the Mongols and the Persians, and not necessarily in that order"*[168]) thus denying racial/blood grounds for communal rivalries and their distinctive borders.

Apart from the clear effort to overcome Muslim/Hindu rivalry (a serious intra-national problem in the subcontinent), Sahgal focuses her deconstructions of caste identity on her own caste, Kashmir Brahmins. Kashmiriness, in the novel, is equated with aristocratic power over India, encompassing "*the tiny wee handful whose uncles and aunts all knew each other and who are in charge of everything without a notion of what 'everything' really is*"[169]. This ironic view of the bond between power and communal aristocratic identities explores the pathetic in non-democratic arrangements. Ravi's best career move was the marriage to the "*youngest daughter of the second cousin of the Prime Minister's mother*", matching "*caste, community, features, complexion, height and width*"[170]. Sahgal represents caste identities as the wrong basis to judge suitability for leadership and management by treating irrelevant things very seriously ("*height and width*"?), and basic requirements, like awareness concerning India's problems, as something that is totally irrelevant for the matter. From this surreal point of view, it makes sense that "*aunts and uncles*" do not have to know anything about the country they are ruling: they just have to be Kashmir Brahmins.

In spite of her sardonic jokes, Sahgal does not suggest any particular agenda to promote inter-caste marriage, nor does she represent any kind of negotiation between traditional femininity and modern wifehood. She simply suggests that women should take

[166] *Ibid,* 1983: 56.
[167] *Ibid,* 1983: 55.
[168] *Ibid,* 1983: 73.
[169] *Ibid,* 1983: 113.
[170] *Ibid,* 1983: 171.

their careers seriously, "opting out" of marriage. This is a relevant agenda, but a very strict one, which ignores other social classes and does not reflect on intermediate possibilities. How many women in India can afford to "opt out", apart from a very privileged social circle? And how many would not simply prefer more comfortable terms (regarding rights, status and self-esteem) to share a married life? Still, the whole discussion on the connection between power and caste aristocracies is one of the sub-themes that run through the whole novel and this is a relevant subject to define the position of high caste women as objects of exchange between the members of a male alliance. Marriage and women's sexuality are strictly controlled in such a patriarchal system and I can imagine that deviance from established role models will be ruthlessly repressed, since it stands on the way of sheer power[171]. On the other hand, the novel also inscribes room for a certain freedom with youth infatuations, if they happen with one of the members of these communities "*whose aunts and uncles all know each other*". This may seem a little step. It depends from which (more or less puritanical) point of view you determine what is acceptable. The worth of the feminist agenda entwined with the exemplary deviance of such a character as Sonali is that it promotes the liberating idea that a woman has the right to move away from the domestic, family minded sphere, engaging herself in professional life and the acquisition of qualifications.

This focus on individual identities, does not deny the hold of collective practices. In the previous section I have talked extensively about Rose, the British second wife in Ram's household. I will return to her now to discuss another set of problems that high caste women have often faced. Although Rose always helped her husband in the shop, she has been a "wife" all her life, sharing her husband Ram with his first wife (Mona) and his lover (Marcella). Rose has suffered her share of insecurity as a barren, foreign, British wife, thrown into a Hindu household, but she managed to be accepted, and even esteemed. On his part, Ram has been, for decades, a fascinating and alluring presence, but he had a stroke, and has been in a coma for months. The moment the plot of the novel starts to unfold, Rose is living with her step-son Devikins and his wife Nishi, in an uncertain wife-widow-mother-in-law position. The relationship between Nishi and Rose is agreeable, although superficial, but Devikins has always resented Rose's presence as the cause of his father's emotional distance from Mona (Dev's mother) and from himself, their son. When Ram dies, Devikins certainly does not plan to give Rose her fair share of his father's fortune and the text offers ample evidence of his dishonest character since Devikins has been forging his father's signature so that he could dispose of his money. Without Ram, Nishi and Devikins will be Rose's only relatives, and this is far from a soothing thought. Rose's material dependence on Ram and Devikins reproduces the actual situation of many Hindu wives in spite of the Hindu Code Bill.

In 1956, the Hindu Succession Act granted female children equal claims with male siblings to inherit property. In 1957, the Hindu Code Bill established the rights of a widow over inherited property, on an equal basis with other relatives (actually, the Right to Property Act, from 1874, granted a widow's life interest on her husband property). The problem is that progressive laws are one thing. Private family arrangements concerning property are another. Very often, without the support of, at least, a part of the family, a widow's destiny can be destitution. Through one of Sonali's memories, the text mentions the "*shaven-headed*

[171] The only example of transgression in the novel, Sonali, who "opted out" of marriage, had the constant support of her father. Hence, this is not a scenario where codes of social control would be activated since authority is compliant with the transgressor.

little girls wrapped in grimy saris" who "*waited for leftover food to be thrown to them from the saint's kitchen. Child widows. Their karma. Nothing to be done*."[172]

Rose fears her destiny may not be very bright after Ram dies, and she asks Sonali to get her a lawyer. When Sonali tries to approach a lawyer among her friends, she is given the hint that no lawyer will dare to fight Devikins, obviously one of Indira Gandhi's "protégés". Everybody's opinion is that since Dev "*is doing splendidly*", "*it would be better if she came to an understanding*"[173] with her step-son. Sonali insists with her friends on the necessity of a legal arrangement but the problem is that Dev has been nominated for "Chairman of the New Entrepreneurs" and nobody would like "to upset", the new, blooming millionaire.

This episode is very meaningful to denounce the cancellation of legal procedures in the name of family "convenience". The uncertainty of Rose's position poses a social problem which, in India, is neither rare nor hidden from public awareness. The marginalisation and abuse of women inside a family cell, which is outside of the effective reach of the law, is a current fact. In order to press her point further, Sahgal actually ends the novel with the murder of Rose at the hands of her step-son's men. Obviously, Rose's death is reported as an accident (she fell in the well and drowned), closing the possibility of any police investigation.

Another gloomy clue to understand women's risky position within the frame of traditional conventions, hidden in the privacy of their homes, is provided by Mona, the abandoned first wife, who attempts suicide. When the doctor arrives, the family provides the same excuse (as in Rose's case) to prevent further enquiry: what happened was an accident; the oil lamp of the prayer table fell, and Mona's sari caught fire. The suicide attempt fails because of Rose's quick intervention, and from that day on, Mona and Rose re-discovered each other. A new love finished with the rivalry over Ram, and Hindu Mona truly accepted British Rose as her family. This happy turn in the plot of the novel does not prevent Sahgal from having induced reflection on alternative explanations for domestic "accidents", in India.

Sahgal's serious exposure of cultural traditions that can be lethal for women proves the adequacy of literary criticism to provide insights on real problems, even though they are addressed through fictional representation. Another topic proving this point is the discussion of *sati* (widow immolation), although Sahgal represents it as a problem of the past. Still, she denounces *sati* as "murder", claiming for the present time a huge dimension of national guilt and self-awareness. The advantage of confronting this past is to secure greater public awareness of violence against women, so has to stop with the invisibility, or denial, of these problems. The main chapter on *sati* (number eleven) goes back to 1829, the year of the legal abolition of such practice, by the British Raj. The action goes back in time through a manuscript, written by Sonali's grandfather, in 1915 (this manuscript is presented as evidence of the willingness of some Hindu citizens to finish with such practices themselves, which is an important detail to bear in mind from a postcolonial perspective).

The first thing Sahgal denies about *sati* is the widow's supposed consent: they were often sedated and drugged, which is why there were no screams when they were dragged to the pyre, making the victims look complicitous with the sacrifice. Secondly, Sahgal goes on to describe how some of them actually tried to run away from the fire. The fact that she presents these narratives as quotes from pieces of news enhances the link between social realities and fictional representation. This is a strong narrative piece (although aesthetically less succeeded than the rest of the novel): the reader is told how the relatives of a Brahmin widow twice grab her and throw her back to the fire, beating her with logs from the pyre to

[172] *Op. cit.,* 1983: 56.
[173] *Ibid,* 1983: 93.

deprive her of her senses. Beyond direct enforcement to perform *sati*, as is clearly the depicted case, the text does not dismiss the power of superstition and social pressure in convincing some depressed widows to go ahead with it.

On another level, *sati* is connected to politics and the manipulation of popular opinion for electoral gains. The sudden appearance of saints and speakers, preaching in villages, dressed and painted with religious symbols, and encouraging a return to fundamentalism is a phenomenon that implies a degree of organisation and planning which cannot be accepted as coincidence. Sahgal hints such agitators have political aims, are instructed where to go, and told what to say.

As the narrative develops, the text offers one more instance of the possible typical developments leading to *sati*. Suddenly, Sonali's great-grandfather died, although he was in good health and only fifty, exactly as the local "saint" had predicted. Out of the blue, distant relatives arrive, and since the only son of the deceased is under age, an uncle claims the inheritance of the house and family assets. Both widowed mother and son realise they are about to be robbed and they make legal arrangements to protect the son's rights (none of them considered a widow's claims a practical solution). A few days later, when the son returns home from college, he finds the house strangely empty and though he rushes to the river bank, he is too late to save his mother from burning. He is told his mother accepted *sati* as a bargain with his father's family to keep the son's inheritance rights, but, knowing the kind of person his mother was, the poor teenager knows that this explanation is false. She was simply murdered to shut up their inheritance claims. The broken-hearted boy (Sonali's grandfather) was dispatched to England to study, and that was the end of the affair. Back to the present, Sonali recalls that this place became a spot of pilgrimage[174] where the last woman on the region committed *sati* (within the fiction of the narrative plot this last *sati* happened to be Sonali's own great-grandmother). Within the frame of the whole narrative, this historical memory repeats the social logic of Rose's murder, projecting into Indian cultural references, a habit of regarding women as more "die-able", like in the "accidents" that "happened" to Rose and Mona. In spite of Sahgal's reference to *sati* as an element of the historical past of India, apparently, this is not such a settled issue.

According to Radha Kumar, there has been a recent case (September 1987) of *sati* in the district of Shekhavati[175], which was amply discussed by local press. This district used to belong to powerful landowners who lost their status under the land reforms of the 1950s. Once deprived of wealth and power, these deposed landlords turned to *sati* and other traditions as the means to restore their sense of pride and dignity consolidating, again, the identity of the Rajput community. The spot where the last widow was burnt (the eighteen year old Roop Kanwar) became a place of pilgrimage, with parking lots, stalls selling food and souvenir shops. Right wing politics like to be seen visiting the place, and state authorities are complacent to avoid alienating the vote of the Rajput community. Kumar's paper was relevant for me to place *sati* as a current problem, and not a problem of the past[176]. Furthermore, this particular example of political dynamics in Shekhavati shows how inter-dependent communal identities, politics and the oppression of women are, which amounts to say that changing women's status in Indian society implies messing with

[174] *Ibid,* 1987: 252.

[175] Radha Kumar; "Identity Politics and the Contemporary Indian Feminist Movement" *in* Identity Politics & Women Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective, Valentine M. Moghadam (ed.), Westview Press, Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford, 1994.

[176] Actually, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, there was another *sati*, on November 11, 1999, Charan Shah, a 55 year old Dalit woman (*Chicago Tribune*, November 18, 1999). Another case occurred August 2002, in a village of Madhya Pradesh, when 65 years old Kuttu Bai died at her husband's funeral pyre (India Express Bureau, 06 August 2002, Internet network news).

powerful interests. This particularly tight connection between women and politics is made via tradition and the self-assertion of the dominant castes and communities. The novel Rich Like Us is a good case study to draw these connections. Not only is the Emergency regime always represented as a "family business", a sort of "club" or "dynasty", but we are shown high caste Brahmin Kashmiriness as a serious power claim based on lineage and caste aristocracies.

As Nira Yuval Davis[177] points out, tradition is instrumental to keep the coherence and the identity of an ethnic or national group. The survival of tradition (and of a strong distinctive identity) depends of its appeal to the individual as part of, and responsible for, the collective community: Your private "self" is imbued with meaning, making you responsible for the perpetuation and purity of the community. That is why it may make sense to live by a set of unnecessary rules that may be very demanding on the individual. The mechanics of the manipulation of tradition for the assertion of caste or community inside Indian society is a good example to understand local restrictions and demands on feminine identities. In the context of India's fragmented cultural diversity, politicians know that, for millions of illiterate peasants and impoverished urban dwellers, the appeal of religion and tradition is the effective way to captivate popular support. On this account, traditional codes and life styles are frequently used to create distinguishing borders between local cultures (and in relation to foreign influence, too), asserting communal identity, and the corresponding sectarian party, as the legitimate representative of the community. Hence, communal codes do not amount to receptive grounds to promote agendas of change, especially among high caste groups, whose lineage and status establishes the claim to power and privilege.

In conclusion, after mapping the power mechanisms among patriarchal, high caste aristocracies in India, Sahgal's novel presents a set of directions for institutional reform, targeting increased vigilance over possibilities of domestic violence, enforcing punishment for these, protecting women's/widow's inheritance rights and demanding a public rejection of violent elements in India's traditions. As a positive aspect of the represented social world, Sahgal writes a plot around bonds of friendship between women (Sonali and Rose), being this friendship the first site of support, advice and encouragement. The relevance of Sahgal's Rich Like Us to discuss current women's issues and agendas in India is more effectively argued if one compares the content of this novel, with other novels, equally written by Indian women. That is precisely what I would like to do next, proceeding to a discussion of Arundhati Roy's polemic debut novel. I will start again from a postcolonial approach and then, move on to a feminist reading.

[177] Nira Yuval Davis, "Identity Politics and Women's Identity", *in op. cit.* Moghadam, 1994.

Arundhati Roy

II.3 Anglophilia, Omelettes, Caste Borders and Other Small Things

With her very first novel, The God of Small Things (1997), Arundhati Roy won the Booker prize, one of the most prestigious British awards, was translated into twenty one languages, reached sales records and became world famous. She was also awarded the French Prize of the Universal Academy of Cultures in November 2001, for her contribution to fight intolerance, racism and sexism.

Reviews to her novel were polemic, both in England[178] and in India (where Roy even got prosecuted by a fundamentalist party on the grounds of "corruption of public morality"[179]). Meanwhile, unscathed by all the turmoil[180], Arundhati Roy quietly reduced all the fuss around her to a dismissive "Fuck the Prize!"[181], claiming her independence from media and critics as far as her own projects and commitments are concerned. After the huge success of the novel, she has published two "manifestos"[182], confirming her willingness to interfere with political issues and take a stand in public matters. Recently, the German newspaper *Die Zeit*[183] published an extensive piece on Roy, referring to her fight against globalisation and the construction of dams in the Narmada valley. At the time, Roy was going to court again for having screamed offensive words against the Supreme Court of Delhi and encouraging the masses to demonstrate. She risked six months in prison and she was actually sent to gaol on March 7th 2002 (Tihar prison, New Delhi) for three months. She was given a fine of 2.000 rupees (30 pounds) but she refused to pay it and instead accepted

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[178] See for example the review by Stephen Moss, "Prize Concern", which claims that Arundhati Roy only won because the shortlist was disastrous. Mr. Moss' justification for his critique is that what he considers "literary heavy-hitters - McEwan, Banville, Shields were ignored" Guardian Weekly October 26th, 1997.

[179] Interview with *El País Semanal*, no. 1, 137, 12th July 1998, Spain: "existe una acusación criminal contra mí por corromper la moral pública" (p. 25). In 1999, in the introduction to the anthology Arundhati Roy, the Novelist Extraordinary, (Prestige Books, New Delhi, 1999) R. K. Dhawan also mentions the impending prosecution for obscenity, in Kerala.

[180] In India, the fact that Arundhati Roy got one million dollars for the manuscript of The God of Small Things both promoted her, and created a wave of discredit, as if it was "not quite moral" to be so lucky. A chorus of voices tried to diminish the value of the book as a financial success but… not quite real literature. Curiously, the jury that awarded her the Booker Prize was unanimous. She is also accused of feeding the Western fascination for the Indian exotic, while others claim she achieved an adequate representation of the reality of Kerala. Definitely, Roy is controversial. For these different reviews see Arundhati Roy, the Novelist Extraordinary (Prestige Books, New Delhi, 1999).

[181] "Fuck the Prize!", interview with Arundhati Roy by Alexandra Lucas Coelho, Leituras *in* PUBLICO, no. 2970, 2nd May, 1998, Portugal.

[182] The End of Imagination (1998), translated to Portuguese by Asa Literatura, 1999. In this manifesto, Roy uses her fame to promote awareness of the dangers of nuclear weapons, refuting the arguments of local politicians to justify the nuclear tests carried out by the governments of India and Pakistan. Roy clearly denounces these nuclear tests as nationalist propaganda to raise popular support for the elites in power, risking peace and other social priorities (like education) in the name of political opportunism.
The Greater Common Good (1999), Portuguese edition by Asa Literatura, 2001. In this second manifesto Roy deals with the displacement of thousands of peasant and tribal people because of the construction of huge dams which will flood the houses, fields and woods where they lived. Roy exposes the lack of any kind of compensation or support from the Indian government to these people. Roy even takes her argument further, questioning the advantages of these dams. This manifesto is the product of an accurate research on the legal process and the business interests behind the project Sardar Sarovar, the great dam on the river Narmada. This manifesto includes technical details and references to documents and reports from the World Bank guiding the reader through corruption and manipulation. Finally, Roy addresses the ecological impact of such dams building an impressive set of arguments against the Sardar Sarovar project.

[183] *Die Zeit*, number 32, 2nd August 2001, page 43.

to go to prison. This unexpected choice (Tihar is grimly famous for being a tough prison) has certainly worried authorities even more. Would you like to have an intelligent, powerful writer, who has caught the world's media attention, collecting first hand evidence on the less savoury aspects of your own backyard?

Roy has also been giving money to support activism against the dams in the Narmada, and she is building a network of friends and scholars to report against such ecological abuses.

Among the many Indian women writers I could select for this study, I picked texts with a committed hedge, which is only logical if one considers that the theories which, structure my literary analysis (feminism and the postcolonial debate) have a high potential for political activism and social criticism. The wealth of issues addressed by Arundhati Roy, plus the style of her writing (I am one of those under her spell) made of her first novel a clear option.

I think The God of Small Things is a postcolonial novel for the same reasons as Sahgal's Rich Like Us was one. In both of them, the point of view of the writer is self-consciously involved with history and the local redefinition of collective identities. The horizon of this unfinished redefinition (which is always a process anyway) is determined by a corruption of the independence ideals, current social problems, internal tensions and the clash between partial modernisation and traditional mentalities. Self-consolidation is waiting on the way all these elements are managed. But, apart from internal problems, this self-consolidation process has international implications. According to events inside the nation, the still unsettled place of the post-colonies in a new world order will be defined. At stake is to grant a positive outcome in a process that may, or may not, manage a dignifying negotiation between self-assertion, self-preservation and the pressure of globalisation as a form of neo-colonialism.

For better and for worse, history is relevant, and one cannot ignore that involvement in a centuries long process of colonial history makes the relatively recent process of independence an important reference to understand the transitional and provisional contradictions of a society that is living through fundamental changes, consolidating and self-defining itself between what has been and what may become. This means that, for me, one of the things a postcolonial novel does is to deal with a current postcolonial society, reflecting on, among other things, its search for post-independence patterns of collective identity, the exorcism of traumatic memories from a colonial past, and the self-assertive remembering (or recreation) of local cultural references (I am leaving diaspora and migrant writing out of this research). All of these issues are articulated within the frame of local, material circumstances. They are solidly connected to their postcolonial geography and time, and there is no ambiguity about these co-ordinates seen from within a located text, where they are the references to everyday life. At its most optimist tone, postcolonial literatures still exude a willingness to change, mend, and "move on", licking one's wounds. But, after the post-independence euphoria, there is, in many of these same novels, this feeling that some of the old problems remain, the promised changes did not happen, and something has gone sour in the current political scene...

How does Arundhati Roy address the debate on these issues and what is her contribution? As I have done above, I will look at individual characters to disentangle the set of ideological arguments the writer decided to address in this particular text, taking micro-universes (fictional individual subjectivities) as the centre of a wider network of historical, political and social issues. I will define the function of these characters inside the narrative structure of the text through the discussion of key scenes, which will gradually guide the reader in my analysis of this novel. The discussion of plot and character are the main narrative elements to organise my reading of the text. Whenever relevant, I will refer to time,

space and setting as the co-ordinates to define a located cartography, that is to say, to refer to history, politics or the cultural references which the text invokes, and on to which its ideological and symbolical meanings are to be projected.

From a postcolonial angle, the novel The God of Small Things is relevant for its resistance to Anglophilia, its rejection of Western influences as a "solution" for the problems of India and its caustic analysis of Indian patterns of collective identity, totally embedded in caste segregation and sexism. In this section, I am going to address the novel from each of these angles.

Anglophilia and Anti-colonial Resistance

I have said above that one of the strategies of cultural colonisation by the British Raj was to promote British culture as the standard of civilisation to be emulated by other cultures. To reject the proposed mimicry of British ways implies a self-aware postcolonial stand that can already see beyond the manipulative power of hegemonic colonial discourses. In this way, while deconstructing Anglophilia in her novel, Arundhati Roy is taking part in postcolonial revisionist practices, creating room for another parallel process, which is the self-discovery of India as a modernising society, regardless of Western models.

In the plot of The God of Small Things, the representation of Anglophilia starts during the colonial period, in the last decades of the Raj, although the high status of British culture remains a current social reference in the 60s/70s, when the main events of the plot take place. The whole time frame of the plot encompasses the life of four generations of the same family, in their Ayemenem house by the river, in the state of Kerala, south India. Only the adult life of the fourth generation (the twins Estha and Rahel) escapes an Anglophile environment. In fact, in the nineties, when the twins are thirty-one, America has replaced Britain as the most current foreign influence, although America never becomes a stylish, upper class reference. America means "money".

Great-grandparents Reverend E. John Ipe and his wife are the oldest generation of the family to be mentioned in the text, but they are quite secondary in the structure of the novel. The plot really develops around the last three generations of the Kochamma family, and the central events take place in 1969. At the time, Estha and Rahel are seven years old, and they are living with their divorced mother (Ammu) and her family.

The events that became a turning point in the life of the twins started with the arrival of their uncle Chacko's ex-wife (Margaret) and their daughter (Sophie Mol), during Christmas holidays. These new comers are British, and the way their Indian relatives receive them is important to frame one of the dimensions of Anglophilia in the text. Margaret and Sophie are expected to embody a superior civilisation, and thus, receiving them, is regarded as a motive of pride and joy for this Anglophile family. For most of the members of the Ipe clan, there is a strong emotional investment in the British relatives as the means to claim membership in a "superior" and "progressive" community. This is a case of true assimilation of colonial propaganda, and the behaviour of the characters expresses their agreement with colonial views of India.

According to Homi Bhabha (see section 3.3, part I), individuals learn through a series of available pedagogic and performative narrative strategies, which inculcate in the individual dominant codes of collective identity and their corresponding life-styles. In this way, individual subjects create a sense of who they are and with who, or where, they belong. The assimilation of a sense of collective identity provokes, in the individual, a strong emotional identification with the dominant ideologies of the group, shaping one's subjectivity to consent the perpetuation of existing power structures and adapting one's projects and hopes to the promoted life-styles. In the case of Anglophilia, the colonised

citizen assimilates British self-promoting colonial discourses, adjusting his/her frame of mind to see colonialism as the civilising mission of a superior culture committed to the improvement and development of a backward one. Hence, the drive to imitate British ways is given free hand, so as to claim one's integration in the most powerful, dominant culture.

The status awarded to the British ex-wife and the half-British child overlap Anglophilia with sexist issues. For the three older women of the Kochamma family, Mammachi (widowed grandmother), Baby Kochamma (single aunt, younger sister of the deceased grandfather) and Kochu Maria (servant), the man of the house (Chacko) is, undeniably, the head of the family. He will provide for their future, as son, nephew and master, and his half-British daughter, Sophie Mol, means the continuity of the family, and its promotion to a more sophisticated class. In any case, the status of the son, Chacko, and his daughter Sophie, would always be much superior to the tolerated daughter, Ammu, and her twin children Estha and Rahel. The fact that both son and daughter are divorced does not mean the same thing. Chacko is a man, and he divorced a British wife. Ammu's divorce is only a source of shame and embarrassment. According to local mentality, women do not divorce: they endure.

I will deal with the sexist dimension of the novel later on, in the next section. At this stage, I am more concerned with Anglophilia as the assimilation of racist/colonial views, leading to consent and agreement with colonial arrangements.

As it fits an Anglophile family, the Ipes invest on Western culture and education as their rightful source of collective references: Estha's hero is Elvis Presley, the children speak English, uncle Chacko was sent to college, in England (Oxford) and the twins are taken to the movies to watch *The Sound of Music* (obviously, they already know its songs by heart). Actually, the way the children react to the film is important to describe the assimilation of colonial stereotypes by colonised people:

> "And there was Captain von Clapp-Trapp. (…) A captain with seven children. Clean children, like a packet of peppermints. He pretended not to love them, but he did. He loved them. (…) They all loved each other. They were clean, white children, and their beds were soft with Ei.Der.Downs.
>
> The house they lived in had a lake and gardens, a wide staircase, white doors and windows, and curtains with flowers.
>
> Oh Captain von Trapp, Captain von Trapp, could you love the little fellow with the orange in the smelly auditorium? (…) And his sister?
>
> Captain von Trapp had some questions of his own:
>
> (a) *Are they clean white children?*
>
> No. (*But Sophie Mol is*.)

In order to be up to the level of civilisation of their half-British cousin, the twins Estha and Rahel are forced to practice their English pronunciation, and they are forbidden to speak Malayalam, their mother tongue, even among themselves. They also have to witness the excitement provoked by the arrival of Sophie Mol, a reaction that spells out for the unfortunate twins their lower racial status and "fatherless" situation. These distinctions between the children, imply wider racist schemes of social reference, the stereotypes of colonial propaganda, which become concrete and humiliating in the small things: "(…) *there would be two flasks of water. Boiled water for Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol, tap water for everybody else*"[184].

The combination of the above quotes, sketches a tense social/emotional environment where Estha, Rahel and their mother Ammu are not exactly welcomed, on account of racial

[184] Arundhati Roy, The God of Small Things, Flamingo, London, 1997: 46.

and sexist prejudice. From an Anglophile point of view, the twins are considered less than their cousin Sophie, and, correspondingly, they are thought to deserve less love and attention.

The Anglophile mania that runs in the family is a legacy of the deceased grandfather (Pappachi) and his converted wife, Mammachi. Grandparents believed that "British is better" and, logically, they wanted to imitate British ways. The problem with this kind of allegiance is that Pappachi invested in the culture of the coloniser as the grounds to develop his sense of collective identity, because it was among the British community that he wanted to claim membership and receive recognition. Yet, he belonged to the colonised race. This contradiction between his race and what he considers to be the superior culture leaves Pappachi with a self-lacerating problem, being Indian and desiring to be British. This unbearable contradiction is nicely represented by a vivid image: Pappachi in his impeccable woollen suits, "*looking outwardly elegant but sweating freely inside*"[185], self-punishing himself in the heat of Kerala to fit British fashion.

Arundhati Roy is very ironical towards Anglophilia and she deconstructs it from several angles. One of her strategies is to expose the difference between the civilisation the British claim, and their concrete, less noble, patterns of behaviour. This non-coincidence between what is said and what is done, frames Anglophile allegiance as a case of naivety, a lack of critical insight. In the case of Pappachi, Roy constructs a cruel example of his self-imposed inability to see through colonial propaganda: when Ammu told her father why she wanted to divorce her husband, she complained of his alcoholism and of his agreement with Mr. Hollick, the English manager of the tea plantation where her husband worked. In the agreement, Mr. Hollick was ready to tolerate his assistant's alcoholism if he promised to go to a clinic for treatment, while he, Mr. Hollick, looked after his children and his "…***extremely*** *attractive wife*…"[186]. There are already several light skinned children in the plantation as evidence of Mr. Hollick's "tolerance". In spite of the seriousness of the matter, Pappachi did not believe his own daughter because he could not accept "*an Englishman*, ***any*** *Englishman, would covet another man's wife*"[187].

According to the definition of "Anglophile" presented in the text, it means to like British culture, but in a state of mind in which one is predisposed to "*adore one's conquerors*"[188] and forget one's ancestors and history.

The "history house" is the image created by Chacko to explain to the twins the situation of the Anglophile in the context of British colonialism in India. The Anglophile is locked out of his own Indian history because he is a prisoner of colonial ideologies:

> "(…) Our minds have been invaded by a war. A war that we have won and lost. The very worst sort of war. A war that captures dreams and re-dreams them."
>
> "We belong nowhere. We sail unanchored on troubled seas. We may never be allowed ashore. Our sorrows will never be sad enough. Our joys never happy enough. Our dreams never big enough. Our lives never important enough. To matter."
>
> (1997: 53)

Anglophilia is then connected to racism (despise for everything that does not conform to the British norm) and self-hatred, as far as the Indian citizen is made to reject Indian ways and Indian culture as a deviation from the British model while facing the impossibility of being recognised as "British" (at least, during the colonial period) since

[185] *Ibid,* 1997: 48.
[186] *Ibid,* 1997: 42.
[187] *Ibid*, 1997: 42.
[188] *Ibid,* 1997: 53.

there will always be something missing, namely, the right skin colour. While racism creates the image of the "other" as inferior, self-hatred implies the assimilation of racist discourse, creating a split subject who, in spite of being "the other", identifies with the discourses of the white colonisers.

Anti-colonial subversion starts when the colonised subject displays enough critical distance to see through colonial propaganda, becoming aware of the amount of ideological manipulation involved in such hegemonic practices. The difference between Pappachi and Chacko is precisely a matter of awareness. The first cannot question the superior status of the English culture while the latter is aware of his predicament as a split subject. However, Chacko does not express an active rejection of Anglophilia, nor does he turn to his Indian identity in a self-assertive gesture. Chacko is only nostalgic for a more rewarding sense of belonging, either by becoming more acceptable to his British family or by finding a connection to his own Indian history and nation. Instead, the anti-colonial critique of Anglophilia offered in the novel is voiced by Ammu, the daughter of the family, whose particular experience as a woman, trapped by codes, rules and prejudice, made her more cynical and critical towards dominant ideologies. She has known, all her life, how it feels to be at the wrong end of power hierarchies and that experience has made her impatient and rebellious (a "*breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she so raged against*"[189]). She is then, because of her awareness of sexism, the better equipped to deconstruct colonial discourses, overlapping anti-colonialism with feminism in her private fight against prejudice.

Ammu's rebellion against the mentality that diminishes Hindu children by comparison with their British cousin (and implicitly, that grants a different status to the two cultures) makes her question the grounds for such a different treatment. She rightly sees the obsession with a display of "civilised", "British" references as a symptom of a national inferiority complex, where Indians see themselves as the "native", keeping British colonisers in the position of "enlightened saviours". Hence, the importance of Ammu's comment on the whole performance to receive Sophie Mol: "*Must we behave like some damn godforsaken tribe that's just been discovered?"*[190]. If Indian families stop acting according to an Anglophile and self-hating frame of mind, the grounds for all these distinctions, based on unreal judgements determined by prejudice and colonial propaganda, would be exposed for what they are: a powerful campaign to alienate those educated elites who could organise rebellion against colonisation.

As an embodiment of resistance, Ammu's behaviour is subversive because she repeatedly parts with strongly established notions: she dared to divorce her husband, she rejects Anglophilia, she has a love affair with an untouchable and she never accepted her second status as "daughter" (in Indian subcultures, male sons are generally preferred to daughters). All of these attitudes, plus her irony and sharp answers, turn Ammu into the most innovative character in the text, since it is she who tries to find other ways of thinking and living, outside of fossilised myths that only perpetuate unfair caste, race and sex distinctions. In the novel, these three hegemonic practices are presented as the "enemies" of human sensitivity, creating a social order that instead of being balanced, fair or welcoming is emotionally destructive and impossible to handle (there are no happy characters in this social world). In what concerns Anglophilia, Ammu's irony is very corrosive for the status of British culture because her remarks create a critical space to think outside of colonial discourse, confronting it.

[189] *Ibid,* 1997: 176.
[190] *Ibid,* 1997: 180.

Although The God of Small Things is a very rich text, dealing with several political and social issues, the anti-colonial critique of Anglophilia is a very clear and quite extensive topic, absolutely seminal for the meaning of the events in 1969. Without the Anglophile obsession of this family, one cannot fully understand the impact of Sophie Mol's death. It is because of all the dreams of social mobility that die with Sophie that Ammu and the twins have to be "punished' for that accident in such a wild way (their separation, the indifference concerning Rahel's education, the refusal to help Ammu, even when she was terminally ill). The drowning of Sophie Mol means the end of all the future projects of the Ipe family, such as Chacko and Mammachi were dreaming them at that stage. Ammu and the twins are mere "guests" who never counted as subjects for the future of the family, and even less as possibilities to claim respectability and improvement.

Roy deals with colonialism as a "psychic experience" that lives on after formal colonialism is over, through memories and dominant mentalities. Her rejection of these after-effects of Anglophilia does not mean that Roy is defending a return to Indian traditions or any other form of fundamental nativism. That would have been the nationalist strategy to fight colonialism, if this novel had been written in the 1930s. In the nineties, a committed writer such as Arundhati Roy is, probably, tired of either nationalist or socialist rhetoric. Not only does she represent political allegiance as a worn out frame of activism, but she also writes a novel whose plot amounts to a stern defence of a set of human rights that have been equally ignored by colonialism, democracy and communism. Within the logic of Roy's arguments, it is individual sensitivity, critical awareness, and one's bonds to other people, across caste distinctions and outside of patriarchal rules, which can bring about an effective change and improvement in Indian society.

On the margins of Arundhati Roy's narrative, there are other secondary themes that are worth mentioning in connection to a critique of Anglophilia. The fact that America has replaced Britain as mythological land of wealth and power suggests that to emigrate to America is the current equivalent to "family connections in London".

Arundhati Roy makes three points on this new fascination. Emigration is not, necessarily, worth trying (Rahel's story is her narrative translation of this argument), "progress" is not necessarily development, and Americanisation is not an improvement on the split identity of the colonised subject.

Rahel's marriage to Larry McCaslin and her emigration to America end up in a grim job as a night clerk in a bullet-proof cabin at a gas station. Back in India, what Rahel recalls from her American experience is drunks vomiting in the money tray, pimps and their job offers, one or two men being shot and stabbed. This negative image of America contrasts with the reaction among Rahel's acquaintances in Ayemenem:

> "His daughter's daughter is this. In Amayrica now. (…) *Oower, oower, oower.* In Amayrica now, isn't it.' It wasn't a question. It was sheer admiration."
>
> (1997: 129)

Being an emigrant, Rahel represents someone with better possibilities and wider roads to travel. She is like the "Foreign Returnees", at the Cochin airport, with their dollars that mean security, ability to provide for children's needs, dowries for daughters to be married, medicine for the old. Only Rahel is not "Americanised", while the masses of emigrants arriving for holidays in India cannot think further than the ever increasing gap between those who wait for the returning relatives and those who arrive. Their love for their families starts to have "a lick of shame": "*Look at the way they dressed! Why did Malayalees*

have such awful teeth? (...) Going to the dogs India is"[191]. Soon, "*Foreign Returnees would be trapped outside the History House, and have their dreams redreamed*"[192]. These comments indicate that Americanisation has the same effect as Anglophilia, making Indian citizens turn their backs on their history and culture, erasing a part of their memories and identity. The gap between the first generation emigrants and their Indian relatives is a symptom of the undecidable contradictions that will fragment this generation's sense of identity for good, making them endure the same split subjectivity that afflicted colonised Anglophiles. Naturally, this amounts to say that India is, to a certain extent being neo-colonised by America, through the power of the dollar.

The line of thought which makes Arundhati Roy represent emigration in a less positive light is an extension of the argument against Anglophilia. Both themes are addressed to demonstrate that the solution for the internal problems of India was/is never abroad. The future of India depends on the Indian people and the ideas and values they choose to hold on to. Similarly, Western money does not mean internal "progress" for India. In fact, economic growth and modernisation are treated in the novel as ambiguous advantages which, by themselves, do not solve any of the problems: five star hotels and their speedboats bring tourists, but leave a gasoline film over the water; open air sewers are left to exhale an awful smell in hot days, but hotels have got air conditioning; the view over the river is beautiful, but the water is polluted and toxic, so, no baths are allowed. Like Sahgal, Roy is not indifferent to the poverty of the Indian people around her, and both of them refuse to accept the lack of governmental solutions in spite of the amount of capital invested in India. Arundhati Roy's point is that, in the nineties, government seems to think "progress" is the exchange of environmental pollution for profitable private business. For Roy, industrialisation, with poisoned fishes rotting in the sun, and the same poverty as ever, is not worth the effort. If World Bank loans only mean pesticides, then these loans are not helping India in the right way, and Roy, as a committed and intervening writer, does not welcome this kind of help. Even in cultural terms, Roy denounces tourism as a new form of colonialism, an industry that corrupts Indian culture, selling it as picturesque folklore for example when "*ancient stories were collapsed and amputated. Six-hour classics were slashed to twenty-minute cameos"* [193].

Politics as Omelettes

In spite of the capitalist references to industrial pollution, pesticides, organised tourism and indifference to poverty, Kerala, where the action of the novel takes place, is a state with a long Marxist tradition, being one of the post-independence bastions of communist power. Accordingly, the narrative flash-back regarding events in 1969 already refers several instances of activism, like the organisation of trade unions, workers demonstrations and the discussion of Communist ideology. A couple of decades later, in the nineties, the "*once Ayemenem office of the Communist Party, where midnight study meetings were held*" is a place grown "*limp and old*" and the red of its flag has "*bled away*"[194]. The way Arundhati Roy writes about politics and the communist party echoes Ammu's irony against Anglophile feelings: both writer and character speak from a critical distance that annihilates the hold of these discourses. In this novel, politics is the old "*omelette and eggs thing*", and politicians are "*professional omeletteers*"[195]. Since one has to break eggs to

[191] *Ibid,* 1997: 140.
[192] *Ibid,* 1997: 141.
[193] *Ibid,* 1997: 127.
[194] *Ibid,* 1997: 13.
[195] *Ibid,* 1997: 14.

make omelettes and politicians are responsible for the priorities they define, the implied comment on this less than flattering joke is that politicians always make the wrong set of choices, and it is common people's lives who are "broken".

The representation of Communism in the novel is an example of this dismissive view of political utopias. The main communist activist, Comrade Pillai is moved by private ambition to promote himself through the party. This ambition makes Comrade Pillai resent Velutha, the untouchable, because he is the other "card older" in Mammachi's pickle factory, and he is an inconvenient advert for Communism since, thinks Pillai, touchables will not trust a party that accepts untouchables. The implicit corollary of this reasoning is that the communists are not willing to break with caste[196] distinctions. This is a serious contradiction of communist principles focused on the erasure of class differences, which make a privileged few live off enslaved majorities. I was left wondering what would come out of a communist government that accepts the existence of untouchability. Susan Stantford Friedman actually answered that question: Kerala has got the worse record of land reform to protect the rights of untouchable people[197], which amounts to say that the caste system is such a deeply set cultural heritage that it has remained powerfully established.

The dismissive way Roy mentioned communism has earned her serious resentment from leftist critics. In the paper "Reading Arundhati Roy Politically"[198], Aijaz Ahmad does not spare praise to Roy's depiction of caste issues and her achievement in terms of style. However, in what concerns her representation of communism, Ahmad accuses Roy of incoherence, lack of realism, and "*spite, pure and simple*" in her references to Namboodiripad, "*an actual historical figure and a towering presence in Kerala*"[199] (the Chief Minister of the state of Kerala for many years, since the elections of 1957). I agree with Aijaz Ahamd that Arundhati Roy is not clear about the motives for her resentment against the communist party, replacing real arguments for unsympathetic comments. Still, I take Roy's anti-communist feeling as a strategy to assert the importance of private rebellion, which is a logical conclusion after reading her novel. If Roy wants to make of the rejection of the caste system and untouchability a private, personal battle, starting with individual refusal to accept these rigid social codes, then, she has to inscribe in her text a certain dismissal of available political utopias, which had their opportunity to settle these problems and did not manage to succeed.

As an alternative to party politics, Arundhati Roy offers erotic transgression as a political act, making her main feminine character (Ammu) fall in love with an untouchable Velutha. Falling for an untouchable lover like Velutha implies willingness to break with stern social codes, which determine who can be loved (that is, who fits one's caste and family) and how much (untouchables are not supposed to be desired or loved by high caste women). As Brinda Bose[200] notes in her very convincing analysis, the politics of desire in this novel spring from specific cultural histories, and "*the ways in which sexuality has been perceived through generations in a society that coded Love Laws with a total disregard for possible anomalies"*. It is because of the unquestionable status of these social codes that breaking any of these laws amounts to more than a particular emotional, erotic issue. The

[196] Mind that The God of Small Things is about the Syrian Christian community, which does not have castes since it is out of the Hindu system. However, in practical terms it works as a class system since the Syrian Christians always were a very powerful high class group in Kerala.

[197]Susan Stanford Friedman, "Feminism, State Fictions and Violence: Gender, Geopolitics and Transnationalism", *Communal/Plural*, vol. 9, n° 1, 2001.

[198] Aijaz Ahmad, "Reading Arundhati Roy Politically", *Frontline*, August 8, 1997.

[199] *Ibid,* 1997.

[200] Brinda Bose, "In Desire and in Death: Eroticism as Politics in Arundhati Roy's 'The God of Small Things", *Ariel*, University of Calgary, Alberta, 29: 2, 1998: 59-72.

issue under cross-examination is the set of caste/class barriers of the represented society[201], and this is a very central and serious political issue. Arundhati Roy's passionate disavowal of caste prejudice and untouchable status amounts to a strong argument in favour of desire, affection and greater respect between social groups. This sort of change of mentalities and behaviours does not rely on party politics, but rather on political awareness and more individual freedom. That is the direction of change suggested by the novel. Instead of writing the nation through an established political project, as Sahgal does, Arundhati Roy writes the nation by provoking a liberation of individual identities, which will cause, indirectly, a shift in the mentalities that organise such segregation across classes in the Indian society.

The way Arundhati Roy castes a critical eye on the postcolonial society of Kerala, discussing in a minute and insightful way its sources of tension and conflict, materialises one of the most interesting and powerful aspects of postcolonial literatures, which is its facet of social criticism. Indeed, these literatures have moved beyond the initial assertive moment, either nativist or obsessed with "answering back" to colonial discourses. The international dialogue with competing powers stills goes on, in the representation of the damages and after-effects of colonisation and also in what concerns resistance to neo-colonial threats. Yet, for a later generation of post-independence writers, the importance of an internal analysis of the post-independence society around them is becoming more and more central. This is precisely the factor that makes these texts relevant for local audiences on the spot. Through the combination of these two sets of issues and themes, postcolonial literatures keep their appeal for an international readership, feeding cultural exchange between different cultures and peoples, and, at the same time (if not mostly), they provide key ideas, concepts and figurations to think the internal politics and the internal social problems afflicting these developing countries, suddenly stormed by globalisation. Hence, my claim that the social critique directed at a concrete postcolonial location (not only in terms of past history but also as far as current socio-political issues are concerned) is one of the fundamental aspects of these literatures, and one that, in my opinion, has not been properly addressed by mainstream postcolonial criticism produced in Western academies[202], always more interested in discussing only the international aspects of the intellectual dialogues invited by these texts.

The God of Small Things

Above, Arundhati Roy's project to "write" the defining discourses for postcolonial India was framed by the creation of exemplary characters, encouraging a fundamental change in patterns of individual identity. This argument underlines the connection between macro and micro universes, assigning to the individual a great amount of responsibility in accommodating to certain aspects of social organisation as a form of co-operation with oppressive power mechanisms. If her dismissal of institutional politics implies a return to the

[201] Just to give the reader an idea of the extent of these caste barriers, note that, until the XIXth century, slaves could be bought, sold and given away in Kerala, they had to address the higher castes as "sir" (thampuran) or "father" (achan) and call themselves slaves. They could not use the word "I" to refer to themselves. Prefixes meaning "dirty", "rude", "black" and "unrefined" had to be added to their clothes and food when talking about them in the presence of high caste members, their own birth should be refered to as "karangituka", meaning "birth of apes". Currently the Keralese government has instituted a reward of two thousand rupees for "intercaste marriages". For the lower castes this amount of money is more than what they make in a year. Still, intercaste marriages are a rare occurrence. (Marion de Uyl and Aileen Stronge, Invisible Barriers: Gender, Caste and Kinship in a Southern Indian Village, International Books, Utrecht, 1995.)

[202] On this topic see Susan Stanford Friedman (*op. cit.*, *Communal/Plural*), vol. 9, n° 1, 2001.

"self", problematising consent and indifference, then, it is necessary to assess closely the forms of deviant self-definition imagined by Roy.

In the novel, there are two alternatives for the identification of the God in charge of Small Things. The most obvious figure is Velutha, the untouchable, not only on account of his private sensitivity but also because of his ability to carve small wooden figures with which he delights his friends. Beyond this explicit reference to the charms of this particular character, Roy also writes a novel on small things, which have been unprotected and forgotten because they were wrongly deemed unimportant. Some of the "small things" Arundhati Roy writes about are feelings, memories, private desire and affection, a set of invisible internal processes, considered too private and individual to matter.

Small things are crushed in the name of big things. In the novel, the "big", important matters are caste identity, respectability, the assertion of caste differences and the preservation of the *status quo*. These are the priority references for the majority of the characters, obsessed by claiming membership in a powerful group, be it the British culture, the Syrian Christian community or the Communist party. In order to claim membership in any of the desired communities one has to behave according to specific ideological and moral patterns, thus gaining public approval among the acknowledged members of the coveted group. This means that public morality is determined by a desire for public recognition and will be defined from the point of view of the invested interests of the group. Since public morality is an external code, and desire and feelings are internal drives, only by repressing the latter can one live up to the expectations of the former. The great motivation to endure such repressive codes should be public acceptability and one's integration in the community. Nevertheless, this social system of self-regulation and social control can be disrupted by its discontents, like Ammu and Velutha. Ammu is a divorced woman. Velutha is an untouchable. They are not promised any rewards by the social order around them. They are outcasts. Hence, they are the ones in a position to ignore the limits of this world order, since the only thing this order has brought to their lives is waste and sheer injustice. They should know. They are the ones suffocating for lack of alternatives, those that simply should not be: an untouchable that is talented and educated and falls in love with a high caste woman, a clever, resentful girl who does not endure a violent marriage neither refuses to stop living at twenty something. They are anomalies, feared, embarrassing, upsetting. For them, erotic transgression is the desperate encounter of brothers in arms who find solace in each other, as a counterpoint to the demands of the represented claustrophobic society. The problem of this couple is that private desire and love collided with caste codes and lineage systems.

I learned from Michel Foucault[203] that social codes are a form of discipline, with clear mechanisms of punishment. They control the citizen by exerting pressure to make the individual fit certain patterns of behaviour and public morality. Prejudice, marginalisation and public exclusion are some of the forms of social punishment that prevent transgressors from getting away with their individualism, and teach potential rebels to obey. Since you cannot legislate affection ("*the Love Laws lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much.*"[204]), feelings and sensitivity are highly transgressive areas, which are controlled by being contained within the invisible sphere of privacy. If this inoculation against desire and affection is unable to prevent the unthinkable from happening, then, the available forms of social discipline are prompted into action, and the anomalies corrected…at any price.

If caste (equated with class and community) is defined by lineage, inter-caste/class sex is a political problem. If such a kind of transgression becomes public, it has to be

[203] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison, New York, Pantheon Books, 1977.
[204] *Op. cit.* Roy, 1997: 177.

effectively repressed and its punishment exemplary. In the context of the Indian caste system, the love affair between high class Syrian Christian[205] Ammu and the untouchable Velutha cannot be tolerated. What is at stake is more serious than public morality or snobbish susceptibilities. If what keeps social groups apart is prejudice and tradition, and being from specific castes or communities implies different rights and duties, then, it is on the interest of the high caste/class groups to keep a narrow-minded sense of borders, with rituals and rules to mark these distinctions, so that differences in treatment are accepted by the exploited and humiliated as differences in value. It is, again, colonial propaganda, only this time the colonised are the lower castes who are led to consent to high caste values.

According to Sucheta Mazumdar, 962[206] temples were built in Kerala (the state where the plot of the novel develops) during the eighties and nineties, expressing a return to religious references and orthodox Hinduism. Temples bring with then, tradition, rituals, and the assertion of caste and communal identities. As "recently" as April 1991, the hold of traditional worldviews was strong enough to lead a crowd to lynch a sixteen-year-old Hindu girl and her eighteen-year-old Untouchable lover[207]. On these grounds, I think any public attitude (like writing a very successful novel) supporting inter-caste affairs will be interpreted as politically dangerous, a threat to hegemonic discourses and the coherence of the whole caste system.

Arundhati Roy's choice for the representation of an untouchable lover as a person entitled to respect, affection and career opportunities interferes with sensitive areas in the traditional organisation of the Indian society. From a feminist angle, the assertion of Ammu's female desire and agency, materialised in the attitude of choosing a lover for herself, are equally disturbing for the established patriarchal system. This choice of themes makes of The God of Small Things a rather explosive text, addressing wider issues than the strict family biography at the core of its plot.

Since none of the victims of the social order deserves the violence showered upon them (certainly neither the pacific lovers nor the children), it is social prejudice and the traditional caste system that are to blame for this pain. If pain is a small enough thing to be sacrificed in the name of the described patriarchal oppression and caste prejudice (the big things), who collects the gains? The moral dilemma at the heart of the novel is the sacrifice of children's innocence, sensitivity and love for the perpetuation of hegemonic ideologies, which are totally dependent on traditional mentalities to keep its grip on power and privilege. In order to invert the logic that makes the caste system and untouchability look acceptable, Roy represents two forbidden loves (Ammu and the untouchable Velutha, and the twins' incest) as natural and healing, while the social order around them is exposed in such a way that it looks twisted and unnatural. Consequently, the positive alternative to these destructive and unfair social codes (and failed political utopias or self-hating patterns of identity) is dependent on human sensitivity and feelings, as motivating forces (or drives) for subversion. Ammu, Velutha and Rahel are the inspirational, transgressive characters of this text, suggesting directions for social change according to their liberating points of view. Since these characters are heroic characters, the reader is expected to identify with them and agree with their choices and actions, disrespecting caste distinctions and patriarchal social codes. When Ammu and Velutha die, the novel acquires a tragic dimension, and its moral discussion is focused under a sharper light. Since the only direct result of Ammu and Velutha's transgression is the trauma that haunts the twins (destroying their childhood and

[205] "The Syrian Christian community of Kerala amounts to twenty percent of the population of the province" *in* "Sexual/Textual strategies in The God of Small Things", Chanda, Tirthankar; *Commonwealth* 20-1.
[206] Sucheta Mazumdar, "Moving Away from a Secular Vision? Women, Nation and the Cultural Construction of Hindu India" *in op. cit*. Moghadam (ed.), 1994.
[207] *Ibid,* 1994.

reducing Estha and Rahel to *quietness* and *emptiness*), the novel seems to finish without a positive, self-assertive element. In this way, and still following the patterns of classical tragedy, the lovers' defeat (Ammu dies, alone, in miserable conditions, separated from her children, Velutha is beaten to a pulp by the police) stands as an example to caution possible transgressors against disrespecting the prevailing rules. Assessed from this angle the novel looks very patriarchal and orthodox, encouraging the assimilation of traditional patterns of cultural identity. Nevertheless, the novel does not end with this generation, but with the next, the twins. The second couple of transgressive lovers, Estha and Rahel, are alive when the narrative plot ends, and they are, symbolically, as old as Ammu was when she died (thirty one). The circularity of time in the structure of the narrative suggests that the twins are starting off where former rebels left, and their option for trespassing, again, on the laws of love, and family structure, and the unspeakable, clearly leaves the reader with an open end to think about future possibilities (that is why the last word of the text is "tomorrow"). The circularity of time is further underlined by circularity of space. Rahel has returned to the family house, where she lived her childhood until she was seven. This overlapping of chronological and spatial circularities makes the return of Rahel a special event, a conclusive point and a beginning, the closing of a perfect circle.

On another level, "small things" are distant causes, facts or words that seem too removed from concrete current events. Roy repeatedly connects everyday private episodes to (big) historical events and social forces. One of the main arguments in The God of Small Things is the necessity of changing these wider forces so as to allow individuals more room to adjust external circumstances to inner lives. It is on account of this failure to balance external stress and internal damage that I see the twins as traumatised characters, and I interpret them as exemplary cases in Roy's subversive argument. They represent an unforgivable side product of wider mechanisms of power.

The connections between history, prejudice, tradition, social segregation and the Ipe family, in Ayemenem, are not small (actually they are determinant factors). They are just so "natural", so deeply set in the dominant mentality that, to the eyes of less lucid characters, they feature as absent, transparent forces, as if they were hardly interfering and hardly recognisable in current notions of "right", "desirable", "correct" and "normal". However, Roy tried to demonstrate the opposite. In an interview granted to the 1997 Booker prize[208], Roy explicitly makes this point on her novel: "*For me, fiction has always been a means of making sense of the world, to connect the smallest things to the biggest things*". Bearing in mind both this statement and the text itself, I think The God of Small Things has to be read on several levels at once, where particular, private events, invite the discussion of wider and more complex topics. These wider histories are, for instance, Indian traditions (concerning the caste system, untouchability and patriarchies) the British colonisation of India, massive emigration to America and current industrial pollution.

Recreating the English Language

Finally, I would like to consider the appropriation of European languages as a significant issue for the assertion of postcolonial literatures. Arundhati Roy is a key case to discuss this point. Style, when applied to Roy and what she does to the English language falls short of witchcraft. Her spectacular abilities concerning her creative use of English were one of the most celebrated aspects of The God of Small Things and one with far reaching implications for the status of postcolonial literatures and the literary usage of a language inherited from colonialism but appropriated by other cultures and places. As it was

[208] Official internet site, October 14, 1997.

discussed in section I.2.7, when postcolonial writers change and bend the norms of the standard European usage of the language they are appropriating, they are also making a political point, linked to the self-assertion of the independent community.

Almost single-handed, Roy managed a conclusive statement on the debate about the "authenticity - inauthenticity" of Indian writers writing in English. The extent and the quality of Roy's appropriation of the English language is her blunt argument. In an interview where she was asked to comment on her own style, she simply said that "*language is a skin on (my) thought*"[209] (a poetic enough answer in itself) claiming her relation to English as a natural right, non-mediated by colonial history. This way of looking at the status of the Indian writer writing in English is important to establish the usage of a language such as English away from its colonial roots, asserting the autonomous, and hence mature, world of "literatures in English".

When Arundhati Roy was awarded the Booker prize, several critics (like Aijaz Ahmad[210]) considered the novel over-written[211] and even repetitive. In terms of plot, I have to agree, considering that it was probably unnecessary "to list" so many childhood memories. Estha and Rahel are captivating enough, with less effort, thanks to their vulnerability, their hunger for affection and their tender fights against "Real Life", being the innocent children they are. The twins immediately grab the reader, granting the climax of the text (the identification of what is left of Velutha at the police station) its due impact.

In terms of narrative strategies, the option for shifting the narrator's focalisation between an adult omniscient point of view and a child-like perspective is a powerful mechanism to bring the reader closer to Rahel and Estha, seeing "Real Life" through their confused eyes. Another way of making internal processes take precedence over realist (chronologically linear) patterns of narration is to use memory as the constructive principle to organise the time frame of the text.

Together with the intimacy of the biographical mode, which centres the whole plot on the lives of Ammu, Rahel and their memories, the novel imitates the codes of a detective murder story, in which the reader is told of the event (Sophie Mol's death, the Terror, the separation of the twins) before one knows why and by who. This "suspense" is, in part, responsible for the strong reading appeal of the text.

Paramount to all these strategies, Arundhati Roy's use of language is one of the most fascinating aspects of the text.

When dealing with a postcolonial novel, the representation of the process of living in between languages is always charged with ideological issues. For example, the fact that the twins had to pay a fee, deducted from their pocket money, when they were caught speaking their mother tongue, Malayalam, instead of English, is another small detail that constructs, in the sense of identity of the twins, the idea that they belong to an inferior culture. Yet, they could acquire this English language, and experiment with it. The playfulness of the children in learning English is a little material example of the gradual mastering of this other tongue:

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[209] *The Week*, 26 Oct. 1997: 46.

[210] *Op. cit. Frontline*, August 8, 1997.

[211] Actually, it is possible to argue that the novel is not over-written if one considers repetition and expansion of sentences a matter of style. This text mixes narrative with poetry. Some passages may look pointless in terms of action, but that is because they are not there to serve the development of narrative. They are, simply, pieces of poetry, in-between narrative developments. On this subject see, Cynthia Vanden Driesen, "When Language Dances: The Subversive Power of Roy's Text in The God of Small Things" (pp: 365–376) and P. Hari Padma Rani, "The Structural Ambiguity of the God of Small Things" (pp: 338–341) *in* Arundhati Roy, the Novelist Extraordinary, Prestige Books, New Delhi, 1999.

"He made the twins look up *Despise*. It said: *to look down upon; to view with contempt; to scorn or disdain*".

(1997:52)

"*Humbling* was a nice word, Rahel thought. *Humbling along without a care in the world*."
(1997: 55)

"What a funny word *old* was on its own, Rahel thought, and said to herself: *old."*
(1997: 92)

The sounds and pronunciation patterns of the English language also become an object of experimentation in the novel: "Never.The.Less", "Ei.Der.Downs", "Per NUN sea ayshun". Each syllable is noted, feeling its "flavour". This playfulness and self-reflexivity mark an itinerary of growing intimacy with the English language, while enjoying it from the distance allowed the bilingual, the one with the frame of mind to juggle between languages. The irony in the representation of this process of experimentation and playfulness with English, constant throughout the novel as the narrator's voice replicates the children's appropriation process, is that the Malayalam speaking kids have an awareness of this language that native people may not have, acquiring it naturally, without distance to enjoy and reflect on it. This point is established in the confrontation between the twins and Miss Mitten. She is very upset when they read English aloud backwards[212], playing with her own mother tongue in a way that Miss Mitten, the native speaker cannot follow. The extra knowledge awarded the bilingual is stated in another way. While adult Miss Mitten did not even know of the language people speak in Kerala (she thought it was "Keralese"), the seven year old twins even read English backwards, displaying a high degree of comfort with a second language.

Another way of marking an intervention in the English language is to create neologisms, and The God of Small Things is full of them: "*The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man*", "*Squashed Miss Mitten-shaped stains in the Universe*", "*a die-able age*". Similarly, Arundhati Roy's use of capitals to mark certain expressions, as if they were the names of particular illusions ("*Everything was for Ever*") or emotions ("*Moth Shaped Fear*") or attitudes ("*The Reading Aloud voice*") are examples of a practice of inventing substantives out of compounds of words or expressions, in a way that is totally foreign to the English language. The use of capital letters emphasises the deliberate unusual adaptation of these words to work together, sometimes replacing other current words like for example the Arcadian "hope and innocence" of childhood for "Everything was for Ever".

Finally, Arundhati Roy's refrains ("Little Man. He lived in a cara-van. Dum dum") explore the musicality of language, inscribing in the text a miscegenation between prose and poetry:

"He watched the trains come and go. He counted his keys.
He watched governments rise and fall. He counted his keys.
He watched cloudy children at car windows with yearning marshmallow noses.
The homeless, the helpless, the sick, the small and lost, all filed past his window.
Still he counted his keys."

(1997: 63)

As the above examples prove, Arundhati Roy's very particular use of the English language helps to create a distinctive frame to review writing in English apart from a

[212] *Op. cit.,* Roy, 1997: 60.

European norm whose claim to the ownership of a language no longer applies to the reality of mature postcolonial literatures. By confronting readers with a "defamiliarising" usage of language, post-colonial writers can assert the reality of their literary difference, and thus disrupt the supremacy of the European standard in any of the inherited languages.

Arundhati Roy
II.4 "No Locusts Stand I"

In this section, I would like to approach the God of Small Things from a feminist perspective. I will return to the same characters and scenes I have just discussed from a postcolonial point of view, but its ideological content will be given a different *nuance,* according to the different focus determining the perspective from which I am re-reading the novel.

The use of "gender" as an analytical concept allows me to establish the patterns of thought and behaviour determined by patriarchal mentalities, exposing their stressing effect on women. Simultaneously, sexual difference theories enable me to monitor resistance and evaluate self-awareness, as a means to confront the social perpetuation of patriarchal codes, inscribing in the horizon of possible role models alternative ways of being a woman.

Like Sahgal, Arundhati Roy offers a concrete set of directions to change the position of women in Indian society, but Roy puts a lot of energy in encouraging a critical, rebellious perspective to consider current patterns of feminine identity in India. By contrast to the traditionally promoted accommodating and devoted figures, Roy constructs rebellious and dissenting women characters.

While reading a critical anthology on Roy[213], there was a paper on anger, as a major feature of the tone of the novel, which stroke a chord with this feminist study of the novel. The God of Small Things is indeed an angry text, echoing other Indian women writers (like Nayantara Sahgal) in their impatience with some aspects of India's traditions. The expression "No Locusts Stand I" (after "locus standi", recognised position, acknowledged right or claim) is used[214] to describe, with a caustic irony, the position of Ammu, the daughter of the Ipe family in relation to inheritance rights. Ammu is a sort of "thesis" on the denial of women's place inside their own blood families, with far reaching implications in terms of affection, attention and education opportunities. Note that the action of the plot takes place in a village of Kerala, in the sixties[215], and, at that stage, Ammu still has no claims to family property, no place in the lineage sequence, no entitlement to the same attention and affection reserved to sons. Within the logic of the novel, which reads on multiple levels, taking micro-universes as traces of wider social patterns or issues - the epigraph itself claims that *"Never again will a single story be told as though it's the only one"*- I take the single case represented in this fiction as an example of a more generalised habit in the organisation of Indian families[216]. Besides, the comments integrated in the

[213] Arundhati Roy, the Novelist Extraordinary, ed. R. K. Dhawan, Prestige Books, New Delhi, 1999.
[214] *Op. cit.* Roy, 1997: 57.
[215] The Hindu Succession Act (1956) granted female children equal inheritance claims with male siblings. However, the fact that these laws were passed does not mean they were immediately implemented in practical terms.
[216] I feel more confident to make this generalisation because of many other texts written by Women in India, either Hindu or Muslim. See especially the anthologies of short stories The Inner Courtyard, Lakshami Holmström (ed.), Virago Press, London, 1990. See also Ismat Chughtai, The Quilt and Other stories, The Women's Press, London, 1991, and Susie Tharu, K. Lalita (ed.), Women Writing in India, anthology, (two volumes), Pandora Press, London, 1991, 1993.

narrative always shift between "the big" and "the small" things, linking particular events to wider histories of oppression and segregation.

Although traditions vary from community to community, it is a fact that there is a tendency to award daughters a secondary status in relation to sons, a general feature[217] directly linked to the caste system, a patriarchal system of lineage organised around the rigorous control of women's sexuality. According to the mentality of the caste system, marriage will determine the future of daughters since women traditionally take the caste of their husbands the moment they marry, and they are integrated in the husband's (joint[218]) family. Women tend to be married within the same caste, or above, if possible. In any case, daughters are not their parents' responsibility beyond childhood, dowry arrangements and the search for a husband (I am leaving aside any personal, affective attachments, focusing only on social codes. Hence, when women get married, it is as if they had changed family. This social system has led to two situations, both of them potentially bad for women: they can be abused by their new in-laws (and we have seen in the above discussion of Nayantara Sahgal's text that many "accidents" can happen within the private realm of the family household) and, secondly, parents tend to see daughters as a sort of mere passing guests, a continuous source of worry until they are married off and dowries adequately paid, dismissing daughters as future members of the household. Since they are to be given away, daughters have less "locus standi" at the core of their own blood families, which amounts to say that power, continuity, and, eventually, acknowledged membership, are all male privileges in terms of family organisation. What is special in Roy's text is that she explicitly links this "male child" oriented mentality to a lack of support and care concerning daughters, which diminishes their self-esteem from birth, affecting their own self-image for life.

The traditional preference for sons does not necessarily apply to the whole of the Indian society, and cities tend to be more liberal places than rural areas[219]. Still, many families live by these codes, especially the higher castes or powerful high class communities (like the Syrian Christians of Kerala). In any case, it is a popular, common-sense notion among diverse Indian communities that sons are family assets and daughters family nuisances, to be constantly guarded and expensively married off. This distinction sums up one of the thematic lines of The God of Small Things, where gender segregation among one's progeny is vehemently denounced and criticised by Arundhati Roy. The example of the tense relationship between Ammu and her family is a clear fictional argument to confront the reader with the *non-place* of daughters inside traditional patriarchal families, as it happens with the Syrian Christian community of Kerala.

The clear policy of affective marginalisation and swift "giving away" of daughters is widely documented in other instances of Indian literature since many women writers have

[217] "Most social scientists interested in India's economic development have assumed that richer families would provide better food, clothing, and medical care for their daughters as well as their sons. Not so. In studies of child nutrition in rural areas, it appears that well-off peasant families continue to spend on sons and deprive daughters. In other words, son preference persists even in prosperous families. "Female feticide", that is, the practice of aborting the female fetus after sex-determination tests, offers another challenge to the view that prosperity will benefit females". Geraldine Forbes, Women in Modern India Cambridge University Press, 1996: 239, 141.

[218] Nowadays' young couples tend to live as nuclear families (parents and children) but until a few decades ago, the joint family, including aunts, uncles and cousins, was the most current form of family organisation.

[219] Even so, in her sociological study Invisible Barriers, Marion de Uyl concludes that the same applies to untouchable castes, in Kerala. Among the diverse untouchable communities the celebrations for the birth of sons are different than those for daughters, being these last always inferior or even non existent (Marion de Uyl and Aileen Stronge, Invisible Barriers: Gender, Caste and Kinship in a Southern Indian Village, International Books, Utrecht, 1995.

dealt with this problematic subject. For example, Githa Hariharan[220], Manju Kapur[221], Sarat Kumari Chaudrani[222] and Mrinal Pande[223] are some of the names I could relate to Arundhati Roy in the commitment to change the "second best"/ "object" status of daughters, determined by cultural values. Certainly, this problem is not even limited to India, being a conservative, right wing reference in Europe, which makes of this issue a good example of the importance of creating dialogue and awareness of women's problems across cultural contexts that divide us.

Since daughters are to be married off, it does not make sense "to waste money" in the education of girls because only the family of the husband would benefit from that and, worse, educated girls are not as "adaptable" as simpler, younger girls, and "to adapt and endure" is what is expected of wives, together with the production of healthy sons. That is why, in this high caste/class[224] family, the son, Chacko, is sent to Oxford to study, while the daughter, Ammu, is expected to remain quietly at home after high school. Pappachi (grandfather, the patriarch of the household) considered "*a college education (...) an unnecessary expense for a girl*"[225], so, after high school, there would be no prospects for Ammu, apart from waiting for marriage. But even that was neglected in this case. Ammu simply did not count, and there was no question of raising a dowry and finding a suitable husband. Not even that. The same procedure was repeated years later with Rahel, the daughter of Ammu.

The fact that the plot includes the lives of three generations of women from the same family is important as a context for all the feminist issues discussed in the novel. It makes one reflect on both the mutability and continuity of certain forms of oppression. Education is a key topic for that matter.

For the women of the older generation, Mammachy and Baby Kochamma, education was regarded as something "damaging" in a bride, or wife. The novel only mentions two details, but they were significant enough to hover through the rest of the plot, as a complement for the wider point, which is the unfair treatment of women as concerns education opportunities within the frame of traditional Indian mentalities. The first of these telling passages refers to Baby Kochamma. Her father only allowed her to study ornamental gardening in America because she had developed a 'reputation', "*was unlikely to find a husband*", and "*since she could not have a husband there was no harm in her having an education*"[226]. This passage voices patriarchal prejudice against the education of women, which actually was a commonly held view during the XIXth and beginning of the XXth centuries, and whose final aim would be to grant the superiority of the husband in relation to his wife, keeping the family patriarch in a position of power.

The second passage where access to education is denied to a woman concerns Mammachi, after she has been married to Pappachi (the father/grandfather in the Ipe family).

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[220] Githa Hariharan, The Thousand Faces of Night, Penguin Books India, New Delhi 1992.
[221] Manju Kapur, Difficult Daughters, Faber and Faber, London, 1998.
[222] Sarat Kumari Chaudrani, "Beloved or Unbeloved", 1891, in Women Writing in India, Susie Tharu and K. Lalita (eds.), Pandora Press, London, 1991, vol.I.
[223] Mrinal Pande, "Girls", 1983, *in* The Inner Courtyard, Stories by Indian Women, Holmström, Lakshami (ed.), Virago Press, London, 1990; Rupa & Co., Calcutta, Allahabad, Bombay, New Delhi, 1990.
[224] The caste system is a Hindu tradition. The Syrian Christian community is out of the Hindu system. Still, for practical matters, the Syrian Christian community has been interpreted by lower castes as a "high caste" group, since the Syrian Christians, together with the matriarchal Nair families, have always been one of the most powerful, high class groups in this state. In relation to untouchability, the barriers separating this high class/caste group from people with a lower social status are as racist and intolerant as in the rigid system separating other castes and communities.
[225] *Op. cit.* Roy, 1997: 38.
[226] *Ibid,* Roy, 1997: 26.

She went to Vienna with her husband, for a six month period (the time of Pappachi's course), and she started to attend violin lessons. "*The lessons were abruptly discontinued when Mammachi's teacher, Launsky-Tieffenthal, made the mistake of telling Pappachi that his wife was exceptionally talented and, in his opinion, potentially concert class*."[227]. The fact that Arundhati Roy makes Pappachi particularly resentful of his wife's talent is not very meaningful in itself. Then, I would have grounds to interpret this behaviour as an individual flaw in character and nothing more than that. However, the issue takes a different dimension due to the coherence of all the scenes regarding women's education. Repeatedly, the men around these women prevent them from developing their potentialities to the full. By inviting reflection on these issues (because she wrote about them in this powerful way), Arundhati Roy is stating her belief in the need to break with these traditional views, and she is equally promoting a less misogynous mentality, one which would protect women's legal rights and see to their access to education and other opportunities for individual self-development. To analyse The God of Small Things after my discussion of Nayantara Sahgal's novel, made these demands seem all the more serious and urgent because this other writer, focusing on another Indian community, identified as priorities for change these same problems. Note, nevertheless, that the last generation of the Ipe family, Rahel, does get access to university, and it seems to be the case that, in more general terms, the old prejudice has eroded away. This fact is confirmed by several of the studies I have read[228], which indicate that more and more women are taking up careers and making the transition to professional sectors of society.

Geraldine Forbes[229] who carried out an in depth study of women's movements and women's associations in India, during the XIXth and XXth centuries, confirms the widespread existence of superstitious beliefs asserting that educated women would become widows, connecting in a symbolical way the development of women's intellect to the annihilation of the father/phallus[230]. At home, women who wanted to study would be teased, in the best possible scenario, harassed and ostracised if they insisted too much[231]. The whole study demonstrates that the most conservative and repressive reactions came from the higher castes (like the Kashmir Brahmins of Nayantara Sahgal's novel). Anyway, education is beyond the reach of millions of families in India, and men still are expected to be "the breadwinners"[232], which makes of the education of sons a priority.

The discussion on the position of daughters inside patriarchal families, in southern India, makes the set of feminist arguments put forward in Arundhati Roy's novel a sort of social map, hinting at the construction of masculinity as power figures that one day will reproduce this same model has the heads of their own families. In terms of the definition of Indian feminine role models, the paragraphs above confirm Sahgal's view of Indian traditions has a system of common-sense references that construct an opposition between education and marriage. The fact that women are "meant" for wives and mothers is strongly emphasised by shunning career as an abnormal aim for women (actually, this is just what

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[227] *Ibid,* Roy, 1997: 50.

[228] On this subject, see Susan C. Seymour, Women, Family and Child Care in India, a World in Transition, Cambridge University Press, 1999. See also Geraldine Forbes, Women in Modern India, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.

[229] *Op. cit.* Forbes, 1996.

[230] *Ibid,* Forbes, 1996: 32, 33.

[231] *Ibid*, Forbes, 1996: 61.

[232] Actually, among working class families women became the main breadwinners working for multinational factories. According to Vasanth Kannabiran and Kalpana Kannabiran this has led to an increase of domestic violence as a means to balance masculine sense of disempowerment. See the paper "The Frying Pan or the Fire?" in Women & Right-Wing Movements, Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (ed.), Zed Books, London and New York, 1995.

happened in the West some generations ago, which testifies to the possibility of reforming dominant mentalities presiding over a patriarchal society, without annihilating its coherence or identity). Beyond echoing Sahgal's concern with education and property rights, Arundhati Roy adds another layer to her critical survey of Indian patriarchies when she addresses the position of divorced wives. Since the traditional system does not provide for that anomaly (wives "endure", they don't "divorce"), these cases do not have room "to exist". Actually, Roy maps a double 'absence of room' for women in such a heavily coded society: as a daughter you are second best, as divorced wife, you do not exist at all. By circumscribing the gaps in the traditional social mantle, Roy is mapping a certain amount of claustrophobia for those who are not totally accommodated to this social universe, and she is also mapping the power of patterns of social discipline. The lack of alternatives is a clear mechanism of social control, repressing possible dissenting voices.

The distinctive treatment between sons and daughters seems to be extensive to their progeny. In the previous section, I discussed this issue from a postcolonial angle, reading the preference for half-British Sophie Mol as a case of Anglophilia. But, the contrast between the status of Sophie Mol and the twins Estha and Rahel combines both sexist and postcolonial questions. The other line of exclusion that distinguishes Sophie Mol from the twins is that she is the daughter of the son (Chacko), and this fact makes of the young half-British girl the future head of the family (in the absence of brothers), and consequently, she is the one the older generation is counting on. On the contrary, the sheer presence of Estha and Rahel at their grandparents' is a continuous source of embarrassment for the family. The only reason they are not at their father's home, their logical, natural place, is that Ammu has dared to divorce, and their presence at their grandparents', in the Ayemenem house, is a living testimony of Ammu's failure to live up to expected patterns of decency and convenience. Within the circular logic of patriarchal prejudice, the adults around the twins (Baby Kochamma, Chacko and Mammachi) think these children are *not their responsibility*, for their presence is an aberration of the social order, which has established that daughters, and their children, belong to the husband/father. This amounts to say that from the point of view of her own relatives, Ammu and the twins are living with the *wrong* family. As evidence on the depth and general hold of these cultural references I will quote Kochu Maria, a servant, who knows very well whom she can bully and whom she has to please:

> (Concerning Sophie Mol) "When she grows up, she will be our Kochamma, and she'll raise our salaries, and give us nylon saris for Onam."
>
> (1997: 185)

> (Addressing the twins Estha and Rahel) "Tell your mother to take you to your father's house. (...) There you can break as many beds as you like. These aren't your beds. This isn't your house."
>
> (1997: 83)

The fact that Ammu divorced an alcoholic husband who would beat her is considered irrelevant. From a patriarchal/feudal point of view, obsessed with notions of order and perpetuation, good wives and mothers endure, the few that remain single "behave", and thus, the stability of lineage systems is granted.

In Roy's Kerala, which several Indian critics deem a relevant representation of local social realities[233], prejudice and tradition are fundamental to keep communities apart, marking a hierarchy of different identities. "Power" is the deity that lives off these rigid traditions, but at the expense of considerable social tension and unacceptable human costs. It is in the name of the caste system that women are treated in this way, as non-entities to be exchanged among the right families, and it is this same worldview that prevents bright untouchables (like Velutha) from having the jobs and careers they deserve.

From the angle of sexual difference theories, the strength of patriarchal mechanisms of social control is adequately measured by the itinerary of neglect that runs through the three generations of Indian women in the Ipe family. The way women are treated by their parents or grandparents snatch from them the necessary self-esteem to react and rebel, encouraging the intended accommodation. However, too much pressure can have the opposite effect. The lack of flexibility to reach for a middle ground between tradition and the creation of a more fulfilling position for women inside their blood families is what makes Ammu's rebellion so extreme. Had the pressure to accommodate been less intransigent, the marginalisation and cruelty awarded to this young woman and her twins would certainly look as unnecessary as they are.

Taking into account sexual difference theories and the novel's geology of women's wounded self-esteem as a social pattern produced by local patterns of family organisation, it seemed sensible to turn this critical analysis to the internal life of women characters, assessing emotional stress in their self-definition. Both dissenters and accommodated women characters will be considered, because all of them had to handle the lack of very important "small things" like expressed concern for their sensitivity and emotions, and a clear environment of affection. The feeling of being loved and cherished has got serious consequences for the development of individual self-esteem and self-respect and that is why gender divisions inside families, inculcated from childhood can be so damaging.

Roy structures most scenes of her novel upon the difference in treatment between Ammu (daughter) and Chacko (son). This distinction between the two of them is vividly represented from the beginning of the plot, for instance, in the first chapter, when the family is gathered in the church, at the funeral of Sophie Mol. Chacko stands with the rest of the family around him while Ammu and the twins are made to stand apart, excluded, isolated from the rest of the family. There are reasons for this family division at this particular ceremony as the reader later on finds out, but the important thing in terms of the structure of the novel is that this division is always present, in a more violent or subtle form, throughout the whole text.

A sense of opposition and division also permeates different senses of identity among different generations of women, creating a line of conflict between older and younger women. While the women of the older generation (Mammachi and Baby Kochamma) accepted to play by the rules of the established social order, Rahel and Ammu chose to resist accommodation. In this way, the last two characters become inspirational figures to think processes of liberation and social reform. Ammu and Rahel do not reach solutions, but they provide an account of the pain that simply makes them "walk out" of the established script, even if this implies taking suicidal risks. The movement of these two characters inside the narrative plot is born out of desperation, but it opens a whole new set of hypothesis in terms of forms of living and feeling, the subversive impact of which can only be measured by its

[233] See R.K. Dhawan's introduction to Arundhati Roy, the Novelist Extraordinary, 1999: 12, see also, N. P. Singh's "Women in The God of Small Things" (1999: 69), and Nirmala C. Prakash, "Man-Woman Relationship in The God of Small Things", (1999:77) *in* R. K. Dhawan (ed.), Sangam Books, London, 1999.

contrast to the rigidity of the dominant feudal codes of gender division, active in this location.

Ammu and Rahel have a different degree of critical awareness and self-(gender)-perception because, since they are divorcees, they are outsiders to the marriage/caste system. The indifference of Pappachi and Mammachi (the parental figures in this text) has left these two women to find their own answers outside of marriage (the institutional pattern of accommodation, placing women under the authority of a husband), and this is the fact that makes these two characters so special. The lack of an arranged marriage is an expression of utter neglect on the part of the parents/grandparents, but "*oddly, neglect seemed to have resulted in an accidental release of the spirit*"[234]. Left to choose their own husbands, both Ammu and Rahel made their attempt at creating their own families, but their marriages did not last. Once they were done with any possibility of accommodation within the traditional system, they had to improvise other, alternative patterns of identity.

Ammu rebelled in two ways. One of them was to opt for a divorce, imposing her presence (together with her twins) to her own blood family, demanding from them the material support her husband was supposed to grant. For a while, she almost succeeded in conquering a sort of "place" for her small family, in this improvised, deviant household.

Her second rebellious attitude, and one for which she paid dearly, was to refuse a sex-less, body-less identity only because she was a divorced mother (she is only twenty-seven in 1969, when the central plot of the text develops[235]). Velutha, her untouchable lover, is the assertion of her female desire and her right to live on, passionately, after divorce. However, Ammu is also, to a certain extent, a "failed" model of transgression because she follows the traditional narrative scheme of shame, marginalisation and death, the kind of evolution that the plot of misogynous texts reserves for deviant, "sinful" women. Still, her exemplary punishment does not undo the impact of the previous transgression. It is interesting that the main anti-colonial voice in the text, Ammu, is also the most subversive in specifically feminist terms. Apparently, the resisting frame of mind that entitles her to break with stereotypical views of gender roles provides the same distance from colonial propaganda (see previous section on this matter). Ammu's affair with Velutha is an explosive issue in feminist terms. As a proud affirmation of feminine desire, in a society where its assertion outside of the sanctioned frame of marriage and wife-hood is problematic (to say the least), this is no small service. To make this desire visible is very important because the existence of desire implies selfhood, that is to say, entitles women with individual subjectivity, beyond the standard endurance and abnegation.

From a socio-political point of view, the affair between high caste Ammu and the untouchable Velutha is an example of transgression because it crosses the borders between touchable and untouchable. If the reader sympathises with the couple (as one is led to), there are cultural codes whose credibility is in jeopardy, affecting not only codes of decency that govern women's sexuality but also the boundaries that divide castes. This is not a simple issue. The torture of Velutha by touchable policemen is a political act. They are politicians' hounds "*cracking an egg to make an omelette*"[236] and this has to be done is this cruel way because Velutha represents what touchables fear, the fear of losing privilege, of being dispossessed, of having one's purity and ascendancy questioned. This exemplary killing, advertised in the newspapers, is a propaganda strategy to contain any revolutionary spirit from untouchables. This is a matter of "*inoculating a community against an outbreak*"[237] and

[234] *Op. cit.* Roy, 1997: 17
[235] *Ibid,* Roy, 1997: 38.
[236] *Ibid,* Roy, 1997: 308.
[237] *Ibid,* Roy, 1997: 309.

it is an old, hegemonic practice. From a feminist point of view, the relevance of this affair depends on the illustration of the symbolical/political dogmas connected to the control of women's bodies, as potential sources of corruption and contamination for the identity of the community. According to this essentialist mentality, the rape of women is a form of national offence, as, unfortunately, too many women know[238].

In the paper "Understanding Sirasgaon"[239], Anupama Rao discusses a famous court case concerning the abuse of four *dalit* women by high caste men. She concludes that courts were complacent judging this case, as they usually are, and the motives for this generalised complacence are the real subject of her research. She considers that in the context of the caste system, sex and marriage are politics, and desire is a dangerous element because caste is a matter of blood, and women's wombs have to be carefully guarded. If it is the case of low caste men having sex with high caste women there is the risk of social mobility. Thus, high castes try to contain and discipline this possibility in the most violent way. Since upper caste women are not "*permitted*" to choose a partner outside of the convenient caste, the possibility of sexual intercourse with a low caste or untouchable man is perceived as rape, automatically.

I think you can recognise this same "mental habit" in the plot of the novel, especially if one considers how keen the policemen are on "punishing" the rapist. They are too ready to believe Baby Kochamma's rape story. When Ammu tries to say it was otherwise she is bullied out of any complain, as she had to be, to avoid inconvenient investigations concerning the way the police handled the matter. The reason why the policemen immediately believed the rape story is that they could not conceive of Ammu's consent to have sex with an untouchable because, according to common-sensical cultural references, her family is there to grant that she will not be *allowed* to consent. And indeed that is what happened.

In her brave paper, Anupama Rao claims that if a rape case concerns high caste men abusing low caste/untouchable women, then, it is tolerated by the legal system, since it is good to promote high caste privilege: "*the bodies of dalit women are seen collectively as mute, and capable of bearing penetration and other modes of marking upper-caste hegemony (...)"*[240]. The God of Small Things also includes a reference to the sexual privilege of high caste men over servant girls[241] and Chacko's behaviour towards the girls working in his factory falls within the same pattern. On the contrary, the handling of a rape case in which there is an inversion of the castes of rapist and victim will most certainly be met with horror and stern repression:

"The problem of the circulation of women is tied explicitly to the formation and persistence of caste, and it is this critical fact that 'makes' caste. (...) The nature of caste-specific, gendered violence would seem to point to this logic as well. (...) It is rules of caste alliance that serve as barriers to the possibility that all men might see all women as potentially 'theirs'. Imagining the possibility of expressing desire for upper-caste women is fraught with the possibility of **violent disciplining** for dalit men. It cannot be enacted as anything other than the fantasy of rape, since no other relationship to upper-caste women **can be permitted**. At the same time, the bodies of dalit women are seen collectively as mute, capable of bearing penetration and other modes of marking upper-caste hegemony." (Anupama Rao, 1997: 127, my emphasis)

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[238] See Purshottam Agarwal, "Savarkar, Surat, Draupadi, Legitimising Rape as a Political Weapon", *in* Women & Right-Wing Movements, Indian Experiences, Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (eds.), Zed Books Ltd., London and New York, 1995.

[239] Anupama Rao, "Understanding Sirasgaon" *in Thamyris*, vol.4, nº 1, 1997.

[240] Anupama Rao, 1997: 127.

[241] *Op. cit.* Roy, 1997: 168.

If one is aware of these features of Indian society, I think it is easier to defend that Ammu is a very powerful character, through which Arundhati Roy makes important political and feminist points, specially on account of the fact that women's sexuality is such an important issue for blood hegemonies, being the object of rigorous control by the older generations of each family. That is exactly what happens in the plot of this text, as mother, brother and single, frustrated old aunt, join forces with the police, individual ambition (Comrade Pillai gladly refuses any help to his rival) and the indoctrinated Paravans sense of duty (after all it is Velutha's father who denounces his own son) to make sure Ammu is not allowed to choose a lover, and that the attempted transgression is violently and exemplary punished. The twist in the old story is that the point of view of Roy's narrative has parted ways with high caste patriarchies, and the reader has been led to understand and sympathise with the transgressive lovers, making their punishment look like an unforgivable symptom of an aberrant social order (in fact, to focalise the beating of Velutha through the innocent eyes of children is a master move in narrative technique, totally directing the sympathy of the reader).

Rahel, who lives one generation after Ammu, is not surrounded by such a tough social order as her mother. Symbolically, all the castrating figures, like Baby Kochamma, are old, emigrated or have died. Hence, when the novel finishes, Rahel is left in an "open ended" position, albeit a clearly transgressive one, and I interpret her incest with her brother (Estha) as a healing gesture[242] (the gathering of the divided parts of a "Siamese soul") offering the current generation the possibility of living by less demanding ways, if only they dare to assert their emotional needs and risk uncharted ways of living.

Rahel's return to the Ayemenem house is a new beginning, starting from the same place Ammu started her struggle, at exactly the same age (thirty-one). As encouragement, Rahel has the memory of Ammu's words and attitudes, articulating her own genealogy of resistance, by opposition to models of accommodation, like Mammachi and Baby Kochamma. The memory and the example Ammu left behind are precious enough to measure her contribution to a more liberated subjectivity, establishing two alternatives to deviate from patriarchal society: the assertion of women's desire and alliances across class.

A final word on the dutiful patriarchal allies of the text: Baby Kochamma and Mammachi. Baby Kochamma is a single and frustrated old woman who sees in the repression of other lives (like Ammu and the twins) the only solace for her own unhappiness. Since the existing social order prevented her from marrying her beloved Irish monk, this social order has to be preserved at any cost, preferably with punishment for transgressors, otherwise, her accommodation (and corresponding frustration and emptiness) is meaningless. The sole positive view of her life as a "single aunt" is to consider that her love sacrifice was the price to pay for the preservation of collective moral codes. She is lead by collective patterns of cultural identity to believe she has chosen to do "the right thing", flattering in this way her bitter, unbalanced ego. Baby Kochamma is important to bring to this critical dialogue (and to the awareness it intends to provoke) the complicit behaviour of some women in relation to the patriarchal system, perpetuating their own losses and limitations as necessary for the survival of the social order.

When this complicity does not make of women agents of patriarchy, it makes them victims, as Mammachi, the silent wife who endures a violent marriage. She does what Ammu was expected to do, and her pitiful existence is considered the moral, correct one. In

[242] On this subject see the paper "Sexual/Textual Strategies in The God of Small Things, Tirthankar Chanda, *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, Dijon, France, 1997, Autumn, 20:1, 38-44.

the name of this "morality" she accepted the interruption of her violin classes, the beatings with a brass flower vase and the flogging of her daughter, Ammu, with a riding crop.

The violence Pappachi inflicts on his wife and daughter is a theme which combines sexism and colonialism in such a way that it deserves particular discussion, connecting this episode to other similar moments of intersection in the plot of the novel (like the family adoration for Sophie Mol and the indecent proposal of Mr. Hollick to "take care" of Ammu). It is because Pappachi, the mega Anglophile, is totally frustrated with his Indian, colonised identity that he becomes such a despot at home, making of the female bodies at hand (Mammachi and Ammu) the means to compensate for his "effeminate"/powerless position. By beating his women, he is asserting his masculinity in the only way left for him.

According to Ania Loomba, this unfortunate scheme of compensation was neither isolated nor unique:

> (...) Colonialism intensified patriarchal relations in colonised lands, often because native men, increasingly disenfranchised and excluded from the public sphere, became more tyrannical at home. They seized upon the home and the women as emblems of their culture and nationality."
>
> (Ania Loomba, 1998: 168)

In this case, tyranny at home is not a form of cultural or nationalist assertion, for Pappachi rejected Indian culture and the only nationality he covets is British, but, as a man, he feels "disenfranchised and excluded" assimilating racial disempowerment as a form of castration. For the colonised subject, the violent subjugation of women becomes perversely important as mimicry of a display of colonial power. As Sara Suleri suggests in her paper "The Rhetoric of English India"[243] the representations of the empire were private, personal, and intimate. Hence, for the individual subject, colonialism was more than politics: it was a form of psychic disempowerment, to be handled in the construction of a sense of identity salvaged from emotional stress and problematic self-images.

[243] Sara Suleri, "The Rethoric of English India", *in* The Post-colonial Studies Reader, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin (eds.), Routledge, London and New York, 1995.

Githa Hariharan

II.5 Hariharan: Decolonizing the Mind

> "We, in India, think quickly, we talk quickly, and when we move we move quickly. There must be something in the sun of India that makes us rush and tumble and run on. And our paths are paths interminable. The *Mahabharata* has 214,77 verses and the *Ramayana* 48,000. The *Puranas* are endless and innumerable. We have neither punctuation nor the treacherous 'ats' and 'ons' to bother us - we tell one interminable tale. Episode follows episode, and when our thoughts stop our breadth stops."
>
> Raja Rao[244]

Githa Hariharan won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Book in 1993, with her novel The Thousand Faces of Night (1992). She has also published a collection of short stories entitled The Art of Dying (1993) and two novels, The Ghosts of Vasu Master (1994) and, more recently, When Dreams Travel (1999). Hariharan also works as a free lance editor and she has published an anthology of Indian short stories translated from four major South Indian languages. She called it A Southern Harvest (1993).

Hariharan lives in New Delhi but she has lived in the United States and in Manila, as well. A curious biographical detail is her recent complain against the discrimination of mothers, at New Delhi's Supreme Court. Her case contributed to make explicit the fact that although the Indian constitution says the natural guardian of a Hindu minor is "*the father, and after him, the mother*", it does not mean that only in the case of a deceased father, does the mother become the guardian of a minor. Thanks to Hariharan and her husband the legal rights of mothers were promoted by the outcome of this case.

Together with Anita Desai, Shashi Despande and Meena Alexander, Githa Hariharan has been ailed as one of the women writers producing a body of Indian literature that is commited to feminist and social issues. As I hope to have proved above, the names of Arundhati Roy and Nayantara Sahgal (among possible others) can surely be added to this short list. While attempting to describe what is special about this segment of literary production, critics like Chanda, Ho and Mathai[245] discuss the vortex of Indian women's writing as the intersection between women's individual identity and the identity of the community, two mutually implicated dimensions whose bonds are rather complex. If, as these critics claim, Indian women writers are constructing "*narrative mappings of alternative 'Indias*" through their novels and short stories, then, they are contributing to create a set of representations of India which confront the reader with diverse regional/national problems, while suggesting directions for change and improvement, in synchronicity with women's issues.

The above view of feminist Indian literature, attuned to the social dimension of texts, seems to invite feminist readings based on "gender", as a tool to describe the position of

[244] Raja Rao, "Language and Spirit" (foreword to Kanthapura, 1938) *in* The Post-colonial Studies Reader, *op. cit.* 1995.

[245] "Women in 'India': Four Recent Novels" by Geetanjali Singh Chanda, Elaine Yee Ho and Kavita Mathai, *in Wasafiri*, number 26, autumn 1997.

women inside local patriarchies and the extent of the psychological damage inflicted on them as second class citizens of a repressive social order. Naturally, women's writing is not isolated from other forms of social critique given the overlapping nature of social forces. What is special about writing that is committed to women's issues is that the analysis of social and political problems is directed first and foremost at the position of women, revealing how these social problems are specifically felt by a group of individuals of that society.

The activity of writing, together with story-telling, are pedagogic discourses that can contribute to promote dominant patriarchal ideologies. When these two activities serve this function, they become the targets of Hariharan's critical perspective. This amounts to say that Hariharan shifted her reflection from the representation of a concrete society to the analysis of popular discourses promoting certain notions of how to behave as a woman, what activities to perform or which dreams to nurture. For example, why is it that traditional popular tales usually make women desire the prince, if the prince can be more cruel and violent than the powerless shepherd? Acquired notions of class differences and the wish for social mobility tend to make certain men more desirable to provide for women, granting these characters subtle forms of ownership and abuse, more easily allowed and accepted in a suitor that has status and power. This reasoning is an instance of Hariharan's intelligent deconstruction of certain common-sense notions embedded in story-telling and in some patterns of narrative craft which require critical re-thinking. As a means to confront the patriarchal ideology of these texts, Hariharan re-tells the famous One Thousand and One Nights in such a way that the re-created text argues, for example, that self-preservation has to be more important that social mobility, defending the preference for shepherds or merchants.

Apart from the productive effectivity of "gender' as a tool of critical analysis to understand the exchange of women in a system of power and social mobility, Hariharan's creation of alternative women characters, and the design of a plot around their unconventional choices, embodies a form of writing closer to sexual difference theories and their search for women's solutions and priorities. What I mean is that feminist writing can be less concerned with identifiying the mechanics of local patriarchies than with the search for alternative ideas and projects for women. If, would one wonder from the point of view of sexual difference theories, women had ever been allowed to have their way in terms of power and social re-organisation what would they do? Another way to go around the perspectives advocated by sexual difference theories could be phrased as "how will liberated women be?" How can she be different from the domestic version created by patriarchy? I think this set of theoretical questions is relevant to present the last text I am going to address in this part of the research because When Dreams Travel[246] really answered some of these questions in a very creative and intelligent way.

Contrary to the two previous novels, the critical analysis of which was important to get a glimpse of India's realities (its most pressing problems, its self-defining mechanisms, its working through of colonial memories, its current challenges and tensions), Hariharan's novel is more de-territorialised. It is a fantastic text, full of magic and ghosts, which could have happened anywhere in the East…long ago. This does not mean that the politics or the ideological discussions of this novel are less serious or less effective. It just happens that it constructs its meaning in a different way, more dependent on parody and symbol, as language and thought games, than on the straight-forward representation of a concrete geo-social referent. When Dreams Travel is a different kind of text, say, more in the "myth

[246] Githa Hariharan, When Dreams Travel, Picador, Macmillan Publishers, 1999.

making business", projecting exemplary heroines while de-constructing both misogynous and colonial stereotypes. Thus, Hariharan's re-writing of Scherazade's tale, from a postcolonial and feminist perspective falls under the definition of "figuration", offered in section I.1.1, which amounts to say that Hariharan is creating new figures that embody alternative concepts and images, translating to a short-hand version, the horizon of liberated feminist identities.

Because of the above description of the aims and the structure of When Dreams Travel, I agree that Githa Hariharan and this novel should be part of current genealogies of women's writing in India. By deconstructing stereotypical characters and plots in story-telling, Hariharan is undoing the implicit morality and prejudice of traditional texts. Secondly, while re-writing a new, "corrected" version of an established, canonised tale, she already is imagining beyond the frame of dominant ideologies, de-colonising the reader's mind in the process.

The re-writing of canonical texts is a postmodern technique, quite current, for example in the writing of Angela Carter, another very powerful re-writer of traditional tales. I will not take this discussion further, though I make the connection. In this research, the texts are being discussed from feminist and postcolonial point of views, which already proved quite productive and adequate to track down different forms of situated socio-political critique voiced by a genealogy of committed women.

Githa Hariharan's When Dreams Travel (1999) is a re-writing of The Arabian Nights' Entertainments or The Thousand and One Nights, as these texts became known in the West via a French translation. By re-writing Shahrzad's story from a feminist angle, Hariharan imposes on the reader a whole re-thinking of the hatred of women so obvious in the famous translations of the medieval Arab anthologies. In this way, Hariharan is not only "answering back" to a misogynous literary tradition but she is also deconstructing and eroding the sexist impact of the original. The detailed analysis of When Dreams Travel will be undertaken below. For the moment, I want to settle general aspects of the text, so as to guide my readers through a labyrinthine narrative structure.

When Dreams Travel is written in a self-assertive tone, establishing story-telling as a women's tradition passed on among them, from generation to generation. In the novel, male characters can listen and repeat the tales they have heard, but it is women who invent them. To claim story-telling as a feminine tradition is not a unique or isolated position within feminism. One of the most comprehensive studies on story-telling and the female tellers who are said to have told them has been done by Marina Warner[247]. She follows references to legendary sibyls in classic mythology, followed by widespread writings expressing fear and hatred of "women's voices" in the medieval period. These two traditions, the classical and the medieval one, together with some references from Catholic scriptures, have created a binary (popular) opposition between the docile wife and the "gossiping one". Warner brilliantly links the usual old age of the story-teller to the post-fertility period, when "grandmothers" are allowed a voice because they have "less" of a wifely role. The symbolical content of this ageing, speaking figure is that a woman's voice is the opposite of a pregnant belly. This amounts to say that fertile women have to be silent, erasing the subject-hood of a wife in relation to a husband. On the contrary, the old hag, widowed grandmother or the old servant, are husband-less women: hence they are allowed a voice.

Another relevant detail to add to this genealogy of the bond between story telling and women's writing is the historical fact that, in India, newspaper publications were the first "milieu" to accept women's texts for publication. In the nineteenth century, the press was

[247] Marina Warner, From the Beast to the Blonde, on Fairy Tales and Their Tellers, Vintage, London, 1995.

already very active in many small Indian towns and the inclusion of a section focusing on women's subjects (among which the serial or the short story would be included) proved to be an extremely popular measure[248]. Thus, story-telling, in the shape of short story writing, has indeed been friendly territory for women.

And what is there in this rewriting of The Arabian Nights' Entertainments (an alternative name of The Thousand and One Nights) for the postcolonial dimension of this research? Why would Githa Hariharan find important to decolonise such a text? What is at stake in such an enterprise?

According to Jack Zipes[249], who has published extensively on story-telling, the original Arabic title of this famous anthology of tales (the object of diverse selections and editions) is The Thousand and One Nights, referring to an anthology of popular tales compiled in the Middle Ages. The oldest known manuscript is probably from the XVth century, but there are references to the title of this anthology in older documents. This written version of oral tales includes elements from three recognisable different cultures: Indian, Persian and Arab. The first European translator of the Arab anthology was Antoine Galland who published the French edition under the title of Les Mille et Une Nuits, in twelve volumes, from 1704 to 1717. The French translator not only used the original Arab collection, but he also added some more tales that he collected from a Christian Arab called Youhwnna Diab or Hanna Diab[250]. In the XIXth century, Richard Burton translated these tales from French into English, although Edward William Lane had already published a selection of several pieces in 1839-41. Apparently, Burton's edition (1885-1888) is not completely faithful to the French original, and Zipes cannot help mentioning the "*astonishing anthropological footnotes*"[251]. I suspect the timing of this translation, at the height of British colonialism, may well explain the "astonishing" notes. The impact of the Arab tales in the West was tremendous. To begin with, the tales introduced a totally new concept of the sprawling, endless possibilities of literary form, not to mention the creative use of motif and fantasy. The most direct inheritor of the influence of The Thousand and One Nights was a narrative sub-genre mostly devoted to children: the fairy tale. The tremendous success of the Arab tales made of them part of the everyday cultural references of Western culture, and several of the stereotypes that projected a notion of "India" or "the East" in Western mentalities, where certainly promoted with the help of this text.

Some of the Orientalist stereotypes one finds in The Thousand and One Nights (and which where endlessly repeated in other narratives) concern a universe of fabulous wealth, exotic life styles and the decadent sensuality of Eastern peoples, ruled by irresponsible tyrants who followed whim and caprice, instead of reason, in the management of their marvellous cities. And the ruthless way these oriental kings disposed of their women? Was that not further evidence that the East was ruled by undeserving princes to be replaced by the fair, chivalric and righteous Western representatives of other, more sober and sensible forms of power? Take Shahryar, the sultan in The Thousand and One Nights, as one such

[248] See "Indian Women Short Story Writers in English: a Critical Study", by C.V. Venugopal and M. G. Hedge *in* Indian Women Novelists (ed.) R. K. Dhawan, Prestige, 1991, New Delhi (vol. I-V).
[249] The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales, Jack Zipes, OUP, Oxford, 2000.
[250] Robert L. Mack, in his introduction to Arabian Nights' Entertainments, defends that, apart from Hanna Diab, there were other sources from where Galland copied the tales he added to the original Arab Collection. Galland was the secretary of the marquis de Nointel, the ambassador of Louis XIV in Constantinople. There, he had the time and the opportunity to translate diverse manuscripts and unidentified fragments which he later added to his translation of The Thousand and One Nights. (Oxford World's Classics, OUP, 1995, 1998: xvi).
[251] *Op. cit.* Zipes, 2000: 24.

archetype[252]. He had all the available virgins of the city beheaded, plus his wife and her slaves. Certainly not the kindest neither the most balanced of rulers! This, and similar deductions of this kind, is the motive that made the Arabian Nights such a delightful text for colonial Europe. It fed the logic of its racist worldview and it confirmed all of the corresponding expectations of sin, lust, irresponsibility and (what prizes to conquer!) fabulous wealth. This is the East the West dreamed of and hoped to encounter.

What if, as Hariharan playfully suggests in her novel, the rich and sophisticated cultural heritage of the East was altered beyond recognition by the pen of the misogynous scholar who wrote down the oral literature produced by women, the traditional story-tellers? What if Euro-centric readers misread the tales? Even so, the reversal of colonial discourses praising the exclusive cultural superiority of Western culture is put into question by the phenomenon of The Arabian Nights' Entertainments. Even this 'corrupted version' of Eastern culture dazzled Europe. Who seduced whom? Which culture claimed the power of the sultan, and which culture was telling the tales? Which metropolis was voraciously hungry for the pearls of the colonised culture?

II.5.1 "Eastwallas and Westwallas"

In colonial, Victorian England, The Thousand and One Nights were widely known and they became a current source of Orientalist images. These images inspired many Western writers, from the precursors of the gothic novel, like Walpole and Clara Reeves, to Sir Walter Scott, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Joseph Conrad, H. G. Wells and James Joyce. The aesthetic influence and the systematic intertextual references to the Arab collection are well established in literary criticism[253] [254]. Stereotypes of the orient always focused on wealth, sensual delight, exotic appearances and habits, magic and mysticism[255]. To colonial eyes, references to luxurious products invoked business opportunities and the impending rewards for the colonial enterprise, thus encouraging it. As for the other aspects of the (then) current stereotypes of "the East", they were so easily memorised and repeated because they were as instrumental to colonial mentality as the promise of wild profit. Let us consider the above mentioned elements in Orientalist stereotypes: magic, a tainted mysticism (suspect of mere superstition), "licentious behaviour" and "odd" or "illogical" ways of living. All of these stand in striking opposition to reason and Enlightenment, the universal gift the West wanted to bestow on the rest of mankind (whether they need it or not). The irrational is, then, the common element that links all these images of the East. Even the "fabulous wealth" of the Arab tales might look, to imperial eyes, uncontrolled, excessive and un/reasonable, being the simple product of privileged accumulation and not of clever organisation.

According to the introduction of Robert L. Mack to the Oxford edition of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, eighteenth century critics were quick to note the irrationality of the tales, deeming them the product of a woman's imagination, without the sober wit or pragmatic intelligence fit for men (the quoted male critics are indeed sober in their judgement: they all repeat the same ideas using the same words. Not very witty…). However, the importance of irrational representations of the East for colonial England was that these could be used to influence public opinion in favour of colonial practices. With

[252] My working definition of "archetype" is "primordial image or pattern that recurs throughout literature and thought, consistently enough to be considered a universal concept or situation" (Britannica, vol. 1, page 529).
[253] Op. cit, Robert L. Mack, The Arabian Nights' Entertainments, OUP, 1995, 1998.
[254] Elleke Boehmer, Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995: 45.
[255] See on section I.2.2, Homi Bhabha's theory of the stereotype as a conceptual tool in the construction of dominant colonial ideologies.

such irrational stereotypes, it was easy to promote the idea that Eastern people were unable to rule themselves and, consequently, in need of colonisation (and the architects of colonisation needed public support). The next stage in this instrumental use of Orientalist stereotypes was to convince the colonised middle-class that they were unfit to rule themselves and then, the stable colonies would be freed from the danger of nationalist stirrings (obviously there is a logic of class alliance that lies underneath the whole project of colonialism. No one was concerned about convincing hard working peasants or slaves of anything). This was the political scheme that took advantage of certain stereotypical images of the East, being "unreasonable" cultural products translated into evidence of a lack of proper civilisation.

The impression of irrationality is something that the text of The Thousand and One Nights, itself, instigated, both in terms of form and content.

The labyrinthine structure of Hariharan's When Dreams Travel is a mirror image of the structure of The Thousand and One Nights, again, a replica of other ancient traditions of interminable story telling, as is the case of Indian literature and its foundational sacred Vedas, where episode follows episode. This point is made by the critic Meenakshi Mukherjee[256], who, on her turn, falls back on the words of the Indian writer Raja Rao, quoted in the epigraph to this section.

The effect of the labyrinthine structure of The Thousand and One Nights is, just as in the spectacular twists and turns of the gothic novel[257], to create in the listener/reader a predisposition to accept the interference of the marvellous and the supernatural because of an excess of alternative, narrative levels, and an excess of the possibilities of the plot. In both cases, the reader is confronted with narrative developments that go beyond the expectations created by a self-contained, linear, realist narrative. Being the latter the model of Western literary tradition, what appalled critics in the Arab tales (for its deviance from rules of taste and technique) was precisely the novelty that captivated a wider public, making of the translated volumes a huge success.

It is meaningful that Hariharan chose to rewrite such a widely known text when debates on identity, cultural heritage and postcolonialism are becoming mainstream. After all, this is a text that travelled from East to West, as part of the wider flow of products arriving in the colonial centre. This fact contradicts colonial mythologies, which claimed that, in terms of culture, the flow was one way, from West to East, while merchandises and raw materials travelled the other way around. It was never so. Cultural influences were always exchanged between colonial centre and colonies for centuries of their joint history. That is the case of The Thousand and One Nights, a text that stood to the test of time and displacement with an amazing vitality. When rewriting such a canonical text, Hariharan is not rewriting a piece of Eastern literature alone. It is rather a piece of world literature, which proves the existence of this mixed, shared cultural heritage. And, this cultural and artistic exchange still goes on, embodied in the contemporary journey of Hariharan's novel, following on the footsteps of the translated Arab anthology, which travelled to the West before it, to fascinate more and more readers.

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[256] Meenakshi Mukherjee, The Twice Born Fiction, Heinemann, New Delhi, 1971.

[257] The gothic novel is a sub-genre of horror tales. The name "gothic" is taken from the architecture of the setting where these tales usually take place. The type of setting is one of the structural characteristics defining this sub-genre and the specific importance of these space/architectural co-ordinates is related to the constellation of themes and meaning of the sub-genre. The gothic is centred on the supernatural, curses, evil, and the irrational, which are underlined and enhanced by the shadowy atmosphere of gothic castles, with their winding stairs, secret passages, dungeons, isolation and decay. Madness and lust are related aspects of these spaces outside of the everyday, "reasonable" world.

Hariharan includes in her novel other narrative elements that hint at the long cultural exchange and shared heritage between East and West. For example, both civilisations admire exquisite art and cultural refinement and the Taj Mahal is considered one of the wonders of the world. Like the Arab tales, it was created by Eastern "know how", and earned world recognition. Just as Hariharan rewrote The Thousand and One Nights, she also shifts her representation of the Taj Mahal, a monument to love, to unexpected grounds since, in her novel, the fact that it is a tomb (though a graceful monument) is the real symbol of the love between men and women. The Taj Mahal is a mausoleum built in the city of Agra by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan to the memory of his beloved wife who died in childbirth in 1631. Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal (which means "chosen one of the palace") had been married since 1612. The beautiful monument on the bank of the Yamura took the name Mahal from his princess. The mausoleum is built in pure, white marble and its interior decorations include arabesque engravings with precious stones[258]. This exact description of the monument is reproduced in the novel, confirming the fictional invocation of a real referent that is never named.

Shah Jahan conquered his place in history for his monuments and his able leadership, but his reign ended in a humiliating way. According to Mughal tradition, there was no law of primogeniture, so, each time the emperor died, the fratricidal wars between his sons would settle who would succeed in becoming the next emperor. Shah Jahan had four sons. Aurangzeb did not wait for his father's death. He killed two of his brothers, incarcerated his father and seized the throne for a long and ruthless reign. His austerity and his religious zeal made him decrease support for court musicians and painters and all the monumental building plans were stopped. His endless wars and his endless enemies led to the decadence of the once powerful Mughal dynasty, which did not survive long after Aurangzeb's death. Again, this historical information is important because it is included in the main plot of Hariharan's novel. In chapter 11, a violent dynastic succession takes place as Prince Umar (just like Aurangzeb) imprisons his father and takes hold of the palace and the city. In this fictional case, the chosen prison is the mausoleum sultan Shahryar was building for their queen. Austere prince Umar is tired of his father's waste of money with obsessive planning and construction of monumental buildings.

By connecting the Taj Mahal to The Thousand and One Nights and some key pieces in Indian history, all of which are included in the plot of When Dreams Travel, I want to track down the subtle way Hariharan is using, repeatedly, famous Eastern cultural references, like epic history, literature, and most achieved master pieces, to tell her tales. In this way, she is building a self-assertive argument that reclaims the contribution of "the East" to world culture, in literature, architecture and legendary history. I think this is her way of transcending old dichotomies and obsolete conceptual divisions of the world.

Presently, I will deal with one of the passages where Hariharan makes her postcolonial position explicit. However, it should be understood that the plot of When Dreams Travel clearly emphasises the feminist aims of this rewriting, in relation to other ideological discussions. Still, I think the points I made above are very blunt, although on a meta-narrative level, for it is not only the plot of the novel, but also the indirect reflection on a shared cultural heritage, with contributions from different cultures, which is her argument to make Euro-centric/colonial self-images stand on a relative position by comparison with other worth contributors to world heritage. Unfortunately, together with a set of inimitable masterpieces, sexism is the other shared cultural heritage that neither the East nor the West have managed to transcend. Both share this flaw.

[258] The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th edition, vol. 11: 513, 514.

"Nine Jewels for a Rani", one of the short stories included in the novel, and an interesting piece to approach from a postcolonial point of view. When Dreams Travel is a novel divided in two parts. Part one is the main narrative. It comments on the original The Thousand and One Nights, whose plot is described in a short first section entitled "In the Embrace of Darkness" (pages 3 to 16). Then, in the next two sections, much longer than this first one, Hariharan tells her version of Shahryar and Scheherazade's myth, "talking back" to different aspects of the original narrative presented in the first introductory section. Part two has a small introduction, and after that, seven couples of short stories are narrated. This means that Hariharan displaced the secondary narratives to another section of the text[259] (part two) instead of integrating them, one each night, in the main narrative[260]. That is the main structural difference between the original anthology and Hariharan's rewriting. I think she opted for this different form of organisation because the mythical story she wants to rewrite concerns the couple Shahryar and Scheherazade. She does not rewrite the secondary narratives (each of the nights), that is, the tales that Scheherazade told the sultan. Instead, in part two, she writes new tales, which are very different from anything you find in the translated Arab collection. Hariharan's tales are allegories[261] of modern issues.

Another major difference framing these new tales is that they no longer are narrated in the same context as the original nocturnal tales. In the Arab collection, Scheherazade tells her tales to save her life (and other women's lives) by entertaining her husband, the sultan. In Hariharan's version (part two), two women, who are lovers, tell each other stories, one tale answering the others', for seven days and seven nights. The victim's position of the princess is replaced by companion love in the re-written anthology, for Dilshad and Dunyazad are the active story-tellers in this version. The tale I am going to analyse here is the second tale of the first night. I provide a short linear summary of the story and then I comment on the postcolonial arguments of the invoked text. There are other scattered references to postcolonial issues in all of the tales, but this was the "richest" short narrative to discuss under this frame. For the main narrative (Shahrzad and Shahryar's tale), the postcolonial argument was made explicit above when discussing the shared cultural heritage between East and West, asserting the contribution of the East as the source of standards of the most achieved architectonic beauty, impressive literature and ancient history.

The tale "Nine Jewels for a Rani" is about a monster, the one-eyed monkey woman, who was either abandoned by embarrassed parents, or, is the sick, deformed product of an unkempt childhood in the city streets. This monster ends up being "*chopped, limb by limb*" by the inhabitants of Eternal City, but the severed trunk, covered with an abnormal fur and dried blood, refused to die. For days on end, it just moaned. Some of the inhabitants felt puzzled and even sorry for the thing, but others just returned with weapons and prayer beads to insult and abuse it. This violent group was of "*different colours, sizes and shapes*"[262] but, in their violence and lack of compassion, "(…) *it was hard to tell them apart. They could have been members of the same happy family*"[263].

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[259] The structure of Hariharan's novel: Part I, N**1** (Sharyar and Sahrzad's tale); PartII, seven pairs of short stories: N**2**, N**3**, N**4**…

[260] Structure of the original text: N**1,** N**2**, N**1**, N**3**, N**1**, N**4, N1** …

[261] Allegory: trope in which a second meaning is to be read beneath the surface story; metaphor extended into a narrative structure; short narrative that establishes a parallel between different levels of meaning; Joseph T. Shipley, Dictionary of World Literary Terms, *in* London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1955, see also Chris Baldick, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, Oxford University Press, 1990.

[262] *Op. cit.* Hariharan, 1999: 135.

[263] *Ibid,* Hariharan, 1999: 135.

This one-eye monkey woman was a monster and a dissident who behaved in ways that other girls would never have been allowed by their families. For instance, she loved to climb tall trees, and stare at moonlight. The name of this deviant girl was Satyasama and her story was told to the traveller Dilshad, when she arrived to Eternal City.

Satyasama, the street orphan, lost one of her eyes because she was stricken by lightening. She adapted to the loss of one eye by concentrating more on what she saw with the remaining one, and she started to sing from the top of her favourite tree. The Eternals liked her simple singing and even left some coins in a tin plate by the tree. At this stage, Eternals and monster tolerated each other well.

Eternal City was divided in two, because of nothing else but the "*innocent, baby-blue sky*"[264]. The sky divided the city into Eastwallas and Westwallas. The Easties loved sunrise, and worshiped the fact that light rose in the East. To celebrate this fact, they chanted "*one thousand and one names in its praise*". The Westies "*found this early morning devotion a bizarre and alien thing. Surely anyone with a iota of sense or piety or love for motherland would see it was the West he should turn to?"* and so, they loved sunset. Life went on in Eternal City because there was enough sky for everybody, and enough sunrises and sunsets.

The problem is that both Easties and Westies believed that birdsongs could influence the moods of sunrise and sunset. As long as One-Eye sang simple, silly songs, she was left alone for "*all the world loves a simple fool*". But then, two things happened: One-Eye fell in love with her Rani (the title of the wife of a sultan) and heat waves struck Eternal City.

"Rani" is the fond name One-Eye gives her lover, but, because of its connotations of power, the poor monster was tortured by Eternals who wanted to know "*Who is she? What are her aliases? Is she anti-city? Anti-Sky?*"[265]. Because of this encounter with her Rani, which brought to One-Eye refined emotions, she started to have visions with her only eye, and she condensed what she saw in her songs, which became more elaborate and incomprehensible. The Rani wanted love songs that would "*light up a mind*", so, One-Eye abided and created beautiful poems about the sky, and the light of day, and night, the things she liked the most.

The second thing that happened is that there were changes in the climate of Eternal City and heat wave after heat wave made the Eternals suffer from sunstrokes. These melted their brains and, when they cooled down, they would solidify in contorted shapes. These grotesque brains had a method: they believed they no longer could share the sky and they created new departments of Shame, Fear and Loneliness (SFL) to deal with their discomfort.

One-Eye sang of peace and of the undeniable necessity of having both sunrise and sunset, since the natural circle of day and night could not be broken. The grim departments of SFL, who could not understand poetry nor love songs, just saw danger in these songs ("*Is she pro-Westwalla? Anti-Eastwalla?).* The singing monster was summoned for interrogation and she was forbidden to sing because she mixed night and day (East and West) in her songs. These oppositions were fundamental, and not to be questioned. One-eye refused to shut up and, consequently, was imprisoned for one year. After this period, she is promised freedom if she remains silent. Instead, in the first night of freedom, she gave her greatest performance ever and, at dawn, she was caught and "*chopped, limb by limb*". When the Eternals return to dispose of the pieces, the trunk began to moan and "*Eternals wish(ed) they were deaf, or that they could go into exile somewhere to hide their fear and self-loathing*"[266].

[264] *Ibid,* Hariharan, 1999: 140.
[265] *Ibid,* Hariharan, 1999: 143.
[266] *Ibid,* Hariharan, 1999: 149.

This summary of one of the fourteen tales is in itself evidence of the complexity of Githa Hariharan's writing. The sheer amount of condensed issues brought to bear in this narrative piece makes its discussion difficult to organise. Since it was the frame of postcolonial criticism that made me choose for this particular story, I will analyse it from this angle of approach.

As I said before (part I, section 2), postcolonial criticism developed from previous critical reactions from Western academies to the literature being produced in former colonies. The emergence of the modern (and postmodern) segments of these non-western literatures was deeply shaped by the independence struggle, the corresponding anti-colonial discourse and the necessary self-assertion of local cultures. A few decades after independence, the development of a strong stream of socio-political criticism by younger writers (mostly post-independence generation), who started to reflect on their current postcolonial societies (both in terms of their internal problems and international relations), replaced the previous nationalist thematic. The second of these two moments in the development of postcolonial literature has been more independent from the implied opposition between ex-colonisers and ex-colonised, breaking with the frame of mind behind Orientalism (or Africanism), racism, and nativism (the inverted, self-assertive reaction to whiteness and colonial discourses). These binary frames of mind are not a very positive or productive way to think postcolonial criticism because one keeps falling into comparative dichotomies that trigger hierarchies of status and prestige. Hariharan reacts to these binary schemes by questioning the real hold of these dichotomies since cultures, literature, goods and people always travelled across this barrier, transgressing any rigid separation. Still, Hariharan does not mean East and West are the same thing. She builds a strong self-assertive argument in her text. The point is that fundamentalist or purist barriers, as political constructions to protect power claims that feel threatened by neighbouring cultures, have to be rethought and freed from their lethal connotations. This ample horizon of thought is necessary to understand that Hariharan is not creating a "silly entertainment" when she writes such an allegory of the dichotomies of colonialism (Westwallas and Eastwallas, sunset and sunrise, day and night) in a parodic light. She is creating an argument to dismiss their relevance. As Hariharan points out, day and night always co-existed and, in their difference, are necessary and complementary. It is the deviation from natural, pacific co-existence between peoples that can only be explained by "a deformation of sane minds". Hariharan names the forms of this deformation in her allegory. One is "racism", as the racism against the monster. That is why the murderers of the singing monster are all colours and shapes, meaning all races can be violent or wrong. It is the willingness to be violent which is the problem, not the colour of your skin. Another form of deviance form the pacific acceptance of cultural differences is the drive of dictatorial forms of power to censor and spy on people in order to control them. Actually, the short story discussed above is quite able to list an impressive list of repressive measures: censorship, persecution, imprisonment without trial, torture and murder. What is more, this very complete enumeration of such blighted patterns of action is represented as standard practice, typical of repressive regimes. Hariharan's economy of means to sketch such histories, and worse, represent them as a pattern (which implies wide repetition and wide recognition) is impressive, not only for its ideological impact but by the amazing control of language and narrative technique they imply.

The fact that she departs from a suggestion of a real, concrete problem, like the climate changes brought about by the hole in the ozone layer, to the fantastic belief that songs can change the weather is not innocent either. Fundamentalism looms big in the background of this tale. There are undertones of religious belief in the chants of the Easties

to praise sunrise. Besides, the false link between "*singing*" and "*weather changes*" invokes some forms of primitive magic or ritual. Finally, it is no coincidence that the ones who come to insult the moaning corpse carry "*prayer beads*".

But the Westies do not score a better picture to justify their love for sunset, either. Devilishly, Hariharan uses exactly the main three arguments of colonialism, namely, "piety" (missionary zeal, the spreading of the word of God), sense (the Enlightenment, the constellation of Western traditional philosophies related to the privilege of reason and logos, in detriment of emotions and instinct) and love for motherland (nationalism and Anglophilia, in the latter case making the West the only reasonable "motherland" for those who had opted for "piety" and "sense") to justify their preference for the sunset.

The ideological provocation inscribed on the lack of a true argument to justify these pseudo-oppositions does not deny the fact that there is day and night, or East and West, but, simply, that to think that the two cannot co-exist is an artificial idea promoted by ideological sectors who are afraid of losing their ground (the departments of Shame, Fear and Loneliness, or, if you want, inter/intra-national competition for power and exclusion of rivals). Just as fundamentalism and colonialism are insane enterprises for wanting to suppress "otherness", whose existence and necessity are unsurpassable, Hariharan explores in this short story the pathetic of all the violence inflicted on the poor monster who just wants to sing her visions as love songs.

On the other hand, the monster woman is indeed supernatural, as its "undeath" proves. The text suggests that the monster was picked, like a pawn of God, to sing truth, so that she could "*light up*" (meaning "bring knowledge", "provide awareness") the minds of the Eternals. It is curious to note that Hariharan always follows the "rules" of story-telling as they are implied in the traditional fantastic tales of The Thousand and One Nights. In these ancient Eastern tales, there is a supernatural sphere, which is inhabited by jinn's, magicians, witches, spirits (not necessarily of a dead person), ghosts and fairies. This supernatural world interferes with the everyday, human world, and it picks its favourites and chosen ones. These chosen humans, very often bear a bodily mark or a sign of this preference. The circumstances of birth may also contain some of these marks, often enumerated by wise man or prophets, and current among the people as forms of folklore or superstition. The fact that One-Eye loses one sight by lightening suggests divine intervention, especially because it is this physical damage that opens the "visionary eye". It is current in the East, and also among the gypsies, the belief that women have a third eye, an "eye of the mind", which allows them to see beyond appearances and have access to knowledge hidden from men. It is because of this old belief that women still wear a red dot in the middle of their foreheads, in-between the eyes. But, there are other elements that create in the reader the notion that One-Eye is unique. She is, physically, a monster, a deviant, and an abnormality. That the minus in one dimension would be compensated by a surplus in another is a general narrative formula that one already finds in folk tales and in ancient classical myths. For example, Achiles and Samson had a weak spot (respectively the heel and the hair) to make up for their extraordinary gifts. This widely established narrative formula allows me to claim One-Eye Satyasama as a seer, unaware of her powers.

The piece of wisdom One-Eye sings to the Eternals (and the readers) is a riddle which underlines the way night and day complement each other, just as precious stones fit a structure of gold to make a necklace (the jewels for the Rani). This complementary nature of day and night, or East and West, is not the product of homogeneity nor fusion, but it allows for peaceful co-existence and even moments of productive contact:

"So the Eastwallas and the Westwallas muddled along somehow. Occasionally they even managed a few memorable celebrations together: there were some Easties and Westies who actually

got together at midday or midnight. They made laws and music and paintings and buildings and babies and business."

(Hariharan, 1999: 141)

To some "deviant minds", both Easties and Westies full of prejudice and fear, it is necessary to deny the possibility of the pacific (and necessary) co-existence of different peoples, sharing the same earth, water and sky as we always did. On the contrary, to the fool/artist, the one illuminated by supernatural intervention, it is perfectly possible to praise and sing of the joined contributions of different peoples whose peaceful existence is as precious as the finest piece of jewellery.

II.6 Shahrzad and her Followers: Dunyazad and Dilshad

The names I used for the title of this section (Shahrzad, Dunyazad and Dilshad) are the names of the three main characters in Githa Hariharan's When Dreams Travel. They are women story-tellers, linked to each other by bonds of family, love and the palace life. Because of particular circumstances in their lives, they understand the power, the pleasure and the responsibility of story-telling and, each in her own way, carry out this activity, as an entertaining gift for others, as wise lessons in life and as a form of empowerment to manipulate opponents.

Before I can proceed with my analysis of Hariharan's text, I think it is important to establish some elements of the plot of the original main narrative of The Thousand and One Nights, as I found it in a critical edition[267], after a three volume collection from 1812, which reproduces the standard version, current in England, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the original version, two brothers, the sultans of different cities, discover that their wives are adulterous. It is important to note that the lovers of the sultan's wives are always lower in social rank, actually, slaves or "*one of the meanest officers of the household"*[268]. As revenge for adultery, wives, lovers and attending slaves are killed in a blood thirsty rage to make up for this wrong. Eventually, one of the brothers, sultan Schahriar, convinced that no woman is chaste, decides to marry a virgin every night and have her killed in the morning, so as to prevent any "disloyalty". In the city where this carnage takes place, the sultan's visier had two daughters: Scheherazade, and the youngest, Dinarzade. Scheherazade was witty, courageous, had read in abundance, had a prodigious memory and had applied herself to philosophy, physic, history and the liberal arts. Besides, she was a "*perfect beauty*" and no one doubted her "*solid virtue*". She asked her father to propose her to the sultan because she had a "*design to stop the course of that barbarity (...) upon the families of this city*"[269]. As part of Scheherazade's plan, her younger sister Dinarzade is to play a role:

"As soon as I come to the sultan, I will pray him to allow you to lie in the bride-chamber, that I may enjoy your company this one night more. If I obtain that favour, as I hope to do, remember to awake me to-morrow, an hour before day, and to address me in these or some such words: my sister, if you be not asleep, I pray you, that till day break (…) you would tell me one of the fine stories of which you have read so many."

(Oxford World's Classics, 1996: 16)

[267] *Op cit.* Arabian Nights' Entertainments, Oxford World's Classics, Robert L. Mack (ed.), 1996 (1812).
[268] *Ibid,* 1996 (1812): 2.
[269] *Ibid,* 1996 (1812): 10.

According to the canonised text, every night, at dawn, Scheherazade starts narrating a tale, full of adventures, suspense and magic. The sultan is so fascinated by the tale that he postpones Scheherazade's execution till he has heard the end of her story. Of course, narrating for her life, Scheherazade makes one tale lead to the next, weaving a continuous thread that makes her survive for one thousand and one nights, after which the sultan renounces his barbarous vow and deems Scheherazade the saviour of many other damsels that would be sacrificed to his *"unjust resentment"* [270].

The above summary of the main narrative of the original Arab collection establishes several of the points that Hariharan deconstructs and comments upon through her re-writing.

While the original text is divided into numbered nights (each a secondary narrative, N1 – **n2** – N1 – **n3** – N1 – **n4**….) inserted in the main narrative (Schahriar and Scheherazade's story), in Hariharan's version, the reader gets the full development of the main narrative (part one) before the separate set of fourteen tales organised in seven pairs (part two).

The links between the different narrative lines also work differently. In the ancient collection, the story of Scheherazade and the sultan works as a frame to give coherence and continuity to the whole bunch of different stories inserted on the main narrative. In Hariharan's text, each of the seven tales told by Dunyazad comments on, or develops, one aspect of the previous Shahryar/Shahrzad's narrative. Dilshad's seven answers are closer to the scattered spirit of the tales of the original collection, being more independent from the main narrative.

Hariharan's novel starts very much in the same way as I started this section, with a summary of the original tale of sultan Shahryar and his wife, the able Shahrzad. This sixteen pages long section is called "In the embrace of Darkness", a title that underlines a nocturnal setting as the right time for story telling, by opposition to "real life" that happens during the day (the opposition between day and night, with different connotations, is one of the motifs of the novel). This introductory section invokes the supposed light character of the original anthology of translated tales. It is presented as a static play, more of a *tableau vivant*. This static scene features two women and two men. Sultan Shahryar is in bed with his wife Shahrzad and he is listening to the tale she is telling. Next to the bed, on the floor, sits Dunyazad, Shahrzad's younger sister, waiting for the right moment to say her short (but vital) lines, which allow the story-teller go on with her tales; a bit further, sits Zaman, the sultan's younger brother. In this static scene, Shahrzad is the only character gifted with movement. Shahryar has the right between life and death. Dunyazad is the helper, the right hand of the heroine. Zaman is the opponent, the one who is instigating Shahryar's prejudice against women.

Hariharan has reduced the narrative to a sort of primary scheme, an archetype of an endlessly repeated scene, going on forever. Hence the static representation of "*this self-absorbed scene (which) lives on, shamelessly immortal*"[271]. In this primal scene, the two masculine characters are marked by silence, which is a feature that opposes them to the story- teller (and which they share with Dunyazad). Their silence however is marked by the position of power of the sultan, and the dripping sword held by the second man. Both men can be potential murderers. The inherent association between masculinity and violence is coherent with the pattern developed in the long canonised version of The Thousand and One Nights. As Hariharan points out in her own re-writing, the main male characters are always part of a dynasty, which passes power on, from father to son. And power is so much the

[270] *Ibid,* 1996 (1812): 892.
[271] *Op. cit.* Hariharan 1999: 7.

basis of definition of male identity that, at its expense, male characters are often emptied of any real affective life. During the plot of most pieces, brothers are busy carrying on their legacy ("*to rule, to mount, steer, lord over*") as kings, fulfilling the role expected of them. Shahzaman means "*shah of time, ruler of the age*", Shahryar means "*friend of the city, master of the city*"[272]. Nevertheless, under closer scrutiny, this pair of rulers, seizers of power, dispensers of justice, does not seem to live up to their roles. Hariharan's Zaman (Shahrzad's opponent, with the dripping sword) is portrayed as a deeply insecure and suspicious man, terribly afraid of the night/dark. This fear of the night is explained in a tale, in part two ("The Adventures of a Sultan"), as fear of desire, sexual insecurity, which in terms of the construction of male identities means lack of "energy", "strength" or "manly qualities'. Zaman's fear of not living up to his role, as a ruler, is condensed in his lack of confidence on his virility. Hence, his hatred and suspicion of women, this "dark continent" he cannot master.

The connection between sexuality and power is continuously reiterated in the The Thousand and One Nights. As Hariharan's narrator points out, in all the versions of the tales the lover of the adulterous queen is always someone lower in social rank than the husband. Note that any other nobleman will not do. The necessary difference in class is a displaced translation of a gender notion that equates "desire" with "power". If a woman asserts her feminine desire, she has to have a "weak(er) man". Coherently, in the version I summarised above, the queen is found with "*one of the meanest officers of the household*"[273]. Women's desire is then connoted with a threat that can un-man rulers and erode their claim to power. Again, that is why in the canonised story, the brothers leave the palace for an obscure life once they are confronted with the spectacle of their wives/queens adultery. If betrayed by their women, who, through their devices have proved able and clever enough to fool them, these two princes no longer consider themselves fit to rule. They simply lose face. One can only conclude that the basis of identity to rule, from a masculine, dynastic point of view is neither wisdom nor the ability to promote justice: it is sheer competition with women. That the nature of women's betrayal is sexual is only logical if one considers they were not allowed access to any aspect of public life. Even so…from their private realm, women's behaviour could un-man the most powerful of kings.

If insecurity eliminates Zaman as a heroic character, barbarian violence and despotism finish with Shahryar. How can a king who demands the sacrifice of a virgin every night be respected or admired by his people? In her version of this old tale, Hariharan hints at the serious threats of rebellion Shahryar had to face by placing the sultan's chamber in the dungeons of the palace, the only place where he felt safe from the anger of fathers and brothers intent on avenging their daughters and sisters[274]. The only probable heroine left in charge of this initial *tableau vivant* is Shahrzad, the holder of the scene, the one "*gifted with movement*"[275] (...)"*talking for her life*". In spite of her situation, this Shahrzad is rather the gambler than the victim, and she is not frightened at all:

"(…) She throws back her neck, holds her goblet high and drinks deeply, eyes shut. What she does not swallow she holds for a moment or two, rolling the liquid in her mouth as if she is tasting it for the last time. Then she wets her lips with her tongue and begins again. (…) Shahrzad's eyes turn shrewd;"

(1999: 6, 7)

[272] *Ibid,* Hariharan 1999: 9.
[273] *Ibid,* 1996 (1812): 2.
[274] *Ibid,* 1999: 67.
[275] *Ibid,* 1999: 7.

Hariharan's Shahrzad is a magnificent fighter, who knows she holds the destiny of many other women in her tongue. Her daring has a measure of pleasure, of love for risk-taking that goes beyond the self-sacrificial spirit of the martyr. She has been well re-named, this Shahrzad, "*born of the city*", "*clever, ambitious and quick-tongued*"[276]. "Born of the city" is a name that stands in opposition to "master of the city" (Shahryar), and to "chosen one of the palace" (Mumtaz Mahal, the princess buried in the Taj Mahal). Both the ruler and "the chosen one" are creatures of the palace, closing ranks with institutional power. Shahrzad, by contrast, cares for the city, for the common people's lives, the ones she is trying to save from the despotic sultan.

The opposition between city and palace is, like day and night, another of the main motifs of Hariharan's narrative, but while the night complements the day, the palace does not "complement" the city. The palace rules and abuses the city. One of the most meaningful passages to describe this difference of positions between palace and city represents them as two geographically separated entities, being the city the view 'below' the high roof of the palace. The vertical angle from above, to look at the city, reproduces the social hierarchies dividing them. This passage happens in the tale "The Palace Thief", which is a symbolical title, for this tale is about Prince Umar, Shahrzad's and Shahryar's heir, the one who will imprison his father (in the tomb he was making for his mother) and take power in his hands, thus stealing authority away from the palace minded, spoilt, irresponsible sultan. In the tale, little prince Umar asks Nadeem, the executioner (one of his few friends), "*What is the city like? I mean, your city, the one in which people lead ordinary, humble lives?*"[277]. As an answer, Nadeem takes his friend to the palace roof and, with a restraining hand on the prince's shoulder, which Umar "*gently shook off*", the executioner let the child look down:

> "The city lay below them, a different world. It was enormous, varied. The city had grown and spilt over, well beyond its walls. The symmetrical perfection of its palatial centre had worn out even in the circles that enclosed it and protected it from its people. Umar was a little repelled by the city's disorderly look, and the apathy with which it bore its history of plunder. He could feel, even at this distance, the regular beat of its enduring heart and the quiet strength of its mundane life. Its life had gone on for years, before he was conceived, and it would carry on after him. The secret was that though people lined up for parades, though they kissed the ground before the royals and lit up their streets to celebrate regal whims, the citizens' daily lives had a focus and logic and meaning independent of palatial marvels or fears. Umar, reared on the splendours of the palace, on its over-rich diet, came face to face with the scarred city and its banal, daily struggle for bread, and he was moved to tears."
>
> (1999: 225)

This poetic description of the city, as different from and opposed to the palace, becomes a recurrent motif that reappears in different tales. Hariharan also personifies the spirit of the palace, an ever changing, malevolent figure. This spirit, or logic of the palace, haunts everyone inside it, making his graceless presence felt through nightmares and visions. Although the gender of this spirit is ambiguous, he is eventually personified as a palace-man, the slave buyer who picks Dilshad for the palace's harem. He is "*old, hoary with a gravely skin of weather-beaten stone. His greying marble dome bulges with an all-seeing eye. He wears innumerable layers of clothing, bits and pieces of many costumes, fugitive scraps of different histories*"[278]. This spirit of the palace, like Zaman, is no ally of Shahrzad. However,

[276] *Ibid,* 1999: 16.
[277] *Ibid,* 1999: 223.
[278] *Ibid,* 1999: 233.

it is not them who she has to fear. It is Shahryar, the ruler of the city, who can give the command that will murder her.

It may seem to the reader that I am giving to much room in this analysis to quotes of Hariharan's text, but her greatest achievement in terms of feminist intervention is to reconstruct a powerful myth. The projection of a myth has to be utterly seductive, powerful, strong, the kind of image that has the power to hold on to your imagination. Hence, I cannot refrain from providing a glimpse of this "enchanting" writing style, or I will not make justice to the power of this novel.

Though Hariharan summarises the canonised version of the tales in her initial section, she mercilessly explores pathetic details in the original text, while re-telling it. For instance, Hariharan considers the complex internal life of the main male characters, concluding that their broken hearts heal the moment they discover there is a husband who has been more abused than them. Then, pride is the only feeling that structures their emotional lives. Secondly, Shahryar's scheme to kill all the new wives before they can have the opportunity to be adulterous could simply have been replaced by celibacy, if he feels so bad against women. This alternative does not occur to the bright sultan. This ironical deconstruction of the original, canonised version, is important to erode its credibility and assert the re-writing, Hariharan performs. In fact, to quote the original version is also necessary to mark with accuracy the distance of When Dreams Travel from the established, known text.

Apart from ironical deconstruction, the first innovation, or deviation, from the canonised (1812) version of these tales tale is that Hariharan starts her "story-telling" *after* the thousand and one nights are over, when Shahrzad reconciles sultan Shahryar to womankind and order is established again. According to the narrative patterns of story-telling, the conflict is settled, and the tale is finished. But this is the cue to let Hariharan's imagination in. She closes her summary of the canonised version with the following words: "*The story ends on stage*. *Off-stage it has just begun*."[279]. This is when Hariharan's feminist re-writing of the legendary tales starts, exactly at the moment the narrative of the original text stopped. But there is more to this transition. So far we have been "on stage" looking at an old, static story. Off stage, in "real/fictional life", a new story is about to start, and this time it is women's version of the tale that is going to be told…

Mind that in this fantastic novel there is no realist referent in terms of space (like for The God of Small Things, Kerala, Southern India) and time (in Rich Like Us, Indira Gandhi's Emergency Regime). Contrary to the other two previous writers, Hariharan writes a fantastic text, which does not invoke a specific location, though the text is by no means incoherent (it fabricates its own world). The suspension of a time/space realist referent does not cancel the ability of literature to carry on effective forms of social criticism. The difference in relation to the other two more realist texts is that Hariharan's set of arguments are constructed as a sort of allegory instead of composing a point of view on a certain postcolonial location.

Hariharan's narrative "off stage", starts by questioning the meaning of "travelling" and "dreaming", two words in the title When Dreams Travel. Shahryar wants to know where Shahrzad got inspiration for all her amazing tales. This is her answer:

"I don't have a sword, so it seems I cannot rule. I cannot rule, I cannot travel, I don't care to weep. But I can dream. (…) My dreams? They're nothing – just a rubbishy pile of rough, uncut

[279] *Ibid,* 1999:16.

stones. (…) Besides, only those locked up in hovels and dungeons and palaces can see and hear these dreams. Only those whose necks are naked and at risk can understand them."

(1999: 20)

Shahrzad refrains from giving the sultan a straight-forward answer, because as she says bluntly, only those at risk should be entitled to understand the dreams that make up for the absence of a sword (a clear enough phallic symbol, associated to power as violence). Then, "to dream", in this novel, is a form of wisdom passed on between women. Although not allowed to travel physically, women always took to travel through imagination and what has been told and repeated as idle entertainment is, in fact, a manual for survival[280], secretly kept away from men. Shahrzad's story itself shows that dreams and imagination can make women survive.

And dreams travel, in narratives, told and (re)written. Just as Shahrzad's named was "*reconstructed by men across the seas*", overlapping sexism and colonialism on a double frame of misreading, and became corrupted from Shahrzad, the city born whose "*fate was tied up with her city's well-being*" to Scheherazade, "*pretty tinsel in a child's treasure chest*", the meaning of her stories was equally corrupted to "*innocuous bedtime stories dressed in fabulous clothes*"[281]. But Shahrzad and her tale are survivors, they became myth, travelling across cultures and time, to reach nowadays' women (still, "*the powerless [who] must have a dream or two, dreams that break walls, dreams that go through walls as if* ***they*** *are powerless*). In this way, Hariharan reclaims, explicitly, a tradition of women's wisdom in story-telling[282], linking the corruption of the original text (possibly feminist) to its Western colonisation, as "*women, dreams and stories are transported from India to Persia to Arabia to France to England"*[283]. This is, as I state above, the precise history of the text The Thousand and One Nights until it reached the Western public through translation (there is an obvious anti-colonial argument here, as colonisation is equated with corruption). Hariharan's mythical argument is that it is time the real nature of these tales is "corrected" to make justice to Shahrzad's memory, celebrating the fact it has survived long enough, through a chain of women story-tellers, to beat the "official" version in the end.

The first two disciples who inherit Shahrzad's dreams are her younger sister Dunyazad and her personal slave Dilshad. It is these two women, and their search for Shahrzad, that become the main elements in the structure of the plot of When Dreams Travel.

The first difference that marks the first day *after* the thousand and one nights from the precious ones is that the time to tell stories is over. No woman is at risk any longer, Shahryar will rule the city, and Shahrzad can disappear into the harem. In this way, order is established and the conflict that triggers the plot is settled. But…Hariharan changes the horizon of expectations for the possible ending of the tale by asking, simply, what happened to Shahrzad after her moment of glory? Could she, such an extreme lover of risk and power games, be ever content with the domestic life of motherhood and wifehood, lost to the world and the city, behind the close doors of the harem? This question is crucial to understand the

[280] In her first novel, The Thousand Faces of Night, (1992), Githa Hariharan represents story-telling as a feminine tradition, passed on among women, in this case from grandmother to grand-daughter and from old servant to young mistress. The connection between story-telling, self-awareness and survival strategies is already central in this first text. (The Thousand Faces of Night, Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 1992.)
[281] *Op. cit.* 1999: 25.
[282] *Ibid,* 1999: 24, 25.
[283] *Ibid,* 1999: 25.

feminist struggle at stake in re-writing literary (and other) traditions. How could anyone like Shahrzad be content with domesticity, how would someone with the spirit of the most daring warrior cut herself/himself down to the corset of women's protected, quiet existence? Hariharan is quite clear about Shahrzad's love for risk. In the first tale/night told by Dunyazad, the reader is brought inside the harem, to meet Shahrzad, swollen by pregnancy, trying to prepare her performance of that evening. Meanwhile, her body starts the process of giving birth to the baby inside her. Shahrzad is scared and impatient. What if her body fails her? Dunyazad, in solidarity, concern for the city women (and also curiosity for the sultan) offers to take her sister's place in the bed of the sultan, but Shahrzad will not allow that. Dunyazad then proposes to kill the sultan. Since Shahrzad has given birth to a male heir, they have what they need to keep order in the palace and the city. They can dispose of Shahryar. Shahrzad will not accept this alternative either. It is then, in this desperate situation, that Dunyazad realises the extent of her sister's addiction to danger, her pleasure in manipulating Shahryar each and every night, and, sadly, her doom if she succeeds in her intent of redeeming him. What will happen then, when the excitement to play with death is over? What can live up to that experience? Shahrzad's love for danger makes of her a perfect figuration for liberated patterns of feminine identity because she represents, together with her self-assertive wit and saviour behaviour, a model of personality on which domesticity looks like the cruelty it is for less quiet and family minded spirits. It is like locking a good jinn in a household bottle.

Another shift of perspective in When Dreams Travel, in relation to the original (1812) version of the tales, is the change in main character, for Hariharan chose to build her plot around the forgotten sister of Shahrzad, younger Dunyazad. This time, the plot starts when Dunyazad is informed of Shahrzad's death. This sad event is the beginning of new journeys, and new nights, with Dunyazad's departure from her home city to find out what happened to her sister, emulating the previous journey in the canonised version, when the younger sultan receives an invitation to visit his brother. Only this time, it is two sisters and not two brothers, who are searching for each other.

Dunyazad, "*born of the world*", travels secretly to Shahabad, in search for the answer to a suspicion she dares not formulate, though the reader can guess it. She fears the murderous sultan may have something to do with this sudden death. The quest for Dunyazad is to establish how and why Shahrzad died, avenging her, if that is the case.

By considering primarily women's views and lives in this re-written version of the tales it is as if Hariharan's were guessing and re-inventing everything that could have possibly been omitted from a previous women's collection, truncated and corrupted by misogynous interference. Within the frame of the plot, this feminine version actually exists, written first hand by the sultan's visier who was called to take note of Shahrzad's stories (the first masculine hand intervening in a woman's oral text).

When Dreams Travel offers two possibilities for Shahrzad's post-glory destiny, and, until the end, we are not told which one is to be taken as the true answer for Shahrzad' s disappearance. The second alternative follows Shahrzad growing old, and decaying in the empty life of the harem. This possibility takes the reader to the very last tale of the novel, and I will let it rest for the time being.

The other (the first) possibility is introduced by the discovery of a beautiful ivory mirror among Shahrzad's things. It is Dilshad, "*Happy Heart*", the slave appointed to take care of Dunyazad, who deliberately shows her this object, hinting at the existence of a story connected to it. Dilshad has a boyish body and a cunning look of ageless witch, which stir desire in Dunyazad…

Who gave the mirror to Shahrzad? Dilshad, who has been Shahrzad's slave, starts with a tentative "*there was a young man, a traveller and a foreigner who could tell tales of his travels as merchant*", which tells the whole tale, before it is told. Frustrated after the first sentence that escaped her lips, Dilshad reflects she is still not up to the challenge of becoming one of Shahrzad's followers. This scene is important to underline that Shahrzad is not only the subject matter of tales, but that her tale itself is the a source of inspiration for other women, in this case, encouraging the young slave to become a story-teller herself. This is an instance of the ways in which liberating myths (or figurations) can provide role models.

The hint of romance that escaped Dilshad's lips inspires Dunyazad to have a vision of Shahrzad's with her young man, happily smiling, looking younger in a carefree mood. Again, Hariharan is writing the unwritten, evoking, through this unexpected twist in the plot, the canonised narrative where the adulterous wife, with a lover from lower social rank, un-mans her despotic high-class husband. This narrative hypothesis explains Shahrzad's sudden disappearance as a case of desertion, publicly translated as the announcement of the queen's death. That is why Dunyazad never finds anyone who has seen the body or knows where the body is.

A few days later, Dunyazad has a dream (remarkably similar to the vision) and a second time she sees her sister laughing, free from the palace, with her young companion, who may be "*a commoner in the company of royals, but he is no plaything*"[284]. The reference to the lower social class of the lover is very important. It falls in the tradition of the original stories of adultery, but this is a different story for it is women's version: Shahrzad does get away with it, by leaving the palace before she can be caught and "punished". The point here is not adultery but rather that Shahrzad dared to leave the palace (a symbol of masculine, patriarchal power) escaping the control the husband was supposed to have over her.

Since Hariharan's novel stakes a claim to women's dreams and story telling as lessons of survival, I think one should not dismiss Dunyazad's dream and vision as false. The existence of "a young man" would indeed explain the sudden news of Shahrzad's "death"/ "disappearance". Besides, there is another indirect piece of internal evidence in the structure of the novel: a tale that repeats this same story, only with different "fictional characters", exactly as it happens with the weaving of story tales inspired by life (remember the above reference to allegory). As I said previously, several of the tales in the second part of Hariharan's novel comment and expand on the rewriting of the main narrative. The tale "The Woman Under the Deadly Skin" (fourth night, part two) reproduces the narrative situation of Shahrzad, escaping from the palace to join a lower class lover.

Poison Skin is recruited by a palace-man to be used as a spy. She drinks poison everyday, until her skin had such a concentrated dose that it kills her lovers. The tale contains two versions of the destiny of Poison Skin (just as it happened with Shahrzad), once she realised what was expected of her. The scholarly, written version of the tale, says Poison Skin opted to live the life of a recluse (the harem?), in chastity, to avoid killing the prince she was ordered to seduce. But there is a popular oral version, narrated by a young shepherd, which says that Poison Skin was only poisoning as long as she was making love to warriors in the enemy camp. One day, she decided to run away from the palace that employed her services and she met a handsome goatherd who had been bitten by a snake and was about to die. Out of compassion, she made love to him, feeling she could not do more damage. He did not die. Poison Skin hence discovered she was not poisoning to the many passionate and rustic lovers she had. It was sexuality with high-ranking partners that was deadly.

[284] *Ibid,* 1999: 97.

Similarly, Shahrzad's escape from the palace is a liberating alternative to the secluded life she has in the harem, where she is neither allowed the simple pleasures of a normal life of her own, nor has she any share in public power to compensate for her exclusion from the life of the city.

Dunyazad does not know how to decide between the possibility of a hasty, invented death to hide the escape of a runway wife, or the credibility of the official story claiming that a decaying, depressed Shahrzad really took ill and died quickly. But another issue delays Dunyazad, prolonging her days (and dreams) in the palace. She cannot make up her mind between her attraction for Dilshad and Shahryar. Prince Umar provokes a decision by inviting his aunt to join a *coup d'état* to depose Shahryar. Unlike Shahrzad, Prince Umar is no liberator of the city. He only wants to replace his father's folly for another kind of order, responding to "the call of God": He is "fundamentally austere", another Aurangzeb in the making. Dunyazad drifts into complicity with her nephew to overthrow Shahryar and this political choice implies a sexual option for Dilshad as her new lover and companion instead of Shahryar. The moment Dunyazad settles her political and affective alliances, she seems to be in peace with the death/disappearance of her sister Shahrzad as if she had achieved what dreams and visions had been urging her to do. This "inner peace" means the real source of anxiety was not to discover what may have happened to Shahrzad but to make sure that Shahryar, who closed is wife in the harem out of jealousy for her political wit and her growing popularity with people, does not win in the end.

The ambiguity of the narrative concerning Shahrzad's disappearance makes sense, as myths are not supposed "to die". There are, nevertheless, extensive references to Shahrzad's tomb. As it fits a truly legendary character, Shahryar wants to build the most beautiful tomb to his wife, to be visited by everybody (and as Dunyazad and Dilshad suspect, to try to clean his name in history with this late display of affection). On her first night in the palace, Dunyazad dreams she is visiting her sister's tomb. On this magnificent grave, covered with a *"sheet of living gems from one end of the room to the other, a sheet that lilts with a subtle, rhythmic movement, like a carpet of flowing water"*[285] she finds, among these exquisite tokens of grief, the tablet with Shahrzad's epitaph. It reads:

"Here lies Shahrzad, Beloved consort of sultan Shahryar, Daughter of the chief Wazir to the sultan of Shahabad, mother of Prince Umar and the departed prince Jaffar."

(1999: 49)

Dunyazad wakes up screaming in desperation as her hands search for the missing inscription in terms of love and complicity: "sister of". This absence, like the omitted parts of the tales Hariharan imagines to re-cover, tells a history of effacement and invisibility for women, from generation to generation. The only exception is the victim's role: there is a whole gallery of female martyrs in popular culture. Ironically, Hariharan translates this visibility of the role model as victim to a children's game called "the Martyr's Walk", which is Shahrzad and Dunyazad's favourite game as little girls. They play this game out of the desire to be heroines, like boys, but for women or girls, the only available stories that promise any terror and excitement as central characters[286] imply martyrdom at the hands of a man with something sharp on his hands. Thinking in this way, they pretend they have to confront their killer, preparing to die. The difference between Dunyazad and Shahzad, when

[285] *Ibid,* 1999: 48.

[286] According to the patterns of story-telling, the heroine is saved by the intervention of the hero, with whom she is in love. In this case, action and centre stage belong to the male hero. See Vladimir Propp, Morphologie du Conte, Gallimard, Paris, 1970.

they play the martyr's game, is the latter's "greed for life", which makes her see her walk in a different light than the usual victims. For Shahrzad, no matter how, on what grounds, the aim of the game is not public recognition for martyrdom. It is rather to find a way around her executioner.

The dream with Shahrzad's tomb, and the scattered references to the Martyr's walk, combine with the construction of a magnificent tomb (a clear invocation of the Taj Mahal) to bring reflection on the possibility of Shahrzad's death. If that is the case, it is curious that the body is never found or seen by anyone and there are no clear clues concerning the motive and circumstances of the death of the queen. It is also remarkable that widowed Shahryar never mentions memories of Shahrzad or of their moments together but only talks of his own grief and the magnificent tomb he is building as a monument to their "rare love". This monument provokes different reactions: Dunyazad only sees the gift of *a tomb*, meaning, dead/lethal love; the sultan just wants to live up to his father, who had the city of Shahabad built on the spot he chose; Dilshad thinks of the taxes people are paying and the practice of enforced labour. Where Dunyazad sees negativity and Dilshad displays class awareness, Shahryar, oblivious of his people's suffering and Shahrzad's actual absence muses "what colour is a dream?"[287], once more severed from any expression of emotional life, maturity or wisdom.

In the intimacy of their first night together, Dunyazad dares to ask Dilshad if the strange, fur coated mark on the side of her mouth is a birthmark. Dilshad answers it was a gift from Satyasama, a one-eyed woman poet. The story of the one-eyed woman poet, analysed in the previous section, is thus included in the main narrative sequence. This is an example of the internal repetition of structures[288] and elements between the main narrative and the tales, which creates a meta-level of coherence between the different narratives included in this text. That is why it is a novel and not an anthology of short stories, because there is a way you can actually insert most of the tales in the past of the main narrative, or as a sort of expansion on a minor detail mentioned in the main narrative.

The concluding sections of Hariharan's re-telling of the initial *tableau vivant* leave the reader with a lesbian couple, an alternative that was erased from the set of possibilities of the initial archetype. Another point is that both Dunyazad and Dilshad break free from the palace and its patriarchal order, becoming nomad story-tellers as a way of life. As a reword for Dunyazad and Dilshad's part in the imprisonment of Shahryar (they are the ones who take him on a visit to his wife's tomb), Prince Umar gives Dilshad the written version of Shahrzad's tales (as recorded by the sultan's chronicler[289]) and her freedom. With this material in hand, the two disciples of Shahrzad sit down to train their voices and skills to the new role. Dunyazad's tales are about her family, reproducing themes and settings that have captivated most women writers who took up the political dimensions of private lives as means to sparkle feminist awareness. She tells a tale about her sister (which I will analyse below), her brother-in-law (Shahryar), her father (the wazir), her husband (Zaman), her nephew (prince Umar), her lover (Dilshad) and herself (Dunyazad). With this list of main characters, it is easier to make more concrete my earlier point, namely, that Dunyazad tales are extensions or comments on the main narrative, rewritten in part one. Dilshad, now a one-eyed story-teller (she accidentally lost her sight in the fight during Shahryar's imprisonment)

[287] *Op. cit.* 1999: 60.

[288] It would be interesting to analyse this text from the point of view of postmodernism for there are several features of the novel that would fit such a frame of analysis. The most obvious postmodern feature is the fact that it is a re-writing of a previous, widely established text, but from a confrontational point of view which erodes the ideological impact of the original. Besides, the repetition of narrative structures, constructing a multilayered, self-replicating narrative (made of the different tales) follows a postmodern aesthetic.

[289] *Op. cit.* 1999: 241.

with Satyasama's mark on her mouth, starts by telling the tale of (Satyasama) the one eye monkey woman, until she learns to tell the tales of her own travels. Dilshad's adventures teach her about the inherent rivalry and violence in feelings of brotherhood and the hegemonic discourses sanctioned by established myths, which always overlap sexism with aristocratic/high caste privilege. Her last tale is about Shahrzad, like the first one told by Dunyazad. It is proper, and sensitive, that her inheritors should start and finish this collection of tales with homage to Shahrzad, their precursor and inspiration.

On the last tale, told by Dilshad, Shahrzad is old and decrepit, making her journeys between pot and bed with the aid of disgusted slaves (that is the second possible ending for this character). After so many sleepless nights, Shahrzad no longer can sleep. That is her curse. Alone, widowed, abandoned by all her friends, waiting for death in the harem, she recalls her dreams of becoming a famous story-teller and how she achieved this. Nevertheless, there are less pleasing memories: through time, Shahrzad has been realising that stories that are being told as her invention, are not hers. Her stories have been colonised and someone else's moralist themes are there[290]. Shahrzad, always the fighter, considers counter-action. She can go teaching her tales to younger girls, but, she realises with a grimace, she cannot fight for them. They will have to struggle for themselves when their turn comes. The thousand and one nights are not over after all. The old axe is only waiting to be "*freshly sharpened*"[291].

Hariharan's novel projects again an old myth, but with a feminist adaptation. Both the canonised version and this re-writing prove that Shahrzad's myth lives on, as one of the narratives praising women's intelligence and solidarity. Myths are symbolical narratives containing role models and inculcating a set of values on its audience. They are one example of what Homi Bhabha called the pedagogic strategies to narrate collective identity (see section I.1.2 on this). In this way, they are key references that interfere with unconscious life, a sort of primordial archetypes with a strong emotional appeal. Myths also become stereotypes, after which one replicates poses, style or behaviour. In this sense, myths are very close to Braidotti's definition of figurations (see section I.1.1), especially if they invoke a politically charged location or, as it is the case, a specific (feminist) struggle. Modern myths, like Shahrzad's, are part of popular culture, of our collective cultural heritage, and can work as a powerful mechanism to understand the real or interpret experience. This is not to say that myths are, always, openly pedagogic. They are complex narratives, ambiguous and multi-layered, allowing diverse interpretations. Still, they transmit an objective model of behaviour and promote certain values or attitudes. Shahrzad is an example of a positive reformulation of feminine/feminist identities, reversing the traditional victim status of women to a position of empowerment, even in the most adverse circumstances. Secondly, the bond, between the sisters Shahrzad and Dunyazad, and the sisterhood of story-tellers across time and space, constitutes examples of "healed narcissism" promoting women's self-esteem. Last, but not the least, the women characters created by Hariharan are serious candidates to think new forms of liberated feminist identity, along patterns of resistance, survival, imaginative choices and solidarity, leading to unexpected life stories.

[290] *Ibid,* 1999: 274.
[291] *Ibid,* 1999: 276.

Conclusions to Part II:

Given the polyphonic nature of literary language, and its multi-layered opacity, I will grant that there are several possibilities of meaning for one given text. Still, there is a set of central ideas and themes, structured according to narrative codes and formulas, which assemble the elements of the text in such a way that would be met with agreement by most lines of interpretation. It is from this claim to reasonable agreement that I present my conclusions.

I have approached the three selected Indo-English novels from two different, though compatible, angles: feminist and postcolonial. I will start with the results of my feminist readings, moving on to postcolonial topics. I will equally consider the productive intersections between both of these critical frames and I will reflect on the adequacy of the critical theories I have been using.

Both feminist and postcolonial theories worked as a structured set of guidelines to organise my reading, engaging in such a way that my private impressions with wider intellectual dialogues, be it in terms of ideology, ethics or aesthetics. I thus invite other readers to think along the same paths I have chosen to travel. That is, in my view, the advantage of critical theories: to create an explicit common ground to discuss, learn from and enjoy literature. Obviously, the relevance of this or other critical approach is determined by the text itself. My first reading of the selected novels immediately confronted me with a sense of exciting, encyclopaedic material wrapped up in challenging narrative forms: a double treat. Hence, my belief in the relevance of the texts I picked as cases studies for this research.

From a feminist angle, the three novels I have discussed above share some common points both in the feminist agendas they envisage for the future and in the identification of current sexist practices. All of the three texts settle a diagnosis of the evils of patriarchal society through the creation of women characters that experience the oppressive, claustrophobic expectations of the gendered social order around them as stressing, constraining barriers. At the same time, there are, in the represented social landscapes, cases of women characters that have adjusted happily to the traditional gender roles. Certainly, the happy charms of domesticity and motherhood are not denied, and I also think that it is important to consider a great variety of interests and aspirations within the frame of women's issues, respecting different groups of women. What is signalled by the representation of different degrees of women's adjustment or, by opposition, resistance and psychological struggle, is that women may want different things from their lives, and the lack of elasticity in patterns of social organisation may create high levels of frustration and suffering. By representing different aspirations among women, as well as changed expectations according to generation, these texts put into sharp focus relevant variations to define agendas of reform.

On a more public scale, feminist issues are linked to power hierarchies and local forms of communalism or caste segregation. The study of Indo-English literature is particularly interesting for this last matter for it makes very explicit how women's bodies are used to create lineage borders between different social groups, literally embodying the continuity of privilege, segregation and communal self-definition.

The feminist writing carried out by these Indian women writers was equally important to suggest a re-definition of symbolic cultural references, exploring affection, desire and popular myths, as forms of empowerment that can break with the narcissist

wound (that is, lack of self-esteem) that each woman as to face as she grows up in a patriarchal environment where her gendered self is considered "second best".

The discussion of India's traditions as a rigid system in need of reform, a shared point in the two of the analysed texts (Rich like Us and The God of Small Things), consolidates women's writing in India as a powerful source of intra-national confrontation, creating enough of critical distance to revise a cultural heritage too easily misused, with possible violent consequences for women, ranging from psychological pressure to "domestic accidents".

In the represented social landscapes of India, the presence of strong gendered codes inculcated from childhood, embodied in everyday routines, and interfering with the most private dimensions of individuality, is simply pervasive. Following Homi Bhabha's definition of pedagogic strategies (see section I.1.2), the coherence and the tightness of these codes, guarantees that individuals tend to assimilate dominant patterns of collective identity, accommodating to certain mentalities and committed to communal/collective allegiance. Against the communal background represented in these novels, the inscription of feminism amounts to an effort to make women free of "the dependency syndrome", to quote the blunt words of Chaman Nahal[292] that make women wait on husbands, fathers, extended family, the traditions of the community or religious belief to determine their priorities and routines. This means that feminism implies a problematic re-thinking of traditional Indian patterns of feminine identity (communal, heavily dependent on others), making it look suspicious, even for the majority of women themselves. The challenge, for women writers was to create characters that unlearn the pedagogic lesson, a step that liberates them to fashion their own selves in uncharted ways: that is the exemplary value of Sonali, Ammu and Rahel.

As far as Nayantara Sahgal is concerned, she takes the reader on a journey through the universe of high caste, Kashmir Brahmin families, exposing the patriarchal logic of India's caste system and its direct relation to Indian politics. She connects the feudal logic presiding over marriage arrangements (and the life of a closed circle of families) to the relevance of family/caste connections as competent claims to political power. The relevant touchstone to assess women's position in the represented high caste patriarchal structure is to underline, as a matter of principle, the extent of the invested interests at stake in the control of women's sexuality and their choice of partners.

From the point of view of feminist literary criticism, the structure of Rich Like Us, a realist text, chronologically linear (with the exception of chapter eleven on *sati*), and working through external factors and circumstances to construct the inner life of characters (as a reaction to the former), confirmed "gender" as a productive tool for textual analysis, organising a reading perspective that outlines women's problems, exposes the mechanics of the represented, sexist social structures and suggests a set of guidelines for change.

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things is a different kind of narrative, more centred on memories, perceptions, feelings, and how these hurt and haunt you for a lifetime. Since internal psychological reactions are, at least, as important as the external events that caused them, we have moved away from a more realist focalisation (as in Rich Like Us) to a less chronologically linear narrative, sometimes closer to the lyrical mode than to narrative codes themselves. This different form of narrative focalisation emphasised the necessity of sexual difference theories to read literary pieces where more room is given to internal, psychological processes.

[292] Chaman Nahal, "Feminism in Indian English Fiction", *in* Indian Women Novelists, R.K. Dhawan (ed.), Prestige, 1991, New Delhi, vol I.

Arundhati Roy echoes Sahgal's diagnosis of women's powerlessness as the consequence of a deficient access to property rights and education, the two priorities to be settled effectively by a deep change in the dominant mentalities of India. It is true that the post-independence Constitution of India includes laws to improve women's legal access to property, but, if dominant mentalities stick to tradition and habit, a law is no more than mere words written on paper in a high office, very remote from everyday life. Naturally, one should bear in mind that, as Arundhati Roy said in an interview[293], "*India lives in several centuries*, *simultaneously*" ranging from feudal worlds to cosmopolitan cities like Bombay, and it is across these contradictions that feminism has to be negotiated. Still, it is never easy to reform old ways and old myths, moreover in India, where characters like the ideal wife (Sita) are part of popular culture, and constitute important role models for a mass of illiterate, poor people.

Like Sahgal, Roy invokes the presence of Indian traditions as an incisive source of private unhappiness for those women who do not adapt, because the normative patterns are so strong that there is a sheer lack of alternatives. Worse, the mechanisms of social control and social exclusion are aggressively intolerant, as her novel demonstrates.

Roy introduces the problem of the position of women inside their own blood families, writing a powerful novel about the non-place for daughters in traditional patriarchal families, which amounts to displace the claims for better education opportunities and fairer inheritance rights to a previous, more urgent stage, which has to do with sexism in terms of affection, at home, inside the family. Remember that it is through a set of pedagogic and performative strategies of cultural identification that daughters assimilate women's roles according to traditional Indian mentalities. Since the preference for sons is openly established in Indian traditional mentalities, daughters grow up thinking of themselves as second best in relation to sons, developing a low self-esteem and assimilating a disempowering sense of "self".

Hariharan revisits an old classic, The Arabian Nights, or The Thousand and One Nights, to induce reflection on the misogyny of the original version of the tales. Her writing is also a map of her reading of the translated Arab collection, following its impact in Europe as the source of Orientalist images. In her rewritten version of The Arabian Nights tales, Githa Hariharan emphasises the importance of bonds of affection between women, presenting these bonds as the necessary grounds to create "unheard of" stories. The importance of these new tales is that they are the forerunners of alternative moralities and ways of living as imagined by liberated characters whose conquered self-awareness is beyond the struggle with tradition.

Hariharan shares with Arundhati Roy the option for placing at the centre of the plot dissenting women characters that reinvent the roles appointed to them, going beyond the expected, quiet script. Shahrzad (Hariharan's Scheherazade) turns her martyr's position into the means to manipulate her sultan effectively, so that he postpones her death and forgets his murderous vow. Dilshad starts as a slave in the sultan's harem and ends up arranging the coup d'état that imprisons him. Finally, Dunyazad, after lending an helping hand to overthrow the tyrant, settles for travelling with her new lover, breaking with a life devoted to others like her sister, son, stepson, father, and (silently despised) husband.

Hariharan's novel When Dreams Travel is the one that stands closer to the principles defended by sexual difference theories, exploring the liberating potential of imagination to create a new non-misogynous universe of popular references, which will be stimulating for

[293] "A India vive em vários séculos ao mesmo tempo." *In* "Fuck the Prize! Interview with Arundhati Roy", Alexandra Lucas Coelho, *Público*, 2 de Maio, 1998.

women. As an instance of one of these references, Hariharan revisits Scheherazade as an inspirational myth for feminism on account of her qualities of strength, daring and intelligence. In fact, as she hints in her novel, there are very few heroines in the popular gallery of mythical feminine images who succeed in gambling with death and win the game, saving the rest of the community through their deeds. Usually, the role of facing enemies and emerge victorious is a masculine one, being the heroine/bride the prize the hero gets. The worth of feminine wit is seldom given such a flattering representation as in the creation of the famous story-teller, endlessly narrating for her life and the lives of other women… just as committed feminist writers are doing.

The three texts imply, albeit in different ways, a fluid movement back and forth in time, at least in some passages. This treatment of time suggests a continuity of older versions of the same problems between younger and older generations of women. It also denounces the ways in which successive generations of women were differently affected by the negative aspects of local cultural traditions that have led to abuse, misogyny and gender prejudice.

I think that two of the discussed texts (Rich Like Us, and The God of Small Things) have proved that a feminist approach that still relies on gender analysis is worth its salt because of the relevance of a sociological approach to understand the represented socio-cultural world, and the ways in which it is oppressive for women. However, if the studied text grants more room to internal, psychological processes, reflecting on forms of resistance and activism waiting on self-awareness, then, I think sexual difference theories will prove more effective research tools to follow the fashioning of liberated subjectivities and the invention of new feminist myths, much needed models of deviance and transgression

From a postcolonial point of view, the three Indo-English novels I have just analysed led me into travelling through other, parallel roads.

I consider these novels postcolonial texts because they express a postcolonial awareness materialised in a commitment to think through history and the after effects of a long period of colonialism. To think through colonial history implies the revision of old colonial judgements, correcting Orientalist ideas. Nevertheless, this relevant agenda keeps old binaries functional and necessary, which may not amount to the best basis to answer current challenges like sustainability and the preservation of peace, issues that demand serious international co-operation.

At the same time, the nature of multicultural societies, like the Indian one, make it vital to learn to think of the relations between nations and between peoples in innovative ways, breaking intra-national dichotomies, as well. That is why I think these three novels tried to balance the self-assertive drive to "write" the nation with examples of collaboration, exchange and fusion across territorial borders and communal identities. The problematic self-definition of the subcontinent, fragmented across multicultural communities whose co-existence is tense, poses this double problem in the writing of national identity: to consolidate Indian identity is not to assert Hindu majority, because to write to nation, in this location, implies to write multiculturalism, undermining homogenising gestures of a central state. Some sectors of India's politics and intelligentsia solve this problem by emphasising communal caste borders and investing in the purity of the community as a means to compete with other social groups. The three writers addressed here see the danger in this line of thought. Instead of inviting more violence and intra-national tension, they defend, albeit in different ways, the necessity of sharing India, and co-exist with other groups. Nayantara Sahgal is the most straight-forward writer in her defence of Muslim-Hindu friendship. She does not shun British contacts either. Her view of India is constructed via one's commitment to a project, in this case, the socialist one, and not by guarding internal borders against those

India may or may not exclude from "citizenship". In the same line of thought, Arundhati Roy, problematises the caste system and the definition of untouchability, two systems of exclusion that are the backbone of India's social structure. In her view, a functional Indian society has to start by dropping prejudice and intolerance as the most important elements to determine social relations. Her argument is insightful and logic: institutionalised elites will never question the basis of their power, preferring to sacrifice individual feelings, sensitivity and good intentions to the cold necessity of perpetuating privilege. Since no improvement can come from this corporate frame of mind, it is the mentalities of individual people that have to change, because if people act in a different way, expressing innovative opinions and starting public debates, they can bring about social reforms. Hence, it is within people's reach to solve the intra-national tensions of the subcontinent if only they choose to do so. Finally, Hariharan deconstructs the credibility of borders between people by making a parody of their fundaments, while listing, on a meta-narrative level, a set of examples of human achievement, like the legends of The Thousand and One Nights, the Taj Mahal and famous historical episodes, to prove that cultural heritage stands for world metissage, whose hybrid system of references did not turn "the other" into "the same": co-existence and exchange of knowledge beyond hierarchical and exclusive binaries is possible because it has already been happening for centuries, even though it might not have been acknowledged from a colonial frame of mind (that denied the worth of any other civilisation apart the Western one).

While thinking of new forms to represent different communities and new basis to think international relations, these writers are also revising Orientalist/colonial views of India, confronting the West with a self-assertive account that answers back to previous colonial projections. Arundhati Roy is the writer that takes the de-construction of colonial mentalities the further through her analysis of the self-hating, split identity of the colonial subject. Her anti-Anglophilia argument also denounces the gap between the promoted standard of English behaviour as example of civilisation, and the low ethical standards of racism and despotism promoted by this culture (in this point, Roy echoes Gauri Vishnawatan and her analysis of the promotion of English literature as a means to make colonialism look acceptable among Indian elites, while political practice just abused the people of the subcontinent).

Apart from assessing alternative constructions of India's collective identity and highlighting revisionist practices (which de-construct colonial ideologies), another relevant contribution of this study to the definition of postcolonial literature is the demonstration of the clear research focus that gets defined when one picks concrete locations to study the worth of the concepts and categories offered by a postcolonial frame of analysis. The geo-chronological co-ordinates that define a location and the literary system that represents it as "postcolonial" become quite concrete. It is the attempt to develop rampant, abstract theory that weakens the usefulness of such a theoretical frame itself. As I said in the introduction, I regret a certain tendency of critical theories to generalise certain expectations and promote a certain methodological conformity, especially in what concerns the reviewing of postcolonial literatures, when what is at stake is the loss of a precious opportunity to overcome Europe's parochialism (precisely because of its repetitive, self-centred epistemes) and reach for innovative arguments and views that may fall outside of the scope of a more universal and rigid approach.

From the point of view of Indian literatures themselves, I think the worth of these novels has to be measured by the relevance of their social critique for India's self-recognition and evolution. The critique of the caste system and its exclusionary practices with unacceptable human costs (Roy), the denunciation of home colonialism under self-serving elites (Sahgal) and the representation of aristocracies as parasites living of the blood

of the city (Hariharan and her despot sultan, hated by the city dwellers) amount to a very stern dis-enfranchisement of India's postcolonial government and the fossilisation of its traditions of privilege. Roy also voices a consistent warning against the careless, polluting industrialisation of India asking for greater concern and monitored choices.

Aesthetically, the worth of Indo-English literature will have to be measured by its contribution to Indian modern (and postmodern) literatures, possibly comparing it to current literatures being produced in other Indian languages. I can only suggest that, in the distance that separates Nayantara Sahgal's realist text, retrospectively following the fashion of the 1930s, when nationalist writing was at its zenith, to Arundhati Roy and Githa Hariharan's greater exploration of the power of fantasy and myth, I read a literary trend, heavily influenced by Salman Rushdie, to create more surprising and magical texts.

My situated approach to postcolonial literatures answers to the complains of Marxist intellectuals like Aijaz Ahmad[294] and Arif Dirlik[295] who have been openly resentful of the apparent lack of concern of postcolonial criticism for history and politics. I would add that not all the critics writing in the West have to be complicit with neo-colonialism, neither do they have to be reduced to renegade "informers". It is up to each of us (both writers and readers) to be accountable for the effects of one's contribution to current critical debates. In fact, the three Indo-English writers considered above resist neo-colonial practices strongly, tentatively establishing ways to negotiate international contacts (that India needs), but without allowing for a worsening of India's poverty.

Nayantara Sahgal believes in a form of socialism adapted to the material circumstances and the cultural universe of India. Hers is a project that believes in the nation-state, as long as it is ruled by really committed politicians, of the kind that is not willing to "sell" India (and the needs of its people) in exchange for private wild profit. The sense of crisis in the post-independence Indian state is represented as the consequence of Indira Gandhi's dictatorship and the capitalist, bourgeois mentality of her followers.

Arundhati Roy's anti-Anglophilia and ecological concerns define a distance from external interference that is only emphasised by her dismissive view of emigration as a sort of "giving up" on India, falling for a second colonial myth. However, contrary to Sahgal, Arundhati Roy does not really support a collective project to oppose the complicity of governments and transnational capitalism. Her revolution is a private one, starting from individual commitment to an ethic and fraternal behaviour. According to the options offered in The God of Small Things, both "the nation" and cultural traditions have oppressed individuals in the name of the self-serving interests of different elites. None of the main three references for collective affiliation mentioned in the novel, namely the caste system, communism and religion seem really positive or helpful forces in terms of social organisation. On the contrary, love, friends and affection do feature as energising forces and sources of inspiration to find better ways of accommodating individual subjectivity to the demands and needs of other people around you. Through the small family circle of her characters, Arundhati Roy represents the way history and socio-political forces invade and damage the most private dimensions of subjectivity, in the name of the preservation of certain power structures, the prejudice these live off, and the social conformity that grants their continuity. Inversely, subversive reactions at the private, individual level are deemed powerful political acts that can implode the capillary bases of power of the three mentioned systems of collective identity, creating a less oppressive (less traumatising, really) society. That is Roy's project to resist both home colonialism and neo-colonial threats.

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[294] Aijaz Ahmad, "The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality" *in op. cit.* Mongia (ed.), 1996: 276, 291.

[295] Arif Dirlik "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism", *in* Mongia (ed.) 1996: 294, 321.

Githa Hariharan's novel inhabits a fantastic landscape, which makes the assessment of the ways it handles a collective sense of postcolonial location more difficult. She seems rather interested in underlining the constant flow of trade, emigration and cross-fertilisation that evolved from the history of European colonialism. In When Dreams Travel, to think collective postcolonial contexts implies to learn to live with a shared memory and heritage, regardless of being "Eastern" or "Western": we share as much as we differ. Hence, the complementary gifts of cultural diversity have to be praised for their worth, and not feared or manipulated for political purposes of oppression and violence. Still, Hariharan's perspective is not that de-territorialised (it is Eastern) nor does she erase the distinctive identities of "East" and "West", which are compared to the differences between day and night. However, she does transcend dichotomies, trying to think beyond international threats and national defence. Within the logic of her text, self-awareness is survival. By constructing a disgusting sultan as the embodiment of despotic power, Hariharan is advocating a strong line of resistance and non-complicity with abuse. Instead of siding with Sahgal's party logic, Hariharan is closer to Arundhati Roy's incitement to shape individual identities along lines of non-complicity with abusive power.

While Sahgal is clearly the most nationalist of the three, none of the above writers defended any form of nativism nor did they promote any exclusionary practices. Sahgal transcends old colonial dichotomies in so far as she defends the promotion of cosmopolitan forms of awareness, enabling scholars and entrepreneurs to co-operate in the preservation of specialised production (what a country is best at) and accepting each others ways with the same educated charm they adapt their "savoir faire" to different dressing codes, evening parties under different climates, business agreements under different legal systems. In this point Hariharan is closer to Sahgal than to Roy. Her wise survivors adapt and learn, travelling to different landscapes with the integrity of wise nomads.

As for Arundhati Roy, she prefers to stick to clear dichotomies, analysing colonial relations between Indian citizens and British colonisers, dislocating this same dichotomy for the present through her resistance to current forms of globalisation. Yet, the extent of Roy's defence of "India's rights" (a self-assertive argument) does not necessarily promote "nationalist" ideas. The sense of "home colonialism" (exploitation of the people by high caste aristocracies or political elites), already mentioned by Sahgal, becomes a really bitter and spiteful topic in Roy. From the point of view expressed in her novel, the bureaucratic apparatus of the state, or the party, should be treated with distance and suspicion, rather as foes to be feared than as representatives to be trusted.

As concerns the discussion on forms of individual identity, the three novels invest a lot in the fashioning of new forms of awareness and subversive subjectivity, embodied in surprising and captivating characters expected to work as a sort of role models. Since this appeal is intensely personal, these novels also demand an active reader, willing to "play along" in considering the amazing wealth of material for intellectual reflection and ideological translation offered by character and plot, against a masterfully controlled sketch of a specific social background. The provocation to the reader in terms of intellectual thought is accompanied by a quite extensive set of alluring ingredients, taken from popular formulas of success, like romance, sex, gothic settings and detective stories (from the suspect business enterprise of the "Happyola" factory in Sahgal, the "why did Sophie Mol die?" of Roy, to the mysterious disappearance of Shahrzad in Hariharan's tale), not to mention certain melodramatic excesses in Roy's representation of childhood emotions and the Hollywood glamour all over Hariharan's re-creation of the sultan's palace. This appropriation of popular culture is more noticeable in the two younger writers (Roy and Hariharan), who seem to invite a postmodern approach through several other aspects of their

novels, like intertextual play, the deconstruction of established ideologies (and canons), and, especially in Hariharan, the self-replicating, multiple structure of the narrative.

These texts also share with postmodernism the revisionist (deconstructive) mode focused on identities and history. In the case of postcolonial literatures, the master narratives under erasure are the colonial and neo-colonial systems of knowledge and power. However the political agendas and the activist social criticism contained in these narratives breaks up with the text-centred allure of a postmodern approach, more textual, abstract and ahistorical. That kind of critical approach would be gross injustice to texts such as these ones, so involved with history, politics and ways of conceiving better forms of social organisation.

Sahgal excludes anti-colonial views directed at past British colonisation from her text. In fact, there are, in Rich Like Us, several meaningful exchanges and forms of collaboration between British and Indian characters, which amounts to say that Sahgal reserves anti-(neo)colonial resistance to the threat posed by American capitalism, deconstructing the notion of happiness as consumerism or profit. Arundhati Roy is equally resentful of the increasing marginalisation of the dispossessed from any improvement, which she reads as a side effect of capitalism. By writing a novel that confronts the most vulnerable sense of self (children's) with the intolerant demands of different power structures, Roy corrodes the ethical claims of dominant institutions to rule in the name of order, not only because social institutions are represented as intolerant and aggressive forces, unable to allow room for deviance, but, furthermore, because the worth of this same order is revised by the assertion of untouchable selfhood, feminine desire and the undeniable rights of children, either from "divorced couples", or "second best" daughters. On her turn, Hariharan resists the credibility of fundamentalism, racism and the East/West dichotomy as serious references to justify all the violence and abuse that ensued from their use as political discourses.

Taking the above positions and arguments into account, I can conclude that the revisionist drive of postcolonial literature is quite alive and active. However, mind that the analysed texts were produced a few decades after independence, which means that the previous nationalist struggle has been translated into forms of social critique, both intra-national and international, as I have just outlined in these conclusions.

I also read the anti-colonial or anti-globalisation arguments of these novels as a matter of self-assertion, only, I think national (or ethnic, regional) self-assertion no longer is so dependent on the parading of cultural differences as it happened during the initial stage of the independence struggle, when local cultures and their corresponding traditions were deified, as a strategic frame of identity to oppose to Western culture and its myths of white superiority. In the case of the three studied writers, strategies to enhance India's self-definition and self-promotion are more entwined with the reformulation of postcolonial notions of identity, discussing the current postcolonial situation, its past genealogy and its prospects. Consequently, cultural differences are not presented under a very positive light neither is there any political momentum extracted from them. As I said, I am not dealing with pre-independence, nationalist literature but rather with post-independence writing. Because of this time frame, there is no strategic necessity of answering back to racist colonial stereotypes that diminished Indian culture and Indian identity (at least not with the same vehemence). On the contrary, the self-assertion of India as a postcolonial state had to work through the fragmenting impact of distinctive cultural identities in the subcontinent, where caste references and communal Hindu/Muslim rivalry are frequently closer to one's heart than Indian citizenship. These fragmenting forces are rather repeatedly mourned as sources of social tension and intra-national division, which erases the relevance of such a concept as hybridity to understand dominant social forces in the subcontinent.

Of the three writers, I think only Arundhati Roy pushed her use of the English language to such a level of innovation and creativity that its "degeneration" in relation to norms of Standard English becomes an issue, and unanimously, a matter of praise. However, her "style", literally meaning the unique, genial way an artist "marks" his/her authorship, only becomes a postcolonial issue (besides being an aesthetic one) because of the previous colonial prejudice in relation to non-metropolitan literature that did not conform totally to the standard (European) version of the displaced, shared language.

The gains ensuing from the option for a combined approach, using a double critical frame woven out of both feminist and postcolonial critical theories is demonstrated by the above conclusions and the double discussion of each of the novels. Although some topics may overlap, the two critical frames did not exclude or exhaust each other. Plenty of the issues assessed from a postcolonial perspective would be mute under an exclusive feminist approach and most of the agendas spelt out from my feminist readings would be reduced to sociological arguments, or to psychological studies of women characters, without connecting, neither social background nor character, to an established kind of committed literature, whose aims (consciousness raising, identification of sexist problems, discussion of empowerment strategies) determined, at least in part, the design of these novels.

As I hope to have proved in the sections devoted to a postcolonial analysis of the selected texts, the use of a set of critical categories and concepts to think of these modern literatures in relation to wider historical processes (of de-colonisation, national consolidation, modernisation and resistance to neo-colonial practices) only increases the stand of literature as site of ethical and political thinking, without denying any of its entertaining and seductive charms. I do not see how it is possible to read these texts without following the historical comment and the socio-political reflection they invite. Hence the validity of a situated approach, for you cannot deny the context, which inspired the text. Naturally, this amounts to say that I expect this research on the voices of these postcolonial women writers, grounded on their specific locations, has had an effect of making the reader more aware of the challenges, hopes and problems of current India, as these Indian writers see them. That is also my way of deconstructing the hold of Western-centric ideas and their narrower horizons.

Part III

In the next part of this research, I am going to approach a selection of three Lusophone women writers, two from Cape Verde and one from Mozambique, applying to their texts the same binary frame of work as in part II, combining postcolonial and feminist critical perspectives. Again, the discussion will run on separate, though complementary, sections. Firstly, the texts are read according to the discussed postcolonial guidelines, and then from a feminist angle.

The term "Lusophone", which I have just used, is inter-changeable with the expression "postcolonial writers in Portuguese", even if "Lusophone" has been discussed in Portugal as a problematic term with its own imperialist connotations, invoking "Lusitania"[296]. On the other hand, "Lusophone" is quite an established term in literary criticism within the Portuguese-speaking world.

The promotion of such a critical term as "Lusophone" is not devoid of political connotations, but these have nothing to do with the ancient memory of the Roman empire. The issue is rather the more recent creation of the "Comunidade dos Povos de Língua Portuguesa" CPLP (Community of Portuguese Speaking Peoples) on July 27, 1996, which includes seven states (Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde and S. Tomé and Príncipe) and whose aims are to increase co-operation and "*solidariedades horizontais*"[297] (Horizontal solidarities). The discussion of the political and economic implications of this community is open, but its future seems problematic since all of these countries belong to regional international associations, the priorities of which cannot be ignored. For instance, in the case of Portugal, the definition of its commitments to African countries or Brazil has to be thought within the frame of the bonds of Portugal towards the European Community, which does not amount to say that a compromise between European international policies and the promotion of forms of horizontal solidarity among CPLP countries is impossible; nor should one abandon the potential for support and constructive co-operation within CPLP if all the intervenients feel they share certain affinities and sympathies that they want to preserve and nurture. The material worth of the affinities between the CPLP community could be translated, for example, into forms of co-operation and self-organisation intended to balance the dependency of African countries on the World Bank, whose programs seem to have contributed to increase poverty and widen the gap between poor nations and rich nations (currently, 46 per cent of the population of Africa lives below the so called "poverty level" being the GDP[298] per capita negative, between 1987 and 1999[299]). It is a common

[296] "Lusitani" was the name of the Iberian people who fought Roman occupation. There were also Celts in the NorthEast of the Peninsula and they united with the Lusitani against the Roman invader. After a long set of wars the Celtiberians (united Celts and Lusitani) were "pacified" and the Peninsula was occupied, becoming a Roman colony called Lusitania. So, it is curious that "Lusophone", meaning "language of the Lusitani", invokes an imperial origin (since it refers to the Portuguese history), but at the same time evokes the moment when Lusitania/Portugal itself was experiencing the fact of being a colony. (Encyclopedia Britannica**,** vol. VII: 570).

[297] Adriano Moreira in the introduction to Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa, Almedina, Coimbra, 2001: 20.

[298] GDP: Gross Domestic Product.

[299] Adelino Torres e Manuel Ennes Ferreira, "A Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa no Contexto da Globalização", *in op. cit.* Adriano Moreira, Coimbra, 2001: 33.

place in current economic theory that structural interference/support of the World Bank serves the interests of globalisation, which amounts to say that it serves economic interests, quite often at the expense of ethical thinking, ecological sustainability and social concern. With this information in mind, it is logic to look for alternative forms of international co-operation, and it is up to associations like CPLP to close ranks and look for means, solutions and ideas which may change the grim direction of "afro pessimism", as if the repetition of disasters and misfortune would be a complacent justification to let things go on as they are[300], accepting complacently the very active responsibility of developed nations in it (mind that Michel Camdessus, former general director of the IMF[301], declared in an interview to *Le Monde* that 90 per cent of the arms used in Africa are exported by the eight most developed countries in the world[302]). Hence, the strength of the word "Lusophone" could fall on an idea of solidarity, or productive affinities, connecting countries that share a language and several features of their cultures.

In this research, I will use both of the above mentioned critical terms. Although I prefer the more neutral "postcolonial literatures in Portuguese", it is a fact that "Lusophone" is a handy expression to ease one's writing style. Nevertheless, I want to make explicit that I use "Lusophone" without implying, with this critical term, any leadership role for Portugal in this network of multiple partners.

Alfredo Margarido[303], a specialist in African Literatures in Portuguese, is quite particular in avoiding any term that does not signal the "de-colonisation" of the Portuguese language from the metropolitan Portuguese norm. In his book, A Lusofonia e os Lusófonos: Novos Mitos Portugueses[304], Margarido expands on his motives to be uncomfortable with the term "Lusofonia". In the first place, it may express a wish on the part of Portugal to control the use of Portuguese, posing as the norm; secondly, it seems to dismiss painful colonial memories "*das feridas e cicatrizes*"[305] (of the wounds and scars) inflicted on others, as if one could decide to start again on a superficial, warm note, without handling these delicate historical matters.

I hope this research answers to these words of concern in a positive way. By "Lusophone" I refer to literatures that happen to be written in Portuguese, either in Portugal or in the appropriated, changed Portuguese of the variants of Africa and Brazil. Each Lusophone country has got its own literature and literary system, and any comparative study between these systems is comparing two diverse literatures, which share a language. As for the accusation of alienation in relation to the wounds of the past, I do not see how any serious critical approach would ignore whatever ideological reflection and historical discussion the studied literary piece may invite. However, I would not describe the modern and postmodern literatures of Portugal as postcolonial since their foundational context, historical heritage and represented senses of national identity are of a different sort. As

[300] On this pessimistic attitude, Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger talk of "politics of the mirror" to describe a pervasive Africanism (like Orientalism) that makes experts and researchers look at Africa from certain biased points of view, feeding a set of prejudices and stereotypes which, in the end, justify the Western attitude of confining "Africa to the dustbin of history" (Postcolonial Identities in Africa, Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1996: 45).

[301] IMF: International Monetary Fund.

[302] Henri Tincq, "Michel Camdessus, ancien directeur général du FMI: 'Être Chrétien, c'est Rechercher le Bien Public", *Le Monde* (Paris), 16th January 2001.

[303] Alfredo Margarido, Estudos Sobre Literaturas das Nações Africanas de Língua Portuguesa, A Regra do Jogo, Lisboa, 1980.

[304] Alfredo Margarido, A Lusofonia e os Lusófonos: Novos Mitos : Edições Universitárias Lusófonas, Lisboa, 2000.

[305] *Op. cit.* Margarido, 2000: 7.

Stuart Hall[306] pointed out, postcolonial theories may be very productive to approach some facets of ex-imperial literatures, most specifically the work of those writers that look back on the imperial experience and the process of de-colonisation. That is why the explanatory abilities of such episteme (that is how Hall calls postcolonial theories) are certainly important to understand literary developments on both sides of old imperial dichotomies. Yet again, what is received in the West as postcolonial literature (and accepted by critics from these same literatures as a relevant topic for discussion, even if to reject the term) are the literatures from ex-colonies, which emerged from anti-colonial resistance and the independence struggle. Currently, these literatures are evolving into literatures attuned to social analysis, reflection on past historical memories and experimentation with current forms of collective allegiance, confronting both intra-national rivalries and international threats of neo-colonisation.

After having clarified my position, I would like to turn to a brief description of what is meant by postcolonial literatures in Portuguese, or, Lusophone literatures (being the "postcolonial" between the two words regularly omitted even if that is the implied sense). In 1975, Portugal recognised the independence of its five former colonies in Africa: Angola, Mozambique, Guiné-Bissau and the archipelagoes of Cape Verde and S. Tomé e Principe. Portugal also had a colony in India, Goa, until 1961 (when it was annexed by the Indian Union) and it held Macau, in China, until 1999. All the literary production in Portuguese ensuing from these former colonies is considered postcolonial literature in Portuguese. In this research, I am dealing with a continental case (Mozambique) and a Creole one (Cape Verde). Cape Verde is doubly interesting on account of the specific nature of its hybridity, but also because it had one of the highest rates of literacy in the universe of the Portuguese colonies of Africa - a factor which had obvious repercussions in the development of its literature. As for Mozambique, it is probably the most complex mosaic of pre-colonial cultures in the three continental (African) literatures in Portuguese, and it started from one of the highest rates of illiteracy.

In the universe of postcolonial literatures, I am not sure one can place Brazil. As I said above, I consider such a term as "postcolonial", a relevant label to refer to modern literatures whose consolidation took place under the auspices of the independence struggle and whose recent post-independence history still implies reflection on the experience of colonisation, internal consolidation and on going self-assertion, in relation to a wider international world order. The case of Brazil is different. It became independent in 1822 and I think its process of consolidation and self-assertion is of a different nature. Hence, an approach to Brazilian literature would probably be more fruitful if it departed from its current popular heritage, whose colonial beginnings are already remote in comparison to the cultural exuberance of Latin America and the exchange of influences between regional cultures, without forgetting its component of black diaspora and Amerindian (first nation) influences. This amounts to say that there is simply too much going on inside the specific cultural sphere of Latin America to make postcolonial criticism the most sensible tool to understand its current literature, except if one considers the ambiguous position of Latin America vis-à-vis North America (which is neither an obsessive nor a primary topic in Brazilian literature, music or film). Still, from a postcolonial point of view, in the strict, concrete sense I meant above (and which is proving perfectly adequate to approach Indo-English and Lusophone literatures) one could research several aspects of Brazilian literature: for instance, current representations of Portugal and the colonial period, the nationalist struggle in the post-independence literature of the XIXth century, current resistance to the threat of US or European neo-colonialism and, finally, survey forms of hybridity and

[306] *Op. cit.* in Chambers and Curti, 1996: 242-260.

Creolisation in the complex cultural universe of Brazil (much more unified and homogenising than one might expect). Yet, to define Brazilian literature primarily as a postcolonial literature strikes me as reductive, given its regional context, its history and its particular negotiation (actually successful integration) of Amerindian and African influences together with successive waves of European (mostly Portuguese, German and Italian) and Japanese emigration.

In the Lusophone world, I am working with postcolonial literatures from countries where Portuguese is the official language. In this case, Goa does not feature as a candidate, though a regional Indo-Portuguese literature exists. Still, the future of Portuguese in India is uncertain and a lot depends on the teaching of Portuguese and the emergence of a new generation of writers. The same could be said of Macau.

Before guiding the reader into the context of the postcolonial literatures of Mozambique and Cape Verde (the ones which concern this research), it is necessary to frame the main international influences that led to the emergence of these literatures as a form of cultural warfare. I will also defend a particular role for the reception of postcolonial literatures in the West.

III.1.1 The Place of the Colonial Empire in the Portuguese Imagination: Myth and National Identity

> "For nationalists, history has always meant, in fact, selective history.
> Nationalists, whose objective is to foster a sense of identity and solidarity, to establish a chain of heroes, or to prove their case for a certain historical boundary, pick up those raisins from the cake of history which support and rationalise their cause."
>
> Benyamin Neuberger[307]

The quote in epigraph is a good comment on what has been, for too long, the structuring principle of colonial histories told from a Euro-centric point of view.

In the case of Portugal, imperial expansion created a myth of greatness to balance Portugal's uncomfortable self-image in relation to the main European powers, economically stronger and more powerful. This ambivalent position of Portugal, on the periphery of its continent, but at the heart of its imperial network[308], consolidated a sense of national identity where myth makes up for the diminishing comparison to France and England the two strongest European influences in Portugal. One of the main constitutive myths in the definition of the Portuguese national identity was the interpretation of its long colonial past as a confirmation of its future destiny, making of Portugal the key middleman between Europe, Africa, Asia and Brazil. This view of history as destiny does not leave room for an easy reform of colonial practices, nor does it foster critical spirit and innovation. In fact, historical memory became a paralysing factor for the development of Portugal, since

[307] Benyamin Neuberger, National Self-determination in Postcolonial Africa, Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., Boulder, Colorado, 1986: 43.

[308] Boaventura de Sousa Santos (1985), "Estado e Sociedade na Semi-perifria do Sistema Mundial: o Caso Português", *Análise Social*, XXI (87-88-89), p: 868-901.

national identity fell back on its past history to preserve autonomy and consolidate a positive self-image[309].

The link I see between postcolonial literatures being reviewed in Portugal and current shifts in the traditional Portuguese self-image as a colonial nation (shifts that naturally happen together with the wider historical process that brought about the end of colonialism) depends on a particular view of literary discourse. As Carlos Reis would have it, "discourse" refers to the ability of texts to represent collective, social meanings which structure dominant principles, the articulation of which constructs an ideological system[310]. A certain set of discourses is always located on one (or more) ideological basis instead of another (others), meaning their rooting is neither accidental nor spontaneous but rather institutional and corporate. If literary discourse is conceived of as a context of ideological assertion ("*discurso literário (é) entendido como contexto de afirmação do discurso ideológico*" [311]), as Carlos Reis thinks it is, then, postcolonial literatures in Portuguese are projecting a set of ideas and images which will be implicated in the construction of current senses of national identity, not only for the post-independence state but also for the former coloniser. In other words, apart from national, anti-colonial self-assertion, or intra-national critique (that is to say, the discourses that concern the postcolonial location itself), the constellation of postcolonial literatures in Portuguese will have an effect in Portugal as well, as far as they talk back to the former colonial partner at the moment it has been learning to think of itself as a postcolonial, post-imperial nation.

Through this claim, I am designing a very important role for postcolonial literatures (in Portuguese, English, French, Dutch, Spanish…) in the universe of XXIst century Europe, and one that has not been properly recognised. The most obvious connection between diaspora, emigrant writing and Europe's multicultural self-images (and policies) is the one aspect of postcolonial literatures that has been taken as the most fruitful dialogue between hegemonic Europe and the displaced communities living in the West. But that is not the whole picture. Postcolonial literatures, deeply shaped by national or regional self-assertion and anti-colonial resistance provide a serious contribution (through confrontation) to re-think European histories, Western national identities and current international dialogues between nations. It is a matter of pointing out that not only what is being written "here" (in the West) is relevant to understand the inner city culture of Western urban spaces. What is being written "there" (in ex-colonies), about what happened, say, between "here" and "there" is very important for both sides, and it matters to fuel the revision of Western self-images started by postmodern artistic practices and the impact of post-structuralist theories. Without denying the role of postcolonial literatures for the consolidation and re-invention of diverse post-independence, postcolonial geo-political locations in former European colonies, I am (simultaneously) recognising the impact that these literatures are having in the West as the source of powerful revisionist discourses to re-assemble contemporary Western identities and adjust them to the endless changes of history.

In the particular case of Portugal, it is very important to review and promote Lusophone literatures in order to contribute to the renovation of a heavy, five centuries long memory, nostalgically focused on a Golden Age of the past. Portugal certainly has an amazing historical heritage to esteem and remember but that is not the key to live up to nowadays' challenges as part of a postcolonial (hopefully more ethical and innovative than

[309] Isabel Caldeira, "Identidade Étnica e Identidade Nacional", *in* Portugal: um Retrato Singular, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (ed.), Edições Afrontamento, Centro de Estudos Sociais, Porto, 1993.
[310] Ideological discourse is: "(…) Todo o enunciado (verbal ou não verbal) de dimensão transindividual, capaz de representar sentidos de amplitude social, sentidos esses que traduzem as dominantes axiológicas de um sistema ideológico." Carlos Reis, "Identidade e Discurso Ideológico", *in Discursos*, 13, Outubro 1996: 35.
[311] *Ibid,* 1996: 32.

neo-colonial) Europe. The relevance of looking at the impact of postcolonial literatures in Portuguese has to be measured not only in terms of time (because it confronts the long colonial history of Portugal), but also in relation to the position of Portugal as a semi-peripheral nation in relation to Europe (geographically and economically) which, for centuries, had been translated into a collective fear that the end of the overseas empire would implicate the ending of Portuguese nation-hood in positive, powerful terms. Together with the peripheral position of Portugal, there is another factor that explains this mentality: Spain. Although historical relations between Spain and Portugal have been quite peaceful for most of their centuries long history as neighbours, there was always a very strong need to resist the centripetal power of Spain over the Iberian Peninsula. The sea adventure, its routes and the colonies compensated for the perception that smaller Portugal was indeed surrounded (except for its long coast line) by Spain[312].

In current postcolonial times, the renovation of national self-images and the erosion of the credibility of the nation-state itself are at the centre of very lively scholarly discussions. The currency of mainstream debates focusing on issues of identity, history and "the nation" is best surveyed if one considers the sheer bulk of publications on these subjects, in several areas of knowledge like literary criticism, philosophy and cultural studies.

I owe to Paulo de Medeiros the provocation to reflect on the connection between postcolonial literatures and a general revision of national identities in the European context. On his introduction to the issue of *Discursos*[313] (devoted to literature, nationalisms and identity), Medeiros identifies a crisis in the conceptualisation of the nation-state, embodied in the widespread loss of its credibility as the most adequate model of collective organisation, its ability to provide universal progress and its reliability as the most effective guardian of civil freedom. In part, one of the motives for this crisis of credibility was, precisely, the international process of de-colonisation (which took place in the middle decades of the XXth century). De-colonisation necessarily implied a debate on the nation-state as a European model, since it proved ill fitted to accommodate the complex multicultural ethnic landscape of many African and Asian countries. The diverse "failures" of the postcolonial nation-state on non-Western locations shed light on the less positive aspects of this political model, revealing the inherent potential for segregation and violence on its patterns of distribution of power. At the same time, postmodernism promoted de-territorialised frames of reference, more flexible and fluid. The effect of these new patterns of thought, so different from the previous colonial, Enlightenment and modern epistemes, was to bring to the centre of scholarly debate the suspicious questioning of established Western notions, like national identity and the "nation-state". The synchronicity of postmodernism with the process of decolonisation meant that the first was certainly not isolated from the backlash (against the superior, egocentric self-image of the West) implied by the latter, and it also encouraged the deconstruction of central historical myths like the functionality and necessity of the (imperial) nation-state.

In my opinion, the current and necessary reformulation of a mythical/mystifying idea of Portugal, whose glory exuded from the fact that it was an imperial nation, is already taking place. This process is re-vitalising, creative and fortifying. Portugal is currently re-discovering its (post)modernity, while embracing membership in Europe. Hence, the ideas

[312] Valentim Alexandre, "A África no Imaginário Político Português, Séculos XIX e XX", *Penélope*, 15, 1995, pages: 39-52.
[313] Paulo de Medeiros, "Em Nome de Portugal" and "A Questão da Nação", *Discursos*, *Estudos de Língua e Cultura Portuguesa*, Literatura, Nacionalismos, Identidade, Universidade Aberta, number 13, October 1996.

discussed above become very interesting to look at postcolonial literatures in Portuguese, since they put out a re-reading of historical memory in which Portugal is confronted with a mutant, confrontational account of its past glory. Through these dissonant, resisting voices, the positive hold of colonial history is tainted through guilt and self-knowledge, moderating the excessive importance of past imperialism for Portuguese national identity.

To conclude, I believe postcolonial literatures, in this case the Lusophone ones, can contribute to make Portugal find an operative synthesis between the rich collective memories of Portuguese history (which include a long history branded by colonialism and "the black Atlantic") and new, revised self-images and patterns to narrate Portuguese collective identity. Part of this renovation could come from a greater study and promotion of postcolonial literatures in Portuguese (and I hope to be able to contribute to that), such powerful sources of subversion to exorcise old imperial references.

III.1.2 Cultural Warfare

Postcolonial literatures in Portuguese certainly have an international audience, and that is why I believe they can contribute to renovate the obsolete self-images of former imperial Portugal. Nevertheless, regardless of the international impact of these literatures, it should be clear that this is, evidently, a secondary preoccupation in the order of factors that led to the creation of these "national canons".

Historically, the consolidation of the postcolonial literatures of Cape Verde and Mozambique (the two locations that concern this part of the research) were deeply dependent on the struggle for independence and the corresponding growing awareness that cultural warfare was a very important front to mobilise colonised peoples. In this way, one could say that ideological and political de-colonisation were the main ideals inspiring a first generation of African postcolonial writers in Portuguese. The first steps were tentative and discrete: there was tight censorship in the Portuguese colonies and to write critically, implying a dissident point of view, would swiftly lead a writer to prison. Gradually, from a scenario where some few isolated writers only published either colonial texts or romantic, lyric pieces (politically inoffensive), a couple of ground-breaking movements emerged in Cape Verde (the generation of *Claridade* in 1936) and Angola (the "new intellectuals" and the magazine *Mensagem* in 1948). From these first seeds, clear (national) literary systems grew stronger and more sophisticated.

The ideologues behind the liberation struggles that inspired the consolidation of these literatures openly addressed the relevance of the role of literature in promoting a sense of national identity worth to fight for. I will follow the strategies of Amílcar Cabral (leader of the liberation struggle of Cape Verde), Eduardo Mondlane and Samora Machel (for Mozambique) in planning the liberation struggle and its respective dimension of cultural warfare. In the process, the general sketch of the circumstances surrounding the consolidation of these postcolonial literatures will become clear.

African postcolonial literatures in Portuguese emerged around the 1940s and 1950s[314], in the process of preparing the struggle for independence, as a form of consciousness raising and mobilisation. No one expected the Portuguese regime to give in through diplomatic contacts. Too much time had been wasted in trying an impossible

[314] Before the 1950s, *Claridade* (1936) and *Certeza* (1944) had already been published in Cape Verde, both of them expressing postcolonial awareness. However, considering the more general frame of the five Portuguese colonies in Africa, late 1940s and the 1950s are the real moments of consolidation, when a significant set of African writers started publishing.

dialogue with the fascist government, so, for the rebel leaders, it was perfectly clear that war was the only option, and it would be a long (guerrilla) one.

In this reasoning along historical lines, the next two questions to track down as a literary critic are the theoretical sources (apart from the clear experience of living in a colony and seeing abuse in front of your eyes) which inspired the intelligentsia of the Portuguese African colonies, and, secondly, the use of literature to promote nationalist feelings.

Naturally, the birth of post/anti-colonial awareness is regionally dependent on the articulation of several factors: the collaboration of local press, the ambition of middle class groups uncomfortable with colonial authority and the influence of certain international movements like Pan-Africanism, communism and Négritude. Another factor must have been the independence of neighbouring colonies, a strong encouragement to rebellion in the territories that remained dependent (and it must have been the more important, in the context of the late independence of the Portuguese colonies of Africa, in 1975).

In terms of activism, a key element to introduce the reader to the 1950s stage of postcolonial literatures in Portuguese (the decade when a new ideological commitment and a significant increase in literary productivity are noticeable) is that fundamental institution called Casa dos Estudantes do Império, CEI (Home of the Students from the Empire), where all the college students from the diverse colonies were gathered. Although there was a pole of this institution in Coimbra, the most active "Casa", was the one in Lisbon. The "Casa" was a sort of club, with a bar, a small library and a newsletter called *Mensagem*[315] ("message", 35 issues, 1949-1964), which became an important locus of political and artistic debate. The "Casa" was indeed the institutional home that fostered the bonds of friendship between the intelligentsia of different colonies, creating a real spirit of co-operation and co-ordination in the struggle against Portuguese colonialism. As Manuel Ferreira ironically put it, the "House of the Students of the Empire" soon became the "House of the Students Against Empire"[316]. A curious aspect of this college "milieu" is that all those writers that later became towering figures in their own national literatures were then publishing, together, their first texts in this newsletter. Amílcar Cabral, for instance, is one of the names I often encountered when looking through different issues of this newsletter.

Amílcar Cabral, like Agostinho Neto (the ideologue of the struggle for the independence of Angola) and the activist Mário de Andrade, came to Lisbon to attend college, and soon were totally involved with the highly politicised student "milieu", the cradle of a future important network of political influences in Africa. Since the CEI functioned as a marginal sort of ghetto in relation to metropolitan society, it actually managed to master a margin of freedom that was surprising in those repressive fascist years[317].

The diffusion and exchange of political and philosophical ideas among college students from the diverse colonies was a fundamental factor to politicise young elites from the colonies. From the internal dynamics of the CEI, political mobilisation spread "back home", when each of these students returned to his own colony, with a developed postcolonial awareness. However, these activist students defined their political ideas under the influence of international movements that were circulating in the 1940s and 1950s. That is to say that Lusophone intelligentsia was not isolated from international theories defending

[315] This newsletter should not be confused with the magazine with same name that was published in Angola in 1948 (three issues) which was the forum for the movement of the "New Intellectuals". Their project of "re-discovering Angola" voiced, for the fisrt time, social critique against colonial abuses. Censorship did not allow more than three issues.

[316] Manuel Ferreira, in the introduction to a recent edition of Poesia Negra de Expressão Portuguesa, Editora Africa, Lisboa.

[317] On this issue see *op. cit.* Alfredo Margarido, 1980: 18.

the self-assertive re-discovery of "black identities" (mind that you need political self-awareness before you can mobilise people for war). The influence came from far away, in English and French.

For Cape Verde and Guiné-Bissau, Négritude was the first ideological influence to encourage political self-awareness. "La Négritude" was a Francophone intellectual movement, suggested by the works of Aimé Césaire and Leopold Sédar Senghor. Jean Paul Sartre wrote the famous essay "Orphée Noire"[318] to present the project of "Négritude", promoting a re-evaluation of black cultures to the eyes of the academy and established intellectual circles. "La Négritude" was an attempt by black scholars and artists to revive African cultures as a contribution to world humanism, while promoting a sense of racial pride among black people. It is, like Pan-Africanism, a general, supra-national movement, considering the whole of the African continent a cultural unity. It defended authenticity and the preservation/promotion of "*l'ensemble des valeurs de civilisation du monde noir*"[319] declaring the necessity of giving the world that which it lacked, namely, the contribution of black culture and philosophy to the world heritage. This philosophy creates a binary opposition between black and white people, turning the negative terms traditionally associated to black people into positive elements. The differences distinguishing black cultures from Western civilisation are presented as a sort of surplus or extra talent, so far misinterpreted because of the epistemological limits in the comparative models of "white Enlightenment". The poet and playwright Aimée Césaire coined the word "Négritude", in the 1930s, but Senghor is the author who developed "La Négritude" as a model of Negro-Africaine philosophy, with its own ontology, morality and aesthetics. This philosophy would be radically different from classical philosophy, hence the relevance of its innovative contribution. Négritude became a weapon in the fight for decolonisation precisely because of its attempt at decolonising the minds of colonised peoples from the assimilation of Western culture and its self-promoting colonial propaganda, creating a "locus" to develop a black "self"/subjectivity, entitled to rights and respect. It also created a basis of pride to resent white colonial oppression politically because it made black people stop alienation, that is to say, the tendency to imitate Western ways, behave "like the white", covet an European identity. With Négritude, black people were encouraged to be themselves, and break with assimilated feelings of inadequacy or powerlessness. This was a key first stage in the road to the consolidation of political resistance.

Several of the scholars committed to Négritude were members of the French Communist Party, as well. However, party allegiance and race issues embodied different political priorities and the articulation of the two seemed to be tense, in spite of being fruitful. It is obvious that "La Négritude" is not the project that is going to make peasants and exploited proletarians unite. Négritude is rather a middle class, poetry reading, "college-milieu" affair. Besides, the main problem with Senghor's theories when assessed from a communist perspective is that they do not break totally with a certain complacence towards the colonial situation. Nowhere does Senghor offer an idea or a model for revolution. It just praises elements of a re-discovered black culture. After World War II, communism soon replaced these first intellectual movements via the organisation of separate (and more aggressive) national movements for independence.

While communism started political activity with national units, Pan-Africanism and Négritude were continental projects. Secondly, Négritude started decolonisation as a cultural project, working through intellectual elites for the renovation of black self-awareness.

[318] Jean Paul Sartre, "Orphée Noire", *in* La Nouvelle Poésie Nègre et Malgache, Leopold Sédar Senghor, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1948.
[319] Léopold Sédar Senghor, Négritude et Civilisation de L' Universel, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1977: 20.

Communism, by contrast, was a popular political project that started with activism for independence among the oppressed population at large, including those with no direct connection to the cultural projects of an educated, intellectual elite, studying in French and Portuguese universities (Lisbon and Coimbra). Communist ideology offered revolution as a project to get free from colonial rule and gave the African people the means to understand their dispossession as class exploitation, equating "bourgeoisie" with white colonialism. This idea has a popular appeal beyond the self-assertive energy of Négritude poetry.

How did Amílcar Cabral use these ideas?

Amílcar Cabral was the ideologue of PAIGC (Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde), created in Bissau (Guiné), in 1956, as an underground organisation. Ten years before, Cabral had studied agronomy, in the University of Lisbon, in 1945-1946 (where he joined the anti-fascist student movements and the lively cultural milieu of the CEI. Later, after finishing his studies, Cabral moved to Guiné-Bissau[320], in 1950, to work in experimental agriculture. There, he started to tackle popular neighbourhoods, spreading his political ideas among rural workers. Soon, his activities were noticed, and, in 1954, Portuguese authorities ban Cabral from Guiné-Bissau. In exile, Cabral established the headquarters of his party at Conakry (French Guiné) and started to organise it as a responsible political body, which would be in charge of the new country after independence. According to Cabral's vision, the small continental territory of Guiné-Bissau would be united with the archipelago of Cape Verde[321] in order to form a unique state, but this unification never happened beyond the joint liberation fight. The independence war began in 1963, with a rural riot in Guiné. By contrast, in Cape Verde there were no popular riots, nor war. Cape Verdean co-operation came from sectors of small bourgeoisie, active in diplomacy, logistics and co-ordination.

Cabral turned to forms of "cultural warfare" in the initial stages of the struggle as a means to raise postcolonial awareness with slogans, short poems and speeches promoting "black culture" through appropriations of Négritude and Pan-African ideas. For example, in his amazing[322] speeches to the troops[323] Cabral mentions the necessity of keeping good appearance, comb one's hair and wash whenever one could (the troops were living in the bush). He also emphasises the importance of keeping a tidy camp, where gardening was not an activity to be looked down on. With an amazing insight on the psychological frame of his troops, Cabral sensed that a feeling of dignity and self-respect was the corner stone on which he was building his resentment against white colonialism. The circulation of these ideas among colonised peasants is the equivalent to the publication of anthologies of black poetry among the intelligentsia. Both provoke thought and inspire action.

For a sketch of the details of the war see Appendix I, a small descriptive text I wrote to be read as a companion piece to these introductory sections. I thought that it would be useful to provide a brief summary, especially for the Anglophone reader who may not be so familiar with this historical context.

Amílcar Cabral defined cultural warfare in the following terms:

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[320] We will follow events in Guiné-Bissau because the liberation fight of Cape Verde joined the struggle in this other continental colony. The idea was to emerge as a unique independent nation, joining the two territories.

[321] Note that Cabral attended primary school and high school in Cape Verde, so he had knowledge of the two territories.

[322] The adaptation of the speech to the realities (the reader guesses) of the peasants of Guiné-Bissau reveals a sensitive and pedagically competent Cabral. What a contrast with the language of his theoretical essays or his literary interventions in *Mensagem*.

[323] Amílcar Cabral, Análise de Alguns Tipos de Resistência, Seara Nova, Lisboa, 1975.

"When Goebbels, the brain behind Nazi propaganda, heard culture being discussed, he brought out his revolver. That shows the Nazis - who were and are the most tragic expression of imperialism and its thirst for domination - even if they were all degenerates like Hitler, had a clear idea of the value of cultures as a factor of resistance to foreign domination."

(…)

"The more one realises that the chief goal of the liberation movement goes beyond the achievement of political independence to the superior level of complete liberation of the productive forces and the construction of economic, social and cultural progress of people, the more evident is the necessity of undertaking a selective analysis of the values of the culture within the framework of the struggle for liberation. The need for such an analysis of cultural values becomes more acute when, in order to face colonial violence, the liberation movement must mobilise and organise the people, under the direction of a strong and disciplined political organisation, in order to resort to violence in the cause of freedom – *the armed struggle for the national liberation*."

(…)

"From all that has just been said, it can be concluded that in the framework of the conquest of national independence and in the perspective of developing the economic and social progress of people, the objectives must be at least the following: *development of a popular culture* and of all positive indigenous cultural values; *development of a national culture* based upon the history and the achievements of the struggle itself; constant promotion of the *political and moral awareness* of the people (of all social groups) as well as *patriotism*, of the spirit of sacrifice and devotion to the cause of independence, of justice, and of progress;"

Amílcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture"[324]

In the above quotes, Cabral explains the key connection between national liberation and cultural warfare, departing from an example (Nazi imperialism) that is only too clear for Europe, reminding one of this experience of colonisation and, by opposition, the basis of patriotism which fostered diverse resistance movements. Cabral rightly saw that without a clear sense of national culture and political awareness, a liberation war could not be fought, but beyond that, the sustained construction of the post-independence state needed these same mechanisms badly. Initially, cultural warfare was a matter of breaking alienation and connecting isolated feelings of rebellion to a national movement. After independence, cultural warfare was about transcending group (ethnic) rivalries, consolidate unity and inculcate allegiance to a Marxist state, de-centred from urban hegemonies and truly committed to improve the living conditions of a massive peasant population. In other words, Cabral believed that continued mobilisation, promoting political and moral awareness would be the backbone of a long lasting and effective de-colonisation. This perspective on the necessity of a clear cultural strategy to keep people motivated and actively engaged in de-colonisation, implies a project for the literary production of the future postcolonial state. Some writers followed the appointed script, others, just followed their inspiration. In the case of the women writers addressed by this research, none of them is dependent on party allegiance to write, but then, they also belong to a later, post-independence stage.

In the words of Arcília L. Barreto[325], the main strategic error in Cabral's vision for the independence of Guiné-Bissau was the attempt to unite the archipelago of Cape Verde and continental Guiné-Bissau as a unique nation. The idea certainly makes sense from a rational, practical point of view. However, cultural identity has emerged as a decisive

[324] Amílcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture", *in* Postmodernism, a Reader, Thomas Docherty (ed.), Columbia University Press, New York, 1993.

[325] Arcília L. Barreto, "Africa, num Contexto de Busca e de Afirmação", *in* África Austral, o Desafio do Futuro, Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais, Lisboa, 1991.

element in the successful creation of post-colonial states (generating either unity or fragmentation) and, in this case: (…) *"desde os primórdios da ocupação colonial, as relações entre Cabo Verde e a Guiné tinham sido sempre conflituosas. De Cabo Verde iam para a Guiné os senhores compradores de escravos, os lançados, e para Cabo Verde levavam-se os escravos* "[326]. Hence, the Cape Verdean *mestiço* was commonly identified with colonialism and power, and, logically, he/she would not easily be trusted or accepted.

Another point of divergence is that the guerrilla war for the control of the colonised territory was disputed in Guiné-Bissau alone. This difference in the terms of active participation in the liberation war further estranged Cape Verdeans and the people of Guiné. During the fight, the idea of an independent country became totally infused with symbols exclusively inspired by the ethnic groups of Guiné, not to mention their ethnic predominance in the leading positions of the army and in PAIGC, the party that was clearly going to create the first independent government.

At the time, the idea of united independences in the West coast of Africa was not as strange as it may look nowadays. Pan-Africanism is discussed below, but, meanwhile, I prefer to turn to the words of Manuel Duarte, lawyer and Cape Verdean scholar, who wrote the following quote in 1977 (two years after independence from colonial rule):

> "Os mais lúcidos dirigentes africanos compreenderam bem cedo que a balcanização da África só serviria os interesses imperialistas e neocolonialistas no nosso continente.
>
> No contexto da luta de libertação nacional das antigas colónias portuguesas, a orientação unitária seguida no seio da CONCP, foi um factor decisivo na derrota do colonialismo português. Já nos anos cinquenta, em que se fundou o Movimento Anti-Colonialista (MAC), precursor da CONCP[327], proclamava-se que a unidade de todos os povos das colónias portuguesas era indispensável na luta contra o colonialismo português, e que a unidade de todos os povos africanos era fundamental para a libertação do nosso Continente e a consolidação da independência e liberdade das nações africanas."[328]
>
> (Manuel Duarte[329])

Amílcar Cabral, probably one of the most famous and often quoted intellectuals in the context of the anti-colonial struggles of Africa, clearly saw this. A joined independence would strengthen both archipelago and continental territory.

Cabral equally deserves a word of praise for his amazing diplomatic abilities: a legal study on the process that led to the unilateral declaration of the independence of Guiné[330] establishes the ample network Cabral had managed to assemble, lobbying everywhere, from the United Nations to the Vatican, so as to make sure that international support would not

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[326] From the very beginning of colonial occupation, the powerful slave buyers, the *lançados,* travelled from Cape Verde to Guiné, and the slaves were taken (from Guiné) to Cape Verde, *op. cit.*, Barreto, 1991: 123.

[327] CONCP – Conference of the National Organisations of the Portuguese Colonies.

[328] "The most lucid African leaders quickly understood that the balkanisation of Africa would help imperial and neo-colonial interests in the African continent.
In the context of the fight for national freedom in the former Portuguese colonies, the united option followed by the CONCP was a decisive factor in the defeat of Portuguese colonialism. Already in the fifties, when the anti-colonial movement was founded MAC (the forerunner of CONCP) it proclaimed that the union of all the peoples from the Portuguese colonies was indispensable in the fight against Portuguese colonialism, and that the union of all the peoples of Africa was fundamental for the freedom of our continent and the consolidation of the independence and freedom of African nations."

[329] Manuel Duarte, Caboverdianidade, Africanidade e Outros Textos, Spleen Edições, Cabo Verde, (1977) 1999: 121.

[330] António E. Duarte Silva, A Independência da Guiné-Bissau e a Descolonização Portuguesa, Edições Afrontamento, Porto, 1977.

fail to the new, emerging state. Finally, his essays on cultural warfare[331] became key academic pieces to understand de-colonisation processes in Africa. Cabral connected the necessity of "de-colonising" the alienated black minds with the effort to "Africanising" them, following Négritude principles. This concern with culture and mentalities is a concrete example of the application of "cultural warfare" to politics, leading to the creation of nativist propaganda. Hence, Cabral can also be equated with the political facet of Négritude[332], which used artistic production as a means to search for authentic African symbols and worldviews.

It is a common feature to Guiné/ Cape Verde and Mozambique that a lot of effort was put into a solid and pervasive mobilisation of the population so as to make sure that the struggle, once it was started, could count on the effective co-operation of civilians. Mozambique was exemplary on that account, reaching a level of peasant mobilisation unmatched[333] by any other African struggle against colonialism.

In Mozambique, the main source of ideological influences to think the liberation struggle came from communist activism, but, for the 1950s generation of emerging committed writers, Pan-African ideas, via English press from South Africa was a mind blowing influence.

Pan-Africanism was a movement promoted by black intellectuals in the United States, London and Africa. Five congresses were organised (1919, 1921, 1923, 1927, 1945) to discuss the necessity of freeing Africa from its colonial situation, and petitions and manifestoes ensued from these meetings. Dr. Du Bois, the soul of the movement, saw Pan-Africanism as a socio-political movement that would try to improve the status of the black population within the United States while supporting, at the same time, self-government for African peoples. He defended non-violent positive action, of the kind carried out by Gandhi, but this movement remained a middle-class, intelligentsia affair, and it did not tackle popular support. However it was an inspiration for those that were in a position to aspire to power and had the material means to promote the nationalist struggle, through the press and activist cells. After World War II, the Pan-African movement sponsored a series of publications (newspapers and magazines) that kept African intellectuals from Nigeria, Gold Coast and Francophone colonies, in contact. The West African National Secretariat, in London, was the association responsible for this co-ordination and exchange of information and its aims were the "*complete liquidation of the colonial system*", and the independence of a united West Africa[334]. The emergence of specific national movements dissolved, through fragmentation, the relevance of the Pan-African movement. Still, "despite its chronic organisational weakness and its lack of intellectual balance, Pan-Africanism has had an enormous political

[331] Cabral, Amílcar, Nacionalismo e Cultura, Xosé Lois Garcia (ed.), Santiago de Compostela, Galiza: Edicións Laiovento, 1999. See also, from Cabral, Revolution in Guinea: Selected Texts, (translation Richard Handyside), New York, Monthly Review Press, 1969. Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writing, (translation Michael Wolfers), London, Heinemann, 1980. Verkondig Geen Gemakkelijke Overwinningen: over de Bevrijdingsstrijd in Guinee-Bissau, Amsterdam, van Gennep, 1973.

[332] This is also the opinion of Elleke Boehmer, Colonial & Postcolonial Literature, Oxford University Press, 1995: 187, 188, 189.

[333] John S. Saul, Recolonisation and Resistance in Southern Africa in the 1990s, Africa World Press Inc., Trenton, New Jersey, 1993: 2.

[334] Imanuel Geiss, The Pan-African Movement, Africana Publishing Co., New York, 1974: 412. See also, George Padmore, Pan-Africanism or Communism, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1971 and J. Ayodele Langley, Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973.

and historical impact, in conceiving of, and circulating political ideas to strive for the decolonisation of Africa[335].

Although some of the leading figures in the Pan-African movement, like George Padmore, departed from their membership in the communist party to envisage a socialist political project for Africa, there was a certain suspicion that Pan-African issues should not be dependent on communism. African intellectuals feared that any association with international communism would mean that the independence from capitalist imperialism would only achieve the substitution of white forms of domination over Africa, replacing Europe by Russia[336]. Eventually, Padmore clearly rejected communism as the solution for colonialism. One just has to consider the title of his book (Pan-Africanism **or** Communism[337]) to see how distant these two revolutionary projects are deemed to be.

Although the third Pan-African congress was held in London, Padmore claims that there was a second part of this congress in Lisbon, in the summer of 1923. This fact, would testify to the co-ordination and co-operation between Lusophone activists and the Pan-African movement. At the time, Lisbon was picked by the latter as a politically relevant location because of the Portuguese colonial dimension and on account of the commitment of the Pan-African movement to express international support for the *Liga Africana*[338]. At the time, this Lisbon based association was struggling to achieve reforms in the Portuguese colonies, especially in what concerns forced labour and the illegal practice of slavery. In his book, George Padmore[339] claims that the Lisbon congress took place, but Imanuel Geiss[340] seems more doubtful that a real congress happened, apart from a visit and a set of lectures by Dr. Du Bois.

In literary and ideological terms, the Pan-African movement inspired essentialist formulations of African culture, stressing a continental, racial identity. This cultural nativism is currently regarded as nothing more than an inversion of colonial racist discourse, attempting to heal the wounded sense of "self" of African peoples, after slavery and their colonial past. Though the need to assert a humiliated and alienated black identity is strategically undeniable (as a pre-condition to swell pro-independence, anti-colonial activism) the fact is that postcolonial intellectuals soon moved away from such an essentialist, binary logic, which still produces a sense of identity dependent on the gaze/aggression of the coloniser (in so far as the drive to "Africanise" yourself implies that your African identity has to have been snatched away, disrupted by the intervention of "an(white)other"). Nevertheless, in an initial postcolonial stage (when raising political awareness is the priority), nativism certainly made a lot of sense, and it just confirms the importance of forms of cultural warfare in the processes of decolonisation. First things first, and a self-aware, politicised black identity was the means to break popular political alienation and promote anti-colonial ideologies.

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[335] *Ibid,* Geiss, 1974: 428.

[336] The Communist International (the 'Comintern') was actively engaged in anti-colonial movements from the 1920s onwards. The Red International of Labour Unions also attempt to co-ordinate an International Trade Union Committee for Negro Workers (ITUC-NW), and George Padmore was one of the activists in establishing and running this organization. He even wrote a book about it: The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers (1932). However, Padmore changed his point of view later on, claiming that Soviet foreign policy saw the oppressed Negro workers as a tool in the global fight against Western capitalism, disregarding African interests in the name of Soviet ones. This subject is one of the topics of his 1971's book.

[337] *Op. cit.* Padmore, 1971.

[338] The *Liga Africana* was an associaton created by students, from any of the colonies, who were studying in Lisbon at the time. Its aim was to promote the necessity of carrying out reforms and revise patterns of Portuguese colonisation. It was active in the 1920s.

[339] *Op. cit.* Padmore, 1971: 119.

[340] *Op cit.* Geiss, 1974: 255.

While promoting a continental black African identity, Pan-Africanism had the merit of creating bonds between different black communities that shared the need to assert their identity as a form of resistance against dominant colonial and racist discourses. The above-mentioned continental bonds also included an extension across "the Black Atlantic", connecting the independence struggles of Africa to the oppressed black community of North America. As William E. B. Du Bois put it, the problem of Afro-Americans is that the displaced/diasporic black community of America is/was colonised, just like the African territories were.

There were other cultural movements, which happened in the United States but had Africa for referent, whose impact among African intellectual elites was quite strong. "Harlem Renaissance" (1920) or "Black is Beautiful" (1960s, at the same time independence wars in Angola, Guiné-Bissau and Mozambique were starting) are instances of such movements. In both cases, Afro-American artists and intellectuals invoked a mystifying "mother Africa" as the place of belonging, where a sense of origin, racial pride and distinctive identity combine with continental boundaries. On this subject, Fernando J. B. Martinho[341] traced references to famous Afro-American people in Lusophone poetry by African writers. Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Richard Wright, Charlie Parker, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Marion Anderson and the "boxeur" Joe Louis are some of the famous names, which are repeatedly mentioned in Lusophone poetry. The achievements of these successful black people are taken as a token for all the wonderful possibilities castrated by racism and imperialism[342].

While Négritude was the strongest influence in the cultural self-assertion and political mobilisation of Cape Verde and Guiné-Bissau, Pan-Africanism had more impact in Mozambique. Eduardo Mondlane was the ideologue who guided the independence struggle of Mozambique.

In his book Lutar por Moçambique[343], Eduardo Mondlane deconstructs several false ideas internationally promoted by the Portuguese government in the 1950s and 1960s, in a carefully orchestrated campaign of misinformation, aimed at justifying the continued refusal of Portugal to decolonise its African territories.

One of these "political lies" argued that Portuguese colonialism was not racist, hence, welcomed by the local population. Another fallacy was the image of a well-established and long Portuguese presence: only after the conference of Berlin (1884-1885) did Portugal take a stronger hold of the territory with "the Pacification campaigns". Besides, economically, Portugal needed foreign investment to explore the resources of its colony. Finally, Mondlane looks at the myth of "easy miscegenation" to conclude that few marriages (with all its implications of legitimacy) took place between different races. This carefully documented introduction to his book clearly reveals the aim of eroding the credibility of the "right" of Portugal to be in Moçambique: it denounces racism, forced labour, dependency on other potencies and structural weaknesses. By diminishing Portugal to the eyes of the international reader, Mondlane is expecting to gain much needed support to the liberation cause (mind

[341] Fernando J. B. Martinho, "Intertextualidade e Exemplum (O Negro Norte-americano Como "Figura Exemplar" na Poesia Africana de Língua Portuguesa)", *in* Actas X Encontro de Professores Universitários Brasileiros de Literatura Portuguesa, I Colóquio Luso-Brasileiro de Professores Universitários de Literaturas de Expressão Portuguesa, Lisboa, 1984.

[342] On this issue, see also Ana Mafalda Leite "Contribuição para o Estudo de "Moçambicanidade", *in* Actas X Encontro de Professores Universitários Brasileiros de Literatura Portuguesa, I Colóquio Luso-Brasileiro de Professores Universitários de Literaturas de Expressão Portuguesa, Lisboa, 1984.

[343] Eduardo Mondlane, Lutar por Moçambique, Livraria Sá da Costa, Lisboa, (1969, English version) 1975.

that the original English version of this text, 1969, was written during the liberation war, 1964-1974).

As for the role of literature and poetry as a means of mobilisation, Mondlane considers the effort of poets like Craveirinha and Noémia de Sousa important, but not very useful, because they are too remote from the masses of peasant population (the population of Mozambique was 98% illiterate, in 1964). On this subject, less educated Samora Machel would have a better insight on the use of literature and propaganda texts among his troops, as the lavish distribution of FRELIMO anthologies of "literatura de combate" ("fighting literature") would prove. Poems would be read aloud or turned into songs, easier to memorize.

In his speeches and writings, Eduardo Mondlane was keen on denouncing the destructive effects of the "assimilado" policy, insisting on the necessity of de-colonising African minds. By creating the "assimilados", a more educated class of Lusophiles, who rejected its own culture and race in the name of integration and relative privilege, the Portuguese would be creating a network of reliable allies. Yet, against Mondlane's dismissal of the assimilados, this more educated group was the very same class that first developed postcolonial awareness and launched the plan of an independent nation through their writings on the press, the available means to protest against colonial abuse[344]. Mondlane praises the urban, artistic effort of these "critical assimilados" to assert national identity. However, Mondlane's strategic mind also circumscribes the impact of their action to the capital and a few other cities. In his texts, one can follow Mondlane's struggle to reach the remote tribal villages ruled by the *régulo*[345], totally unaware of the mechanics of colonialism. He is a pragmatic man, with diplomatic *savoir faire*, methodically organising a revolution while making sure he is playing the right cards in international politics.

When Eduardo Mondlane was assassinated by the Portuguese secret police (3 February 1969), Samora Machel took over the presidency of FRELIMO. After Mondlane, the politician, Samora Machel was another kind of leader: a military mind, with a powerful popular appeal, honestly committed to build a communist regime in Mozambique. Machel had been a male nurse in the biggest hospital of the capital (Lourenço Marques) and he met Mondlane when the latter came on a long visit to Mozambique to promote the independence cause. Young Samora Machel was so deeply impressed by the speeches of Eduardo Mondlane that in 1961 he joined underground activism. In 1963, when friends tipped him off that the Portuguese secret police was looking for him, Samora Machel escaped to South Africa, and from there, to Tanzania where the FRELIMO movement was organising itself to strike. Machel was sent to Argel to receive military training and he became the leader of the rebel army, from the very beginning of the war.

Samora Machel's written speeches are very clear and simple, meant to be easily understood. Most of these speeches explain the plan of action of the government and reveal a serious commitment to the ideals of improving the living conditions of the people of Mozambique, "*working very hard, without taking advantage of a privileged position*" [346] to paraphrase his straight-forward tone. The fear of nepotism, home colonialism and corruption are very clear in Samora's presidential speeches (he became the first president of independent Mozambique) revealing an acute perception of the risks the postcolonial state would have to fear. Another problem addressed by Machel is tribal rivalry. He talks at some length of unity, and this is a subject he will keep coming back to. Finally, it is worth

[344] *Ibid*, 1975: 111.
[345] "Régulo" was the name of the traditional chief. Colonial authorities protected established African aristocracies as an effective form of undirect rule if they accepted to co-operate.
[346] Samora Machel, Unidade, Trabalho, Vigilância, Lourenço Marques (Maputo), 1974.

remaking that has the leader of the transition government, Samora devotes a section of his acceptance speech to the emancipation of the women of Mozambique, and he declares his intention of breaking with both obsolete traditions and colonial exploitation[347].

In the case of the Lusophone national literatures I am studying here, the highly politicised context framing the emergence of these postcolonial literatures did not create the probable tension between aesthetic quality and the requirements of "ideological propaganda". Any talented writers who were active at the period of swelling nationalism and the subsequent liberation struggle (50s, 60s and middle 70s) did not feel limited by the expectations of activists, dealing with politics to the extent they wanted, but without compromising aesthetic creativity. However, it is notorious, say, in the work of Luandino Vieira (one of the main Angolan writers) the difference in quality between a text like Luuanda[348] and A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier[349] being quite obvious the broader audience Vieira was aiming at when he wrote the latter, less elaborate novel, being the deliberate and mature writer he was.

As far as poetry is concerned, the concrete materialisation of literary influences from Pan-Africanism and Négritude in postcolonial literatures in Portuguese has a particular beginning, the history of which is worth telling here, in the context of the search for an example of the combination of activism with literary quality. The first touchstone, in the universe of Lusophone literatures, is the ground-breaking anthology Poesia Negra de Expressão Portuguesa, (1953) by Francisco Tenreiro and Mário de Andrade. This anthology (forbidden by censorship) soon became a success among African college students in Lisbon, who put it out in their home countries, when they returned. This was the first attempt at publishing together the voices of several Lusophone poets (and their shared rejection of Portuguese colonialism). By joining voices of poets from different places, the anthology consolidates the bonds between colonised peoples, who share the same experience of abuse and oppression. That is why the anthology is dedicated to Nicolás Guillén[350], "*a voz mais alta da negritude de expressão hispano-americana*" (the greatest voice of Négritude in the Spanish-American world) connecting the situation of African peoples colonised by Portugal to the self-assertion of coloured people all over the world. In fact, this anthology means more than a beginning in postcolonial Lusophone poetry (which is important in itself), because it also represents further evidence of the co-ordination of international movements for the assertion of black identities and black culture, in the 1950s.

Among the pages of the 1953 anthology, I picked a poem to exemplify the presence of influences from international "black" self-assertive movements in Lusophone poetry. My selection fell on Noémia de Sousa, a woman poet from Mozambique.

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[347] See also Samora Machel, "Mensagem ao Povo Moçambicano por ocasião do '25 de Setembro' Dia da Revolução", 1974 and "Mensagem à XXIV Sessão do Comité de Libertação da Organização da Unidade Africana", Dar-es-Salaam, 8th January 1974.

[348] Luuanda (Eros, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 1965; Edições 70, Lisboa, 1976) is the title of a polemic collection of stories by Luandino Vieira. When the text was published, Luandino Vieira was a political prisoner in a Portuguese jail. The fascist régime considered Vieira a vicious dissident. In the same year Luuanda succeeded in being published (1965), the Portuguese Association of Writers attributed the first prize to Luandino Vieira, for this text! Salazar, when informed of that year's choice, dissolved the Association of Writers. Too late. Luuanda was already a symbol of the sympathy of the Portuguese metropolitan intelligentsia towards other political dissidents.

[349] Luandino Vieira, A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier, Edições 70, Lisboa, 1988 (clandestine edition, 1961, em Luanda).

[350] Nicolás Guillén was a Cuban poet who asserted the contribution of African elements to the Creole culture of Cuba. In his works he tries to re-discover "genuine" African influences, materialised, for instance, in the rhythm and style of his writing. *In* Manuel Ferreira, No Reino de Caliban, Seara Nova, Lisboa, 1975: 36.

Deixa Passar o meu Povo	**Let my People Go**
Noite morna de Moçambique	Warm night of Mozambique
E sons longínquos de marimbas	And distant sounds of marimbas[351]
Chegam até mim	reaching me
-certos e constantes-	-Reliable and continuous-
vindos não sei eu donde.	Coming from some unknown somewhere.
Em minha casa de madeira e zinco,	At my home made of wood and zinc
Abro o rádio e deixo-me embalar…	I switch on the radio and let myself be lulled…
Mas vozes da América remexem-me	But voices from America revolve
a alma e os nervos.	My soul and nerves.
E Robeson e Marian cantam para mim	And Robeson and Marian sing for me
Spirituals negros de Harlem.	Negro spirituals from Harlem.
"Let my people go"	"Let my people go"
-oh deixa passar o meu povo,	-oh, let my people go,
deixa passar o meu povo!-	Let my people go!-
dizem.	So they say
Nervosamente,	Nervously,
Eu sento-me à mesa e escrevo…	I sit by the table and write…
Dentro de mim,	Inside me,
Deixa passar o meu povo,	Let my people go,
"oh, let my people go!…"	"oh, let my people go!…"
E já não sou mais que instrumento	And I am no more than tool and means
Do meu sangue em turbilhão	Of my whirling blood
Com Marian me ajudando	With Marian helping me
Com sua voz profunda – minha irmã!	With her deep voice – my sister!
(…)	(...)
E enquanto me vierem de Harlem	And as long as voices from Harlem reach me
Vozes de lamentação	Lamenting voices
E meus vultos familiares me visitarem	And my private ghosts keep visiting me
Em longas noites de insónia,	In long sleepless nights
Não poderei deixar-me embalar pela música fútil	I cannot let myself be lulled by the futile music
Das valsas de Strauss.	Of Strauss' valses.
Escreverei, escreverei,	I will write, I will write
com Robeson e Marian gritando comigo	With Robeson and Marian screaming with me
"Let my people go".	"Let my people go".
OH DEIXA PASSAR O MEU POVO!	OH LET MY PEOPLE GO!
Noémia de Sousa *in*	(my translation)
Poesia Negra de Expressão Portuguesa, 1958	

In this poem you can see how de Sousa establishes a connection between the voices of "black" America and the Lusophone writer who, inspired by her brothers and sisters from Harlem, sits down and writes of the necessity to fight for the freedom of the people of Mozambique, refusing (colonial) dependence and imprisonment. The bond between Harlem and Moçambique is also the means for a de-colonisation of the mind, making the poet see the European music (Strauss) as futile and deceitful.

Five years later, Mário de Andrade (meanwhile estranged from Francisco Tenreiro), in his introduction to the sequel, Antologia da Poesia Negra de Expressão Portuguesa, had these words to describe the impact of the first collection:

[351] Musical instrument.

"O *caderno* cumpriu a sua missão de revelar uma tomada de consciência negra de alguns de nós, no momento em que as vozes fraternais de Césaire, Senghor, Guillén, Langston Hughes, Depestre nos soavam já tão fortemente aos ouvidos que nos incitavam a *dizer* os nossos problemas específicos. O acolhimento reservado a essa primeira tentativa foi grande, sobretudo entre a juventude negra do 'ultramar português'."

Mário de Andrade, Paris,
Setembro de 1958: XV

"The *small anthology* fulfilled its mission, which was to reveal the awaking of a Black self-awareness among some of us, at the moment when the fraternal voices of Césaire, Senghor, Guillén, Langston Hughes, Depestre were loud in our ears and incited us to voice our own problems. The reception to this first attempt (at publishing "black" poetry) was very positive, especially among the youth of the "Portuguese overseas provinces."

(my translation)

The second anthology was published in Paris, in 1958, by Mário de Andrade who had to escape to France to avoid imprisonment by the Portuguese state police (actually, Andrade became the head of one of the departments of *Présence Africaine*[352]). This second anthology includes all the poets of the previous edition (except the Cuban Nicolas Guillén), but it collects more poems from each of them. Besides some new names are presented. This second anthology is, again, an embodiment of the ideals of Négritude, in dialogue with Pan-African principles and "black" American cultural movements. As it happened with the first collection, the main themes of the collected poetry are centred on the bonds between African nations, their shared fight against colonialism and their shared history of colonial oppression. The poems construct a binary opposition between black and white people, reversing previous racist discourses and corroding colonial mythologies. The fact that poets from different colonies repeat the same feelings and themes provides ground for the argument of shared oppression, even if it is not mentioned explicitly. Another point worth is the invocation of "mother Africa" as a trans(national), continental cultural identity. At the time, this anthology was very important to promote international anti-colonial ideas among Portuguese speaking peoples, further encouraging literary contributions from other African writers.

In the Lusophone national movements of the 40s and 50s, a creative flux of committed literature emerged in the literary supplements of newspapers, the first available means to publish local writers regularly. Behind the press, supporting and probably manipulating it, was the Westernised, educated intelligentsia, and, at least in the case of Portuguese colonies, the group of Creole or "mestiço" middle-class administrators and businessmen who had been more easily accepted by colonial power than "local natives". All of these half-privileged groups wanted to get free from metropolitan power and the press enabled them to discuss, and put out, the independence ideal and its corresponding political project, even if it was through the indirect assertion of local identity and culture, according to Négritude and Pan-African philosophies.

Among the main titles of the Mozambican press, an especial reference has to be made to *A Voz de Moçambique* (1961-1970s) and the legendary *O Brado Africano* (1918-1974). In Cape Verde, literary magazines and the press were, again, the mediums for literary activity and cultural warfare. Among the activist newspapers in the archipelago, one should mention

[352] *Présence Africaine* is the name of a magazine that became an important forum for artists and scholars commited to Négritude.

Ressurgimento, *O Eco de Cabo Verde,* and *Arquipélago*, together with an extensive list of magazines, which I will discuss in the section devoted to the literature of Cape Verde.

Later on, during the liberation war, many writers participated in the effort to mobilize the civilian population and keep the morale of the fighters high. Again, this was a form of cultural warfare, not only intended for consciousness raising but rather aimed at sustaining the effort of what were long independence wars (ten years for Mozambique and Guiné, thirteen for Angola). As an example of this cultural warfare, aimed at promoting the importance of the independence war, I picked a poem from an Angolan writer, Costa Andrade (previously, an active member of the CEI, the student club of Lisbon I mentioned above as the subversive "milieu" that fostered all these talents):

Emboscada	Ambush
O dia estranhamente frio	The day was unusually cold
O tempo estranhamente lento	Time was strangely slow
A vegetação estranhamente densa	The vegetation was uncomfortably lush
A estrada estranhamente clara	The road unusually lit
Todos estranhamente mudos	Everybody strangely quiet
Placados e estranhamente à espera.	Calm in their strange wait
Um tiro	A shot
E as rajadas uns segundos	The rattling of a machine gun for a few seconds
Até que estranhamente duro	Until, strangely sharp
O silêncio comandou de novo	Silence ruled again over
Os movimentos.	Our moves.
Talvez fossem homens bons os que caíram	Maybe the men who fell were good men
Mas cumpriam estranhamente o crime	But, strangely, they were committing the crime
De assassinar a pátria alheia que pisavam.	Of murdering the foreign land they were walking.
Costa Andrade, *in* Poesia com Armas, 1975	(my translation)

As it is clear, the defence of "the nation", here equated with "the land", is a matter of reacting against a crime that cannot be tolerated. Another point worth is that the defence against this crime certainly justifies violence, even if good men are sacrificed. Apart from the argument in the poem, the sensitivity to represent the ambush as the tense and unnatural wait it is, and the corresponding stress and numbness of the soldiers, succeeds in creating a heroic status for the freedom fighter.

After the liberation war ended, the Marxist regime of Mozambique kept investing in its mobilisation campaigns, publishing, together with the texts of achieved poets like Craveirinha, Rui Nogar and Noémia de Sousa, a selection of ideologically motivated poems, the authorship of which is simply "FRELIMO", the party. The strategic aim of activating "cultural warfare" was quite open. The anthology I am using as an example of these mobilisation campaigns is simply called Poesia de Combate ("Fighting Poetry")[353]. In the first post-war years, the liberation effort still is represented in epic terms, and a strong nationalist allegiance is clear. But the mood would change…

The sacrifices and effort implied in the independence fight were deemed acceptable because the civilian populations of the colonies were promised an improvement of their living conditions. Once the colonial invaders were expelled, people saw no reason to delay the fulfilment of the promised changes. Disappointment and bitterness replaced euphoria.

[353] Poesia de Combate, Edição do Departamento de Trabalho Ideológico da FRELIMO, second edition, 1977.

III.1.3 Postcolonial Post-euphoria: Survival Kit to New Travellers

The concrete definition of particular national projects for African colonies, in the context of the 1950s, was developed either under the auspices of pro-soviet communist regimes (where the key idea is revolution, the overthrow of colonial exploitation and the creation of an equalitarian system, oriented towards the needs of the people) or inspired by pro-West "development" (in this case, the key idea is technological development, increased production, and the participation of the new country in a capitalist international economy. The idea of enlarged access to profit and wealth is expected to captivate "wide" public support). In either case, both revolutionary activists and local middle classes sought the power of cultural products to advertise their project and increase popular support for the nationalist cause.

Before there is agency there has to be subject-hood[354] and a political sensitivity. In the context of colonisation, the assertion of local cultural traditions, social codes or belief systems amounted to the construction of an independent sense of identity which was a key element in the resistance against colonialism and the eventual organisation of each of the struggles for national freedom. That is why, regardless of the fact that one may be referring to the expansion of pro-communist or pro-"development" ideas, postcolonial awareness always starts from the recovery of a positive, collective, black selfhood, connecting this "collective self" to a project that opposes the white colonial system.

Ideas, abstract and immaterial as they may seem, do change the course of history when they become action. In the previous section, I followed several ideologues whose dreams became nation-states and, at the same time, I tried to make an itinerary of the role of culture, in particular literature, in this process. But, in a country where books did not circulate widely among an impoverished and often illiterate population, it is true that cultural warfare was mostly an urban affair. Still, I tried a cultural itinerary of mobilisation processes and their corresponding promotion of a "post/after/anti-colonial life" in the political contexts of African colonies struggling for its national liberation.

The fact that mobilisation was carried out in nationalist terms turned out to be unwise. As Patrick Chabal[355] points out, the current general crisis afflicting several states of Africa may be related to the processes of African de-colonisation themselves. To begin with, African colonies emerged as independent states from the borders that were colonial territories. Thus, the colonial state was created and imposed on African populations before these territories had consolidated as "nations", in the sense of affective imagined communities, as Benedict Anderson[356] would have put it. In other words, three fundamental pillars of the state, namely the sovereignty, legitimacy and the (consented) right to represent all the people of a new national territory, are not established in the eyes of the new "national population", at the independence moment. Independence was the goal of the struggle, but the concrete adjustment of the new nation to the reality of its territory and people is another challenge. Chabal concludes that the nation-state as we define it, according to a classical nineteenth-century European version, may not be the necessary future of African peoples.

I fully endorse Patrick Chabal's ideas, but I would reinforce his suggestion that the nation-state may be the completely wrong model to accommodate multi-ethnic societies and different regional cultures. Is not the nation-state homogenic and uniform by definition? Even in Europe, where the nation-state had time to consolidate, only nowadays are we

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[354] On this subject see Frantz Fanon's Peau Noire, Masques Blancs Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1971 (1952).

[355] Patrick Chabal, Power in Africa, Macmillan, London, 1992, 1994.

[356] Benedict Anderson, "Cultural Roots" and "The Origin of Consciousness" *in* Imagined Communities, Verso, London, 1991.

learning to experiment political arrangements with such ideas as "multiculturalism", or the assertion of "minority platforms", for the future of politics in the XXI[st] century. I agree with Chabal that a basic element to look at postcolonial African states is to assess the adequacy of such an institution as the nation-state and confront the limits of this model to organise diverse populations living in the same territory, taking into consideration the fact that most African nations are a multi-ethnic patchwork.

So, what happened after independence was negotiated with the former colonisers?

I will follow Patrick Chabal's arguments a bit longer: the first problem facing the postcolonial African state is that it had to accommodate a section (or more) of the population, which supported the idea of independence, but not the state under the leadership of a nationalist party which did not represent sectarian interests or priorities. Apart from dealing with those groups of local people who were favoured by the colonial regime or profited from the colonial situation, there were other, older rivalries, to be translated to power arrangements. The nation-state, and its nationalist party, had few alternatives: collaborate and share power, deal with an opposition or try to suppress this last. The Ashantis in Ghana organised as an opposition[357], the Marabouts in Senegal and the Baganda in Uganda got their share of power, but the situation was more complicated with Mandinkas in Senegal, Ovimbundus in Angola, Northerners in Chad and the Makua in Mozambique[358]. While mentioning these examples, Chabal is meticulous about keeping other factors of political fragmentation, like languages, religion, racist practices and natural (eco-systems and their life-styles) regional divisions as an important part of the set of tensions imploding the postcolonial nation-state. Ethnicity alone is a too easy and abused explanation.

Where the violence of war did not become the curse afflicting the newly independent state, clientelism (that is, home colonialism, the process by which local elites go on exploiting the country in a colonial manner, in the name of private greed), connected to bad management, a worsening economic crisis, natural disasters and the continuation of remote control colonialism, all fed civil disappointment. Poverty and violence were not the expected boons that led people to support independence. Given the general crisis of African people, which means difficult living conditions for the majority of the population, no wonder a post-utopia feeling is currently noticeable in the work of many postcolonial writers. In fact, civil society is resenting the events in the last decades, and the crisis of many postcolonial states has created a sort of divorce between the state apparatus and the people it rules.

As was the case with the promotion of postcolonial awareness, nationalist ideals and socialist utopias, again, it is literature that is leading the search for new projects and much needed healing meta-narratives. Patrick Chabal himself was keen to underline the role of literature in diagnosing the coming crisis and the failure of the independence projects such as they had been dreamed of:

> "But perhaps the most lucid and trenchant critique of the early years of independence came from fiction writers, playwrights and poets. Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi, Mongo Béti and many others did more to reveal the reality of postcolonial Africa than most African scholars."
>
> (Chabal, 1994: 8)

I could not help wondering if the ability to voice a "*lucid and trenchant critique*" is the reason why writers tend to end up in jail...

I interpret the current crisis affecting several postcolonial African states (be it a political, natural or humanitarian, if not the three at the same time) as the social-historical

[357] *Op. cit.* Chabal, 1994: 123.
[358] *Ibid,* 1994: 124.

context that, in the process of being translated into literary representation, inspired a general change of tone, from pre-independence euphoria (so clear in "guerrilla poetry" and in nationalist, nativist literatures following Négritude models and Pan-African ideas) to the bitter, broken disappointment exuding from many current postcolonial literatures. This change of tone has taken shape in a backlash of socio-political critique, more obvious (in the case of Lusophone literatures) in the continental postcolonial literatures that suffered the trauma of war.

A clear difference between the literatures written by the first generation of postcolonial writers (1950s) and the 1980s and 1990s second generation is that national independence, the freedom fighter and the colonial presence of white people have been dropped as central themes. In its place, the new focus of this second generations of writers falls, for example, on the continuity of some problems and the emergence of new others, together with the salvaged dimensions of cultural self-assertion and political resistance.

In war ravaged scenarios, like Mozambique, the record of the suffering of the people, and the tentative recovery of routines, projects and a sense of confidence, across unbearable memories, are some of the challenges confronting these later (second generation) postcolonial writers. With them lies part of the responsibility in healing collective trauma and inscribe new hope in the horizon of their readers.

In the case of a Creole culture like that of Cape Verde, the socio-historical process inspiring literature is totally different. For the archipelago the transition to independence meant a negotiation of an uncomfortable proximity to Portuguese culture (Lusophilia) through a re-discovery of the repressed African element, together with a maturing critical eye attuned to the types, the life-style and the collective socio-symbolical references of the islands.

Although one should not generalise chronological references in postcolonial criticism, which is more adequately attuned to situated national or regional approaches, note that I claim as the first generation of postcolonial African writers, those that really lived through the independence war/struggle, approximately in the 1950s. Bear in mind that currently, Africa has got around 50 independent countries and only four of those were independent before 1950. That is to say that with the exception of Ethiopia (1936-41), South Africa (1934), Egypt (1922) and Liberia (1847)[359], most African countries had to promote their struggle for independence precisely between the 40s and the 60s. Then, the time frame for the "backlash" after the initial euphoria of independence has been materialising in the postcolonial African literatures of the eighties and nineties, after one or two decades of deep crisis and civil suffering. It is out of this time frame, linked to a change in the hopeful mood that led to the fight for independence, that I looked up the African women writers I wanted to study (Dina Salústio and Paulina Chiziane, with a nomadic Orlanda Amarílis moving between generations and countries). Thus, I am not focusing on a first generation of postcolonial writers, although I have included, in this part III, some poems from a first generation of writers, deeply committed to mobilisation and to the promotion of the independence ideal.

[359] *Op. cit.* Arcília L. Barreto, 1991.

III.2 Cape Verde: the Creation of a Creole Literature

Taberna à beira-mar	**"Taberna"[360] by the sea**
Uma luzinha distante	A little, far away light
E um farol cuspindo luz	And a lighthouse spitting light
Na cara negra da noite	In the black face of the night
Tudo é salgado e saudoso	Everything is salty and melancholic
Ventos com ondas às costas	Winds carry waves on their backs
Fazem tremer a taberna	And shake the "taberna"
Que é um navio ancorado.	Which is an anchored ship.
Amor intenso e brutal	Intense and brutal love
Entre navalhas abertas	Among waiting blades
E o desleixo	And the carelessness
De uma rameira entre os braços.	Of a whore in your arms.
Andam no ar desesperos	Despair spirals in the air
Em densos rolos de fumo.	In dense coils of smoke.
Garrafas, copos, garrafas...	Bottles, glasses, bottles…
-Ai! A sede do marinheiro…	-Ah! The thirst of a sailor…
Tatuagens picando a pele	Tattoos sting skins
Gritam a dor e a bravura	Screaming the pain and bravado
Das aventuras nos portos.	Of adventures in harbours.
Gente de todas as raças,	People from all the races,
Gente sem pátria e sem nome	People without motherland or name
- Apenas gente do mar	-Only people from the sea
Com voz de sal e de vento	With a voice of salt and wind
E barcos nos olhos líquidos.	And ships in their liquid eyes.
Entram o Tédio e a Saudade	Boredom and Nostalgia come in
Mordendo velhos cachimbos…	Biting into old pipes...
Entram e saem depois	Come in and go out afterwards
Levando, aos tombos, um bêbedo.	Carrying away, a stumbling drunkard.
Baralhos, mesas e bancos,	Playing-cards, tables and stools,
Garrafas, copos, garrafas	Bottles, glasses, bottles
E a cara do taberneiro	And the face of the barman
Instigam a velhas revoltas.	Instigate old rebellions.
E tudo cheio de vícios,	And everything is full of vice,
E tudo cheio de sono	And everything is sleepy
E tudo cheio de mar!	And everything is full of sea!
Aguinaldo Fonseca[361]	(my translation)

[360] "Taberna", in Portuguese, means "seedy, shabby bar".
[361] *Op. cit.* Antologia da Poesia Negra de Expressão Portuguesa, Andrade, 1958.

When Portuguese and Italian settlers, with their slaves, started the colonisation (actually, peopling) of the ten islands of Cape Verde, both Europeans and Africans were de-territorialised from their cultures of origin. They were together, on a harsh landscape, materially isolated from immediate contact with other cultures and influences: both Europe and Africa were ever-present references, but discontinuous, fragmented and contaminated (by the proximity and mingling of African ways with the life-style of European sailors and settlers). Because of these circumstances, Cape Verde is the product of a clear case of cultural hybridity. On the contrary, in the continental cases (like Angola and Mozambique), strong African cultures co-existed with a minority European presence, keeping its continuity and partial integrity, in spite of contamination.

According to Isabel Caldeira[362], since Cape Verde was not an attractive destiny to invest in agriculture, and it did not have significant natural, mineral wealth to prey upon - though coral, salt, indigo, cotton and "urzela" became significant exportation products - it was partially left to itself, and the few white settlers and their slaves who moved to the archipelago developed their own local hybrid culture without too much control or opposition from metropolitan power. In this way, did Manjacos, Mandingas, Balantas, Papeis, Fulas and Portuguese settlers live, mix and miscegenate. Obviously, not all the islands have the same history, nor do they share the same ratio of white and black settlement and ascendancy, even if the whole of the archipelago is the product of *mestiçagem* and Creolisation (90% of the people have mixed ascendancy). For more extensive (geographical and historical) background information on the archipelago see the short summary provided as appendix II.

The first published works by Cape Verdean writers were poems that appeared in the *Almanach de Lembranças*[363] (1854-1932), the available outlet for whoever had literary inclinations in the Lusophone colonies. Although the social references embedded in these poems are not Cape Verdean but rather copied from (European) romantic literature, the fact is that the local Creole of Cape Verde was thus granted "literary" status. Women poets of Cape Verde like Antónia Gertrudes Pusich, Gertrudes Ferreira Lima, Maria Luísa de Sena Barcelos and Maria Cristina Rocha were among the most faithful feminine collaborators of the *Almanach*.

The press is equally important in this first stage of the emergence of a Creole literature. The newspaper *A Voz de Cabo Verde* (1911-1919) was particularly assertive of the rights of the archipelago, pushing for a greater modernisation, better organisation and improved facilities, though all these demands are still presented within the logic of a colonial frame[364]. The "modernisation drive" as a factor to develop postcolonial awareness in Cape Verde has to be understood in the context of the rivalry between the seminar and the high school (liceu) the two local poles of higher education in the archipelago, at the turn of the century. The Catholic seminar in S. Nicolau provided a classical formation, presenting Europe as the "original" source of civilisation, via a Greco-Latin tradition. The high school

[362] Isabel Caldeira, "Identidade Étnica e Identidade Nacional" *in* Portugal: Um Retrato Singular, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (ed.), Edições Afrontamento, Centro de Estudos Sociais, Porto, 1993.

[363] The "almanaques" were a sort of popular magazine, which included relevant practical information like agricultural technical advice, schedules of trains and ships, weather forecast and new laws and rules issued by the king, with more entertaining elements like games, charades, poems and short stories. The simple *Almanach de Lembranças Luso-Brasileiro* was probably the most widely read periodical across the Portuguese speaking world of the nineteenth century. Most texts were in Portuguese but the Almanach accepted texts in Creole for publication. *Almanch de Lembranças*, anthology co-ordinated by Gerald M. Moser, Editora ALAC, Lisboa, 1993 (1854-1932).

[364] Carlos Lopes Pereira, "A Voz de Cabo Verde", *in* África, nº 14, IIª série, ano 9, Lisboa, Agosto/ Setembro, 1986.

at S.Vicente was more oriented towards sciences, and it was placed in the town that was most exposed to international influences, next to the busiest harbour (the city of Mindelo). While the aesthetic perspective of those writers trained within the tradition of the seminar was classic and romantic, those that studied under the more open, and science oriented high school developed a more realist, and critical perspective. It is through the influence of this latter institution that literary modernity reached younger generations, whose works contributed to the making of a Creole literature in Cape Verde.

From a chronological perspective, the first stage in the literature of Cape Verde started at the time when printing facilities were built (1842) and it lasted until the moment *Claridade* appeared (1936). The few isolated poets that were active before[365] the first issue of this foundational magazine are colonial poets, in the sense that they replicated the patterns of Portuguese literary fashion, without contributing to the assertion of a local Creole culture as something else, independent and different from Portugal. For example, most of the African elements are suppressed from representation in these first colonial poems, revealing a longing for a European/Lusophile identity. This alienation from the reality of one's archipelago served colonial interests, for no dangerous nationalism would emerge from such a complacent and uncritical attitude, which was also the current attitude in other colonies, in the first decades of the XXth century. At the time *Claridade* appeared (1936) it had to face censorship and the feared secret police (PIDE) and this fact explains its careful social criticism. Many other magazines that appeared after *Claridade,* like *Certeza* (1944, two issues) were not so tactful in exposing their postcolonial awareness, and the result was that number three of *Certeza* was censored and the movement was over. *Claridade* survived.

Later generations, especially the most irreverent one of the 1960s (publishing in *Seló*) was very critical of the apparent lack of anti-colonial resistance from the group of 1936. Similarly, the group of writers gathered around *Certeza*, a more openly ideologically committed magazine, voiced this same accusation against their predecessors. These accusations are undeserved. Just as a matter of awareness, mind the group of writers around *Certeza* was in its early twenties, full of energy, creativity, political ideas and…immaturity. *Claridade* was a less obvious project, with long lasting effects (as a source of literary influences), which ended up being the serious beginning of Cape Verdean literature, outliving all these other magazines.

The factor that distinguishes the work of the group of writers around *Claridade* from colonial literature is that only the former broke with the previous tendency to copy European literary traditions, inaugurating a recognisable Cape Verdean literature. The writers who started *Claridade* (Jorge Barbosa, Manuel Lopes and Baltasar Lopes) were aware of the: "*situação desastrosa, principalmente no domínio político-económico, em que o nosso arquipélago estagnava"*[366] ("despairing situation, especially in political and economical terms, which was paralysing the archipelago") and they translated their commitment to Cape Verde by grounding the subject matter of their writing in the archipelago. By representing the living conditions of its people and asserting its life style and habits, this team of editors expressed a self-assertive intention, in that it reveals a concern with praising and promoting local culture, distinguishing the culture of Cape Verde from Portuguese identity. This may seem a little step, but, as Baltasar Lopes points out, at the time, under censorship, things were not easy. The word "starvation", for instance, was forbidden in print, in an archipelago that knew it only too well[367]. It is because of this context, that in the introductory note to the

[365] These poets would be the contributors to the local press (like *A Voz de Cabo Verde*), to the few publications organised by students, at the end of high school, and the *Almanach*.
[366] Manuel Ferreira (ed.), *Claridade*, second edition, ALAC, Lisboa, 1986: xiii.
[367] *Ibid,* 1986: xiv.

special edition of *Claridade,* to commemorate fifty years of its birth[368], Baltasar Lopes rejects several accusations of complicity with the colonial regime. It is very easy to say what should have been done, twenty-five years later.

Claridade was in tune with modernist fashion, promoting a realist trend in literature, what amounts to say that, for the first time, writers were looking at Cape Verdean people and their life-style as source of inspiration for their texts. This process has been described, informally but effectively, through the expression: "*fincar os pés na terra"*[369] (literally "bury your feet on the ground and hold on to it" meaning "stick to the land"), emphasising the new bond between the reality of Cape Verde and the critical eye of the writer, traditionally alienated from social analysis and exclusively attuned to the lyrical mode. The commitment of *Claridade* to the reality of Cape Verde influenced other literary projects and magazines, and some of the main themes addressed in the pages of this pioneer publication became a sort of "school" for younger writers. For example, you repeatedly encounter in the literature of Cape Verde references to "insularity", the anxiety of isolation from the "big world", the harshness of the barren land and the constant fear of droughts (with the corresponding obsession for rain). All of these themes were firstly established by the writers of *Claridade,* and they were so characteristic of the life of the islands, that current writers still go back to these themes, as the main traits in the identity of the archipelago. "*Fincar os pés na terra*" was both a thematic guideline and an aesthetic project, re-discovering the beauty and the harmony of the Creole culture of the islands. Previous colonial writers always tried to suppress the African influences, projecting a replica of Portuguese culture on to the reality of Cape Verde.

Currently, most postcolonial critics, in and outside of Cape Verde agree that *Claridade* took a clear attitude of resistance against colonisation. Publishing texts in Creole, was a linguistic manifestation of this same assertion of the otherness of the islands in relation to Portugal. The problem, to the eyes of later liberation activists is that there is not "enough nativism" in all these literary gestures. The harshest critics are the writers from the 1960s, Gabriel Mariano, Ovídio Martins or Onésimo Silveira, who were influenced by Pan-African and Négritude ideas. In their opinion, the previous generation of *Claridosos* was complacent. The irony in this case is that what Silveira considers nativist "genuine" literature was the kind of literature that would turn to African values and black culture for inspiration. Given the hybrid nature of the Creole culture of the archipelago, this gesture of recovering "pure" African roots would be as unbalanced and biased as the simple copy of European models.

Mind that during its irregular life, *Claridade* covered different periods and stages in the swelling of the postcolonial self-awareness of Cape Verde, and different issues of the magazine certainly contributed with different perspectives. In the nineties, nobody denies that *Claridade* is the foundation stone for a national Cape Verdean literature, becoming the first literary movement in the whole of the Portuguese colonies. Curiously, the other archipelago (S. Tomé e Príncipe) was the home of the first Lusophone poet, Caetano da Costa Alegre, and from this other archipelago came the most active group of college students in Lisboa (who founded the newspaper *O Negro*, and later on the famous *A Voz de África*). Geographical isolation seems to have encouraged creativity.

Several things strike you when going through old issues of *Claridade*. The sure lack of means in the Cape Verde of the 1930s, the sheer energy to do it in such a place as

[368] *Claridade:* first three issues in 1936/1937, issues number four and five in 1947, number six in 1948, number seven in 1949, number eight 1958 and number nine 1960.

[369] Expression used by Baltasar Lopes, one of the editors of *Claridade*, in the preface to the commemorative edition of the 50th anniversary of the first issue.

Mindelo (so remote, the only cultural centre in the small archipelago), the impact it had, and the quality of the texts, the whole contradictory and surprising picture falls short of a miracle. It is remarkable that this magazine included texts in Creole (usually poems, followed by the Portuguese translation in smaller characters) already in the 1930s, while during the postcolonial 1980s the choice of literary language still was an issue under discussion in relation to the self-assertion of local culture versus the "rival" alternative of appropriating former European influences, as it was the case with the usage of Portuguese.

After independence (1975)[370], the government of the first republic tried to promote literary creation by organising contests and awards. However, most postcolonial literary production has been published in local newspapers and magazines, which constitute the great majority of the literary life of the islands. Committed writers keep underlining the necessity of a more systematic investment in publishing and culture[371] but the archipelago has other, more basic, priorities to attend. Still, it has got the lowest rate of illiteracy (26.5%) in the five Lusophone African countries[372].

In the 1980s, a significant group of writers gathered around Germano de Almeida (the most internationally acknowledged name in contemporary literature of Cape Verde) and the magazine he founded, *Ponto & Vírgula* (Mindelo, 1983 - 1987), which published 17 numbers (plus a special edition). This magazine had higher intellectual standards than the most of other Cape Verdean publications. Vera Duarte, one of the main woman poets of Cape Verde was a frequent collaborator.

Finally, another magazine that has been the meeting point of a younger generation of writers, the "second generation" after independence is *Fragmentos - Revista de Letras e Cultura* (Praia, 1987 -) and it has an open, eclectic attitude towards ideology and allegiances. Among their collaborators are Vera Duarte and Dina Salústio, the latter one of the women writers addressed further in this research. The division between these generations is not rigid and many of the older writers are still active and collaborate with younger talents.

Orlanda Amarílis is one the most frequently mentioned women authors around 1975. She is a writer with multiple facets, and, because of that feature, her work can be related to different time frames in the evolution of the literature of Cape Verde. She wrote a tale in an anthology of Portuguese women writers devoted to the fantastic[373], but her three published

[370] 1975 is the year of independence. Since 1991, Cape Verde is a multi-party democracy. It was the first of the Lusophone countries of Africa to hold multi-party elections on the 17 th February 1991.

[371] Statistics from 1999, revealed a 26.5 % illiterate population for a total population of 412. 000 inhabitants. This is, by far, the lowest illiteracy rate in the whole of the five Lusophone countries of Africa. There are 54 active writers in the archipelago, six publishing houses and four bookshops. Cape Verde also has one national library, ten public libraries, three university libraries, reading centers and mobile libraries. (Corsino Tolentino, "Para um Estudo da Situação das Indústrias de Conteúdo Cultural nos Palop", *Anais*, vol. 2, nº 2, Agosto 2000, pp: 63/ 83.)

[372] The first literacy campaigns in the archipelago were promoted by the church, in its attempt to spread Catholicism among non-Catholic settlers and slaves. However, according to Elisa Silva Andrade (1996), the people of Cape Verde had assess to primary education around the second half of the XIX th century, when there were state primary schools, private primary schools and municipal primary schools. There were schools for boys and girls, although the number of boys attending school was higher than the number of girls. The church started the first seminar in the island of São Nicolau, in 1886. Seventy years later, Santiago (Praia) and São Vicente (Mindelo) were the two chosen islands to build state high schools, but only in 1962 and 1952, respectively. The one in Mindelo is the most active in cultural terms. There was no university in the archipelago until independence. (See, Elisa Silva Andrade, Les Îles du Cape-Verde: de la Découverte à l' Independence National 1460-1975, Éditions L' Harmattan, Paris.

[373] *In* Clara Pinto Correia (ed.), Fantástico no Feminino, Lisboa, Rolim, 1985.

anthologies of short stories[374] are more linked to Cape Verde than to Portugal, and she is dutifully acclaimed first and foremost as a writer from Cape Verde.

In the next sections of this chapter, a selected piece from the works of Orlanda Amarílis and Dina Salústio is approached through a double frame, combining a feminist and a postcolonial perspective.

Orlanda Amarílis

III.2.1 Atlantic Selves and Sea Tides…

Orlanda Amarílis has lived in Portugal (Lisboa) for several years but she was born in Santa Catarina, in the island of Santiago, Cape Verde. She grew up in the archipelago and she attended high school in the island of S. Vicente. She also lived in Angola and in India, where she finished her studies to become a school teacher. Later, she graduated in Pedagogic Sciences at the Faculty of Letters in Lisbon. During her well-travelled life, she collaborated with several magazines like *Certeza* (in Cape Verde), *Áfrika* (Lisboa), and the newspaper *O Heraldo* (in Goa, India). She got married at twenty-one, to the Portuguese writer and critic Manuel Ferreira, then in the military service in Cape Verde during the Second World war. Their first child was born in Cape Verde, but the second one was already born in Goa, India. All these journeys and moves never cut Orlanda Amarílis from her strong umbilical bond to Cape Verde, the clear base of her identity.

A reference is due to Orlanda Amarílis' husband, one of the most respected professors at the Faculty of Letters of Lisbon, celebrated writer and active editor. He published several anthologies[375] of Lusophone poets, promoting critical discussion among the writers working in different parts of the world of literatures in Portuguese. Thus, Orlanda Amarílis always lived in contact with the "milieu" that, in Portugal, tried to promote the study of the literature of Cape Verde.

One of the basic references to understand her writing is that her displaced position in Portugal created a sort of ambivalence, marking her texts in contradictory ways, as an intimate, "insider" of Cape Verde, and at the same time, as a critical, estranged "outsider". As a Cape Verdean writer in diaspora, Orlanda Amarílis has a double perspective on the evolution of this postcolonial literature being as she is, both inspired by the local realities of the archipelago, and at the same time, as a displaced emigrant, looking back on Cape Verde from abroad, reflecting on the condition of other less privileged fellow emigrants.

Orlanda Amarílis was committed to the fight against colonialism and she was a member of the Portuguese Movement against Apartheid (MPCA). This detail is important to frame her ideological position in relation to the anti-colonial struggle and the relation between different races.

It is interesting to note that though it was written after independence, the anthology of short stories that I am going to analyse here, Ilhéu dos Pássaros (1983) still looks back on memories of resistance and oppression during the colonial period, but revisited from a postcolonial point of view. In terms of literary quality, one of the best features of Ilhéu dos Pássaros is precisely this ability to represent multiple layers of recent history, hinting at the atmosphere and issues affecting Cape Verdean society at different moments in time, seen from the angles of different social classes and with different degrees of innocence or perception, according to the changing/changed age of characters (many of the stories are re-

[374] Cais do Sodré té Salamansa, (Centelha, Coimbra,1974), Ilhéu dos Pássaros (Plátano, Lisboa, 1982), A Casa dos Mastros (ALAC, Linda-a-Velha, 1989).

[375] See several references of the critical anthologies organised by Manuel Ferreira in the bibliography of this dissertation.

interpreted memories, when you look back with more mature eyes). The chameleon-like point of view of Orlanda Amarílis is the main factor justifying my choice for this writer, because even though she was active around 1975[376], that is to say, at the time that a first generation of postcolonial writers published nationalist texts, she was able to keep in touch with changes in the local atmosphere, which makes it difficult to pin her down to a single literary moment. A certain distance from the regime of the first republic and its Marxist commitment was an attitude shared by many other writers who did not accept political constrains in the creation of their texts.

Atlantic Selves and Sea Tides…

The sense of identity of Cape Verde, so deeply shaped by emigration across the sea[377], reproduces a constant wave-like flow of movement between country of origin and host country, as it fits a nation, half the population of which lives in diaspora. For those who stay in the archipelago, usually women and children, physical permanence in land is balanced by the emotional bond to people at sea (sailors, fishermen), or living across the sea (as emigrants).

According to a review by Isabel Maria Baptista Ramos to Ilhéu dos Pássaros[378], the circularity of movement between leaving and returning to the archipelago of Cape Verde is one of the key themes of this anthology, a fact that links the contribution of Orlanda Amarílis to older writers of the generation of *Claridade*. Nevertheless, this thematic similarity should not be interpreted as a lack of imagination or creativity on the part of the younger writer. The right way to comprehend this repeated discussion around insularity and emigration is to recognise that these themes are basic constitutive features in the identity of Cape Verde, since half of its citizens are emigrants, and the poor, claustrophobic archipelago does not provide enough rewarding opportunities for its population[379], let alone harbour the dreams of its youth and their natural curiosity for other horizons and ways of life.

In the introduction to this research, I said I am not dealing with the diasporic dimension of postcolonial literatures. Instead, I am looking at social critique, self-assertion and resistance to globalisation, as strategies to consolidate and heal postcolonial societies, still struggling against poverty, home colonialism and the schizophrenic search for means to find a functional "glocalisation" (i.e. combining local culture and tradition with technology and the ideological impact of Western modernity and postmodernity). However, a Creole culture, with such high rates of emigration as those of Cape Verde, has been living with the awareness of diaspora from the very beginning of its existence. Cape Verde was one of the ports of call of the "Black Atlantic" (the exodus of millions of black slaves to Americas), and its main production for the Portuguese empire was, precisely, people: from Cape Verde were picked the educated mulatto clerks to use in the rest of the empire, making up for demographic shortage of the Portuguese empire. From Cape Verde also came the labour force for the plantations of S. Tomé and Príncipe.

Amarílis writes of this nomadic coming and going, like the sea tides, in a mode that undoes the contradiction between "being away" and the permanence of ways of life and

[376] Actually, Orlanda Amarílis was among the young collaborators of the magazine *Certeza*, in 1944.

[377] See Manuel Duarte, Caboverdianidade, Africanidade, e Outros Textos, Spleen Edições, Cabo verde, 1999. See also, Manuel Veiga (ed.) Cabo Verde, Insularidade e Literatura, Éditions Karthala, Paris, 1998.

[378] Isabel Maria Baptista Ramos, "Ihéu dos Pássaros", *Africa*, nº 13, IIª Série, ano 9, Lisboa, Agosto/Setembro 1986.

[379] The community of Cape Verdean emigrants living in Portugal is the biggest among those from the five Lusophone countries in Africa: 43.797 individuals, in 1999 (information provided by INE, the Portuguese National Institute of Statistics).

habits in the islands. On the contrary, because of its continuity, the life-style of the islands never makes the returning emigrant feel foreign. The emigrant is rapidly integrated in the close community again, so that one's island as "home" is a real territory, and not a projection of the imagination that makes up for the segregation that emigrants feel in the big Western cities. Because of this generalised experience of being away or having relatives away, Cape Verdean sense of self (either individual or collective) is nomadic, and diaspora is a way of life. The archipelago, sure *pied-à-terre* as "place of origin" and re-visited affective community is a shelter, a known harbour, a place to heal and rest, between journeys.

The way Orlanda Amarílis writes about this flow of movement, keeping a strong feeling of "belonging to Cape Verde" among the displaced travellers, creates a coherent and stable image of a society where the high rate of mobility does not have the disruptive, fragmentary effects one would expect. In this way, Amarílis contributes to consolidate a sense of national identity in the archipelago.

The title of the collection signals this same intention. Ilhéu dos Pássaros, is the name of a little islet, repeated in the different sentences that make the epigraphs to each of the seven short stories gathered in this collection. The epigraph is a sentence picked from the body of the short story and it refers to a moment in which one of the characters remembers or talks about the "ilhéu dos pássaros" ("little island of the birds"). The "Ilhéu dos Pássaros" is a big rock, on the right side of the elegant bay of Mindelo, which you pass when leaving the harbour of S. Vicente. It is a sort of sentinel, the last bit of land before the open sea. It is also a beautiful element in the horizon of the city, being a sharp, vertical shape against the misty horizontal mass of the chain of mountains in the island of Santo Antão, just across S. Vicente. Thus, "the sentinel" is also a cherished and familiar view for the people of the city. When any of the characters in the short stories, often in a distant setting away from Cape Verde, remembers with nostalgia this rock, what is being evoked is a sense of roots, whose referent is the little islet, synecdoche of "motherland". Consequently, the impression one gets from these texts is that being away does not de-territorialise a sense of "home", nor is one's identity threatened or in conflict with movement.

From a postcolonial angle, the anthology presents a set of arguments that invite a critical discussion committed to issues of identity, self-assertion, self-consolidation and anti-colonial resistance. The chosen themes, the development of the plots and the construction of characters also suggest reflection on the on-going massive emigration move from south to north, from ex-colonies to ex-metropolitan centre. As her stories follow the movements of emigrants, Orlanda Amarílis maps the impact of historical continuities of dispossession in the awakening of forms of self-awareness and critical perception, which go from a fall from innocence to the making of survivors (scarred, scared ones).

Before addressing the short stories, a couple of remarks on language and *genre* seem necessary. Orlanda Amarílis includes words of Creole in her text in Portuguese. No glossary is provided but it is not necessary either. The same words from Creole are repeatedly used, so, after several occurrences, the context of different sentences makes the approximate (guessed) meaning of the word more precise, encouraging the reader "to master" this bit of Creole. It is a clever strategy that totally reverses the position of Portuguese as the normative language. For native speakers from Cape Verde, it increases bilingual bridges, while for other readers of Portuguese, it promotes Creole among the Portuguese speaking community.

The fact that Orlanda Amarílis writes short stories, a different *genre* than the novels that I analyse in the rest of this study, did not reduce the ability of the collection to illustrate the atmosphere, the factors of consolidation and the most relevant problems in the concerned postcolonial location. The striking amount of insights provided by the anthology is due to the fact that most of the tales fall back on the same deliberate stereotypes of Cape Verdean society. The lack of narrative room to develop a geologically complex account of the socio-

cultural landscape of Cape Verde is compensated by partial repetition, with a different *nuance*. By contrast, the sketch of other places where Cape Verdeans travel to and from, is more simplified, intensely focused on a reduced set of elements that compose the climax of the condensed plot, as it is the standard procedure in the technique of the short story[380].

The first short story of the anthology, "Thonon-les-Bains", constructs an opposition between the dreams that make emigrants leave Cape Verde for France and the reality of second-class citizenship in Europe. However, there are more facets to this contrast than the simple binary opposition. Second class citizenship in the big city also means bigger salaries and the pleasure of showing off, back home (at the island of origin), "worldly knowledge" and urban ways. As for the letters written from abroad to the family, they feed the dreams of those that remain in the archipelago. Orlanda Amarílis completes the picture with the moving innocence of old nh'Ana, mystified by Gabriel's letters: for her, France must be so perfect and so developed that "*todos os menininhos falavam francês desde pequeninos*"[381]. It never occurs to nh'Ana that this "bigger" world may be neither welcoming nor fair.

Nh'Ana is struggling to bring up her four children, alone, without welfare, without a profession. She lives off the meagre rents paid by her miserable tenants in the little pieces of land she owns. Gabriel, emigrated stepson, the product of an extramarital affair of her deceased husband is her second source of income and most esteemed and blessed support. His advice is trusted and his opinion respected. Hence, when he sends a letter saying that he found a job for Piedade, his half sister, nh'Ana does not hesitate in sending her eldest daughter to France, already making plans to start a small business with the money sent home by Piedade. Piedade works in a ski factory and she also has a job as a cleaning lady in a hotel.

Emigration to Europe is an inversion of the direction of colonial expansion, but this change in the orientation of the massive dislocation of people is not accompanied by a similar shift in terms of racial relations or access to better opportunities. The life of Gabriel and Piedade in France takes the tragic turn predicted by a colonial tradition of abuse. Piedade starts a relationship with an older French boyfriend (Jean), who intends to marry her, but, as time goes by, Piedade gets bored with this serious, quiet man. Her reckless, carefree character rejects him, while the patriarchal references according to which she was brought up push the young girl to search for security and comfort through a man who can offer her that. During a party with other young people from Cape Verde, Jean realises he does not like the food, he cannot dance the music and he is not the man Piedade desires. His sense of exclusion, hurt pride and rejection make him push Piedade to the bathroom, lock the door and cut her throat with a knife, escaping through the window. This scene, almost a stereotype of tabloid stories, would be the dramatic climax of a passionate affair if it were not marked by traces of collective mentalities, which reconstruct a murderous heritage opposing white coloniser to black, female slave. Piedade is punished for destroying his nostalgic dream of displaced colonisation. Her black, young body, dancing the rhythm of her different culture, unreachable to him apart from his passive (desiring) gaze spells out a history of independence and rejection Jean cannot accept. While narrating this insane crime, Orlanda Amarílis evokes other historical crimes and encounters, where sexism and racism would have combined to make sure Piedade would not have any opportunity to escape appropriation. Her culture, marked by food, music and dance, materialises an "otherness" which survived (and consequently eluded) the colonial encounter, defeating it. That

[380] See Valerie Shaw, The Short Story a Critical Introduction, Longman, London and New York, 1983. See also Tzevtan, Todorov, Les Genres du Discours, Éditions do Seuil, Paris, 1978.
[381] "All the little children knew French, since they were babies". *Op. cit*. Amarílis, 1982: 20.

unbearable knowledge is the reason why Piedade has to be suppressed and not simply abandoned.

I see this tale as a despondent metaphor for the permanence of racist codes, even though the enslaved/colonised subject has become an emigrant who moves to the West of his own free will. Gabriel, a coloured emigrant in Europe, has to write nh'Ana telling her of the sad news, face the police, keep quiet when he is mistreated, accept being evicted by his landlord and quit his job when he is told by the police (illegally? Abusively?) to leave the region. Gabriel endures everything for the fear of losing his precious licence to work in France. He never accuses Jean. Later on, while on holidays in Cape Verde, Gabriel explains to nh'Ana that he does not believe the French police would ever prosecute a French citizen to protect the rights of an emigrant. Worse, as the story ends, Gabriel prepares his search for Jean, intent on personal revenge. The reader is led to consider that it is Gabriel's isolation from the legal system, his lack of confidence in the police and the totally uncivilised way he has been treated in Europe that press him into crime. The shameful representation of French institutions as indifferent or oppressive could be extended to other European countries, like Portugal, which has been treating emigrants in a similar way.

Considering the importance of emigration for the society of Cape Verde, it makes sense that a tale on this subject should be included in the anthology, and granted the first place, as a sort of introduction to the rest of the collection since most tales deal with characters that are travelling or have been moving between places. Nevertheless, this mobility does not weaken the strong ties to Cape Verde: it is as if the sense of collective identity in the archipelago is conceived of, at the same time, as being at "home and away".

For those that stay at home, the Creole society represents a joyful and easy-going environment, though its tight closeness may be heavy at times, as far as it creates the circumstances that foster too much interference and low-key rivalries. That is the double flavour of the peaceful and amiable life in the islands, which the reader encounters while following nh'Ana's life in Cape Verde. Actually, the sting of "small town atmosphere" becomes one of its comic elements. It is totally impossible to keep any privacy in relation to neighbours and friends. Everything is known, by everybody, no matter how secretive one is.

These two features of the represented society, friendly and supportive bonds versus too much interference, will be re-encountered later on in other short stories, composing, gradually, a well-defined image. Parallel to this illustration of patterns of social interaction in the archipelago, the denunciation of the grinding living conditions waiting the poor emigrant in Western cities handles another fundamental element in the split identity of Cape Verdeans: the wish for departing and "make it" in the big world tempered with the constant longing for the cosy, warm atmosphere of the islands.

Another distinctive trace of life in the archipelago is a strong and widespread belief in witchcraft and divination. Several characters refer to it, and the thoughts of nh'Ana reveal her fear of the evil eye of envious evil wishes. Furthermore, her neighbour tells of a divination session for the future of Piedade, which eventually proves to be right.

The reference to witchcraft and divination is an anti-colonial self-assertive move in so far as the belief in these practices diminishes the impact of Catholicism, and its implied European/colonial influence. To deny the first is to resist the second, upholding the bonds to the African continent and its systems of knowledge, the influence of which shaped the identity of the archipelago from the beginning of its history. On the other hand, in the context of postcolonial self-assertion, to reclaim the African half of the hybrid identity of Cape Verde is a way of creating distance from Lusophilia and its corresponding alienation from a suppressed black self.

The second tale in the anthology, "Luísa Filha de Nica", goes back to the belief system of the archipelago. It is a tale of possession, expanding the relevance of the point I just made above concerning the assertion of the presence of non-Western values in the culture of the archipelago. In this way, Orlanda Amarílis is distinguishing Cape Verdean local culture from mainstream Western references, underlining how much of the reality of the archipelago escapes the limits of "Africanist" interpretations of "the other". The interest for supernatural subjects is an expression of resistance to Enlightenment/rational epistemes, wrongly presented (by colonial discourses) as the only legitimate source of knowledge, and, obviously, an exclusive domain of the colonial West. On the other hand, it should be said that the anti-logocentric perspective that makes this writer go back to these issues is an expression of a personal interest for the fantastic that would keep reappearing later on, at different stages of her writing. The difference between later writings and the anthology that concerns this study is that one thing is to tell exceptional events as a deviation from everyday patterns of normality, and another is to represent the supernatural as part of the everyday life of a community in the context of a postcolonial society that endured a coherent and continuous history of suppression of these manifestations, under colonialism. In this context, to assert and explore the supernatural is an anti-colonial gesture of cultural self-assertion.

The third short story, "Luna Cohen", adds something to the postcolonial arguments discussed above. It takes place sometime after 1975 because the fall of the Portuguese regime is mentioned and Cape Verdean independence has been achieved. The time frame of the short story must be soon after that period. This time reference matters, and still I understand why a concrete date should be omitted: Orlanda Amarílis is not writing about the particular events of one of those years but rather of the spirit of the time and the ideas that were in the air. This short story celebrates the new attitude of young activists that witnessed independence and grew up expecting to see improvements in their own countries once they became POSTcolonial. Still, when looking around, these young, highly politicised people already start noticing some neo-colonial continuity in the postcolonial picture, together with the changes:

Luna Cohen, young Ph.D researcher from Cape Verde lands at the airport of Lagos, Nigeria, arriving from Rome, Italy. In contrast with the previous story entitled "Thonon-les-Bains", where the writer exposed a bit of the harsh conditions working class emigrants have to face, this piece inscribes in the picture another class of emigrants. Equally important, the story makes one aware of the active circulation and co-operation between people from two postcolonial nations (south/south), independently from the Eurocentric (and unrealistic) representation of north/south movements as the exclusive model of international relations. As I said above, Orlanda Amarílis writes a multilayered anthology that partially confirms (but also escapes) the most common binaries taken as the references to understand a postcolonial location.

Another telling instance of the willingness of the writer to expand one's perception of the complexities framing a postcolonial context, it the ironic point on Visa bureaucracy: Luna, Cape Verdean citizen is in Nigeria with the Visa she got at the British embassy in Portugal. Both postcolonial (Cape Verdean) citizen and borders (of Nigeria) still are legally manipulated in a distant office that should be settling matters between Portugal and the United Kingdom. How come that in a post-independence context this small legal affair still ended up being arranged through the two former colonial powers?

On the other hand, Luna Cohen stands for a cosmopolitan, educated, urban elite of Africa that is erased from a nativist representation of "black culture", obsessed with purity, roots and the self-contained space of a re-imagined "mother Africa". These nativist ideas are

dangerously alienating, and they are out of touch with a more complex, neo-colonial reality, as the narrator subtly leads you to notice: the businessmen at the bar of the airport still are British citizens. And then, there are other binary oppositions that criss-cross with the colonial/postcolonial point of view on the changing realities around Luna: she is Jewish, like her PhD supervisor, Professor Khan, who keeps talking about Israel and the necessity of returning to "his roots". Luna thinks her roots are her family, friends and the islands of Cape Verde. She does not understand that obsession, and finds it disturbing. The subject is temporarily settled by her friend Da Silva's caustic irony: "Eles marturbam-se com esse tema, está a perceber?"[382]. In spite of the joke, something keeps depressing young Luna though she is unable to put her finger on the cause.

Most of the subject matter of this story turns around life in the university campus, the parties and the easy contact among international members of staff, until, due to a serious fever that confines Luna to her bed for weeks, Professor Khan suggests that she should stop working until the next term. A skinny Luna decides to go back to Cape Verde for a while, to heal and think things through. As she packs and prepares for the trip, gradually, Luna realises that the endless discussion about Israel is an excuse to avoid talking about other problems, closer at home. She looks back on the last months at the university campus and she takes in how much they had made her open her eyes to postcolonial realities:

"Dr. Odgi levou-a ao hotel para jantar e passar a noite. Parecia já estar na Europa. Até eles chegava a som de uma orquestra num dos salões. Era uma festa privada, uma festa de multinacionais, possivelmente um encontro de magnates de petróleo. A Europa e o imperialismo ficavam para além daquela porta. Deste lado era a exploração."[383]

(1983: 62)

Luna falls asleep thinking of the contrast between the neighbourhoods of beautiful villas, a couple of sky scrappers, and the wide sea of miserable squatter settlements around them, with naked children playing in open sewers.

This short story embodies one of the motives why I picked Orlanda Amarílis as an object of study for this research. She keeps jumping across generations in the postcolonial literature of Cape Verde, writing of subjects that keep their relevance in the postcolonial life of the archipelago and quick to sense the disappointment in the post-euphoria decades that were going to follow the euphoria of the independence moment.

Life under Colonialism

Ilhéu dos Pássaros is a rich anthology addressing several angles of the history and identity of the archipelago. Thus, the collection also includes three tales that go back to the colonial period. The first of them, "Canal Gelado" ("Frozen Channel"), is written around a set of childhood memories. As a privileged, rich, nine year-old girl, the narrator liked to walk through the miserable neighbourhood built for the workers of the British coal warehouse in Mindelo, so cold and uncomfortable that it was called "Frozen Channel". These were one-room houses with an earth floor that had to be wet before one could sweep it. It is also the neighbourhood where tuberculosis claims more lives and people walk

[382] "They masturbate on that subject, you know?". *Ibid,* 1982: 57.
[383] "Dr. Odgi took her to the hotel to have dinner and spend the night. It seemed she was already in Europe. The sound of an orchestra playing in one of the reception rooms reached them. It was a private party, a party of multinational companies, probably a meeting of oil tycoons. Europe and imperialism started behind that door. On this side, it was exploitation." (my translation), *Ibid*, 1982: 62.

barefooted. As a child, the narrator is too innocent to connect these poor living conditions to the pain and suffering they imply. To the eyes of the truant rich child, these people are only exotic, the subject of successful boasting at school, telling of her adventure trips to a forbidden area. Naturally, her mother is dismayed to find out that her child walks these streets where she can get diseases, or worse, bad manners. The little coin earned for speaking Portuguese instead of Creole completes this snapshot of social differences and class prejudice. In the postcolonial present, this neighbourhood no longer exists, but the narrator is mature enough to re-interpret what she saw then and understand its social and ethical implications.

This is a frontal anti-colonial piece, moreover because of the pathetic representation of class/racial prejudice. Contrary to the innocent child, the adults around her know what circumstances the people of the poor neighbourhood have to face, and yet, they decline any responsibility in improving those, shutting their remorse off in their phobias and fears. This is a very good example of colonial prejudice, demonstrating the importance of racism (or class prejudice) as an ally to easy the awareness of the suffering inflicted on others. Though narrated in a very subtle, apparently apolitical way, there is a lot of self-assertive and anti-colonial energy in these short stories. Yet, the delicate handling of these ideological issues might escape a less attentive eye. Probably the experienced practice of writing in an oblique way to go around censorship remained with Orlanda Amarílis in the postcolonial period, as the memory of less peaceful encounters during her formative years, when she collaborated with the magazine *Certeza*.

As for "Xanda", the second tale set in colonial times, it tells of the recruitment of a young Cape Verdean girl to the Portuguese secret police (PIDE), that grim presence, sharply feared by the Creole population. The anti-colonial message of the story comes from the fact that the narrative is focalised from the angle of Xanda's family life, revealing her as an unbalanced, unreliable character that brings exasperation to everybody around her. Later on, in Lisbon, among the student milieu, Xanda is despised for being an informer, which amounts to (though it is not said) being a national traitor. The fact that this disagreeable character could be accepted as a member of the secret police, and on top of that, through an affair with the head of the department in Cape Verde, puts in jeopardy any claim to respectability, rationality or self-awareness from this same organisation. By corroding the credibility of both agent and institution, Orlanda Amarílis hits a double blow on any positive representation of the colonial system.

"Requiem" is the last short story of the anthology and it is set in a transition period when the plotting for the liberation struggle is already consolidating. Young college students, artists and scholars mix in a certain atmosphere that is evocative of the CEI (Home of the Students from the Empire) when underground activism for national liberation, love affairs, alcohol, youth irresponsibility and serious political commitment co-existed in a chaotic way. Some characters seem very sure of what they are planning (although secrecy demands the elaboration of a speech in innuendoes that leave both reader and "non-insiders" unsure of what conspiracy is going on) while others are still in the middle of a process of self-discovery. This is exactly the case of Bina, the main character, who is trying to write a text (novel? short story?) about this activist urban world. She is experiencing a writer's block.

Meaningfully, the creative block ends when, at home, with a hangover, Bina suddenly remembers the "little island of the birds", that proud rock in front of the marginal of S. Vicente. Her spirit drifts to Cape Verde for a few moments. Back to reality, Bina looks at the attempted urban, Lisbon based story and throws it to the dustbin. A relieved exclamation ("Requiem!") marks the ritual of parting with the wrong writing material and the wrong direction to look for inspiration.

On the whole, the anthology of short stories addressed here, offers a representation of a changing Creole universe that has developed its own ways to cope with necessity and harshness, consolidating a relaxed, "small town" atmosphere. This representation of Cape Verde is very different from the postcolonial literature being written in the Caribbean, another postcolonial Creole universe. The first striking difference was the much lighter stream of racism. There are a couple of references to this kind of behaviour, criticised and confronted by the writer (a militant of the Portuguese Movement against Apartheid, anyway), but the expression of racism in the narrated pages of the anthology, usually overlap race with class in a confusing way. For example, rich Creole families, though not white, are treated with deference. Besides, the society of the islands is mostly mixed, anyway. The atmosphere might be different in the two islands that had a plantation system (Fogo and Santiago), but the tales considered here were certainly inspired by the society of the island of S. Vicente, where the writer studied. A telling detail in this positive picture is that girls covet straight hair, a mark of whiteness equated with beauty. In terms of class, social barriers are more serious, especially because poverty affects quite a significant part of the population of the islands. Still, when I read the analysis of Caribbean writers like Michelle Cliff, Ananda Devi and Marise Condé, following an amazing piece of critical work by Françoise Lionnet[384], I was astonished with the contrast between the tense bilingual culture and the problematic identities expressed by Caribbean writers in comparison to the cosy integrated hybridity of amiable Cape Verde from the pages written by Orlanda Amarílis. This positive image of Cape Verde is reproduced by other writers like Germano de Almeida. A couple of explanations may be relevant to understand this difference of tone between the postcolonial literatures of the two Creole locations. To begin with, issues of "authenticity" seem to be a past crusade for the Lusophone writers, quite open to the new influences that may come from (a remote) Europe. As for the assertion of their African identity, geography seems to have handled the matter (the archipelago is 500 km off the coast of Senegal). Secondly, the high rates of emigration and mobility probably upset clear dichotomies between foreign and local, since people are constantly crossing these borders. Finally, the proximity to Africa and the distance from a threatening colonising influence (like America) may be one of the reasons for the absence of a challenging "whiteness" in the atmosphere of Cape Verde.

III.2.2 Respectable Ladies and Adventure Sails in Sailors' Eyes:

Frequently, sexism and racism or Eurocentrism are dimensions of segregation and oppression that combine and overlap. That is why a combined feminist and postcolonial approach is proving productive to read texts written by writers who are aware of their own postcolonial condition, articulating this awareness through their gendered selves. The analysis of the short story "Thonon-les-Bains" (see above section III. 2.1) proves this point quite clearly, as the suppression of Piedade is both a colonial and sexist act. Still, there are aspects of this anthology that are worth considering from a strict feminist angle, more sharply involved with gender issues.

The first point that becomes noticeable, looking at the collection from this changed angle, is the absence of father figures in all of the represented families. This absence is represented as a matter-of-fact, general issue, not commented upon. Five of the short stories are about families encompassing two generations of women. In this case, there are references to masculine characters, but they are neither the heads of the family nor powerful figures.

[384] Françoise Lionnet, Postcolonial Representations, Women, Literature, Identity, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1995.

Instead, they are usually young, and under the authority of the main mother figure. The other two short stories that break with this pattern are about a single young woman studying in college, abroad. From this sketch, it is easy to conclude that the Creole universe that is going to be discussed here is not as dependent on a patriarchal/masculine presence as, say, the Indian women represented in the three Indo-English novels analysed in part II. This does not mean there are no problems, only, according to the context of this other location, the social position of women and the priorities for change are different.

The society of Cape Verde is divided in classes. The available resources are scarce and unemployment is high. As I said above, emigration is a fundamental factor shaping contemporary postcolonial society. Most men between 20 and 45 years of age move to other harbours or other countries where they may find work, leaving their partners and their children in the islands. Many families have moved definitively to the European country where they are integrated in a minority diaspora community. However, for those that live in the archipelago, the standard situation is to have a husband, son or partner abroad, who sends money back to the family (the savings of emigrants amount to a very significant part of the economy of the archipelago). Women are deeply integrated in wage earning activities in the two bigger cities, active in several sectors of society and for them, any relevant social reform will be deeply dependent on an improvement of the economy of the country, and not so much on a reaction to tradition or on the struggle to leave a domestic life.

Strong pressure to conform to patriarchal codes is linked to the power and presence of father figures and these seem very volatile in the social world evoked in Ilhéu dos Pássaros, a fact that is confirmed by the socio-economic conditions in the archipelago, so adequately exposed in these literary pieces. From a feminist angle, the first thing to understand about Cape Verde is that out of necessity it functions, in practice, on a sort of matriarchal basis. Alone, women raise families that, on average, include a rate of five children. In urban areas, the number of such families (only one parent, the mother, and children) is 37%, while in rural areas it reaches a bit higher: 39%[385]. But practical arrangements and dominant mentalities are not directly dependent on each other. Below, I will analyse the dynamics of a family of five women in relation to the pseudo-"absence" of a father figure, because although the head of the family is not a man, the social system remains patriarchal.

The Creole society represented in these short stories by Orlanda Amarílis is branded by a strong institutional basis (the Catholic Church) to promote patriarchal power along cultural patterns that strongly resemble traditional Portuguese life style. This bond between repressive patriarchy and the religion of the coloniser suggests that the critique against patriarchy is a reaction against colonial echoes as well. Moreover, because Catholicism co-exists with strong African influences and a highly respected and feared system of witchcraft, in a way that makes Cape Verde similar to other Creole contexts like the Caribbean. However, for women, the castrating impact of Catholicism is much clearer than that of African influences, feared by high class families precisely because of its "lack of manners" and (sexual) misbehaviour.

The hold of Catholicism is doubly framed as colonial, on the grounds of a certain Lusophilia. In Cape Verde, money grants social mobility, but prestige still is linked, in some sectors of society, to old families. For women, a means to claim one's position in the aspired highest social class is to marry into it. The accompanying side effect of this interest in social mobility is a disposition to assimilate and imitate the conservative ideology of the highest class, usually represented as deeply Catholic and Lusophile. Still, a liberating energy exudes

[385] Georgina de Mello, "Sobre a Mulher e o Desenvolvimento nos Palop", *in* Que Estados, Que Nações em Construção nos Cinco?, Fundação Amílcar Cabral, Praia 1998.

from these short stories as these families are repeatedly portrayed as decadent, cruel, obsolete and consequently, a totally wrong model to assimilate or desire.

Apart from the conservative impact of some decadent families, gossip is a powerful means of social control. In the insular, small town universe of the archipelago, younger women live in fear of becoming the object of gossip while older women watch them fearfully, to keep their respectability (read "marriage ability") unquestionable. Nevertheless, after certain age, and if there is a project or opportunity, young women are quite independent to leave the archipelago, either to study or to work. Tough gossip is feared, the social atmosphere of the tales is very welcoming and warm, reflecting the continuity of its appeal for many returning emigrants.

To make this general discussion more concrete, I will analyse closely one particular short story called "Prima Bibinha" (Cousin Bibinha). This piece did not seem very relevant if a postcolonial critical frame was applied to it. By contrast, it shines as one of the best stories if properly addressed through a critical frame sensitive to feminist issues. The results in the change of critical perspective raise a relevant theoretical point. The adequacy between text and reading approach is fundamental, otherwise a text may be under-evaluated. Naturally, there is a slight difference in the way I handle this anthology, because it is not a novel as the rest of the case studies. This difference in form allowed me to select which short stories should fall under each pole of the bisected analysis.

Thematically, "Prima Bibinha" is devoted to feminine solidarity and women's problematic complicity with dominant patriarchal mentalities. The plot of this piece turns around a family of five women, three older ones and two younger girls, one of them still single. The three older women are cousin Bibinha, a syphilitic, abandoned wife, barren step-mother of three children from her contagious husband; aunt Marinha, virgin spinster and Mam Bia, grandmother. The younger ones are Lola and Biluca, the main character.

The worth of the tale as an ethical lesson in human solidarity comes from the bond between Cousin Bibinha, on her way to Lisbon to receive treatment, and the unwavering generosity of aunt Marinha, encouraging her to face illness, organising the trip, lending her all the best clothes (suitcase included) and taking care of her cousin's home (reforming, fixing, cleaning, painting) while she is away. The impeccable house will be a welcome surprise for the sick relative. The representation of this taken-for-granted, trusted support from relatives paints a warm Creole society where a helping hand is sure to be found in the community.

While aunt Marinha is so busy with cousin Marinha, old Mam Bia is very shocked to find the youngest of her grand-daughters, teenage Biluca, with a boyfriend. Through Mam Bia's fears, the reader gets a glimpse of the importance of virginity/ respectability to guarantee eligibility for marriage. Mam Bia is pleased that her oldest grand-daughter, Lola, is properly settled with Custódio, an agreeable and esteemed member of the family. Now it is time to be vigilant until the responsibility for Biluca's future is no longer on the shoulders of the old woman (it is taken for granted that in a couple of years, with qualifications and more maturity, the girl will be able to make choices, on her own, hopefully, with a nice, respectable husband by her side). But teenage Biluca dreams her own dreams of romantic adventure, eager to find out about sex and love.

Custódio, the only man in the house, has been a good husband for six years, and he is used to the explosive, childish character of his young sister-in-law, taking the "boyfriend affair" quite lightly. Nagged by Mam Bia, Custódio eventually accepts to play the role of father figure, motivating Biluca to write and study instead of going around with boyfriends. The teenager only grows more rebellious. Twice she spells out her paralysing fear of growing into women like cousin Bibinha, aunt Marinha or grandmother Mam Bia. She wants to succeed where they all have failed: in getting her own man. Unaware of the image of self-

denied feminity the older women represent, they constantly underline the importance of being respectable, unable to see that their lonely "respectability" is what the teenager wants to imitate the least.

The protective circle around the young girl gets worse, claustrophobic, until the budding relationship with her boyfriend is broken. Mam Bia congratulates herself for having achieved that, which she translates into a postponement of damaging gossip before it is time for a serious relationship. Things seem poised to return to normality, but the change in Biluca, quiet and pensive, is intriguing. Time goes by until one of the many maids in the house, out of loyalty, tells grandmother that she has not washed menstruation towels from Biluca for the last three months (a period of time that allows no doubts of a pregnancy). When the teenager is bullied into confessing the name of the father of the child she finally screams: "the priest" ("nhô Padre"). Dismay and confusion paralyse virgin aunt and old grandmother. But more bad news reaches this small family. Cousin Bibinha died on board, when returning from Lisbon.

At the funeral, all women friends and neighbours close ranks against the priest, the subject of all whispered talks (establishing the swiftness and depth of the informative network of gossip). Only Mam Bia is not convinced: she remembers the genuine surprise and anger in the face of the priest when she privately confronted him with the accusation. What if Biluca is protecting the young (available for marriage) boyfriend? Again, it is one of the servants that comes out with the truth, only because she likes Lola, the oldest girl, who will soon be hurt unless Biluca is sent away to relatives in another island: Custódio and Biluca are having an affair and they meet at the end of the garden, in one of the warehouses. Ironically, Mam Bia was so effective in cutting Biluca away from any other available man, and she so much pressed Custódio to play an interfering fatherly/patriarchal role, that she nurtured the conditions for this much unhappier turn of events through her prejudice and subservience to social codes, uncritically applied.

One can look at this tale as a demonstration of the consequences of lack of sympathy towards youth, facing the pains of growing up in an over-constraining environment. Too much repression does not do away with desire or curiosity for life. It will only hurt, enrage and confuse young people. From a feminist angle, the tale is more ironical and far reaching. It is the sacred respect for patriarchal authority that turns sour in the uncritical hands of these older women. If they had been less concerned with respectability and strict conformity, they might have found a middle ground to raise Biluca. As it is, their Puritanical views make a victim of the teenager they so much wanted to protect.

The repression of feminine desire and the obsession with respectability are themes which I will come back to in the next section, for Dina Salústio is another woman writer that confronts the society of Cape Verde by questioning the personal price women are made to pay in the name of social mobility, vanity and the assertion of distinctive barriers between social classes. In a way, these subjects echo the ideas and the reflection of the Indo-English women writers, previously analysed in Part II, only in this case we are not talking about reigning castes but rather of a small group of decadent families, isolated from the more flexible and (pragmatically) liberated society around them.

Dina Salústio

III.2.3 Village Fears, Innocent Dreams, City Lights

Dina Salústio has published an anthology of short stories called Mornas Eram as Noites[386], but she is most established as a poet, having collaborated with several newspapers and local magazines. She is also included in the anthology Mirabilis de Veias ao Sol[387], a critical edition of the poets active in the archipelago, in the 1990s. Dina Salústio is an achieved writer of children's stories, and she is a teacher and a journalist, as well. The novel discussed in this section, A Louca de Serrano[388], is her first long narrative. She has written critical essays, and she wrote a chapter of the reader Cabo Verde, Insularidade e Literatura[389].

The novel A Louca de Serrano (the madwoman from Serrano) is about an isolated village, "Serrano", a name that comes from "Serra" which means "big mountain". This isolated village, with the mountain, the river and the fountain, is not necessarily in Cape Verde. It is rather, a fantastic landscape, living under a spell.

Like the re-writing of Thousand and One Nights, which I addressed above in the section devoted to the Indian writer Githa Hariharan, the space of the plot of A Louca de Serrano does not have to be linked to any concrete national geography. Again, whatever form of social criticism or ideological reflection carried out in this novel, it will have to be assessed as a sort of allegory, with several levels of meaning. A second similarity linking Hariharan and Dina Salústio is the fact that they develop the plot of their novels from a central dichotomy opposing two places and two classes of people. While the Indo-English writer I analysed above wrote a novel on the relationship between the city (where people live their busy lives) and the palace (where the sultan who rules the city lives), Dina Salústio writes a novel on the opposition between the village, as a representation of the rural, provincial worlds of the XXIst century, and the city or the capital, as a symbol of the cosmopolitan, powerful, urban centres that rule over these satellite or peripheral areas.

This is an interesting topic for a postcolonial study as far as the widening gap between a rural, less sophisticated, powerless world and the urban heart of politics is creating a sort of replica of the colonial polarisation between a more powerful and pseudo-superior region and other territories ruled by it. The similarities to the colonial situation are enhanced by the fact that to rule over rural areas from an urban frame of mind may imply abuse and exploitation on behalf of foreign, or at least distant urban interests, arising resentment among those who are under forms of political authority that decide, on a unilateral basis, over issues that may affect other communities. Nevertheless, contrary to the colonial situation, the rivalry between city and village is an intra-national problem, though it can be read as a metaphor of the relations between diverse centres of power and their less glamorous peripheries.

On another level, in the canon of the literature of Cape Verde, insularity has been one of the most fundamental and repeated themes, and the isolation of the small community of Serrano, unknown and unknowing of the "big world", can be read as an expression of the claustrophobic self-containment of the islands, if they do not open up to the world. If that is

[386] Dina Salústio, Mornas Eram as Noites, Instituto Camões, Colecção Lusófona, 1999.
[387] Mirabilis de Veias ao Sol, José Luís Hopffer Cordeiro Almada (ed.), Instituto de Promoção Cultural, Praia, 1998. The selection of eight poems by Dina Salústio is on pages 163-171.
[388] Dina Salústio, A Louca de Serrano, Spleen Edições, Mindelo, 1998.
[389] Manuel Veiga (ed.), Cabo Verde, Insularidade e Literatura, Éditions Karthala, Paris, 1998.

the case, then this novel reverses self-assertive nativist gestures, because instead of considering ways to manage borders that distinguish "self" from "other", it invites dialogue and exchange of influences. Being that the case, this would be the first example, among the texts considered in this study, of a dissemination of local (national) references, similar to the hybridity that characterises the emergence of emigrant communities in the urban centres of the Western world (see section I. 2. 4), deconstructing the borders that oppose "national" to "foreign". Reading the novel along these lines, its main argument is an encouragement to open up, and attempt mobility across worlds, rejecting isolation and fossilisation.

As the inverted negative of this cosmopolitan perspective, the village of Serrano, a metaphor for self-centred, isolated worlds and mentalities, is an emotionally and intellectually crippled place, in part due to its geographical isolation, mostly on account of the narrow patterns of living the villagers insist on holding to.

Serrano is also a place without a notion of history or linear time, as a horizon of possible evolution. This conceptual lack prevents the villagers from defining projects for the future, learning new things, looking up solutions: the future will only be a repetition of routines. This life style also shapes their emotional life and their intellectual abilities, forming people that neither think too deeply nor develop sensitivity, seldom expressing intense feelings. Bearing in mind this construction of characters, one would say Dina Salústio does not refrain from adding irony to insult when measuring the achievements within the reach of such a self-centred, isolated community. She certainly makes a strong point concerning the necessity to overcome one's fears, encouraging mobility across rural borders to crave integration in the city.

The naming ceremony is a key scene to define the position of Serrano in relation to the city and establish the power of the reigning midwife (and her co-helper, the village madwoman). Serrano was never on the map, until, some generations ago, several men arrived with instruments, papers, and "*wearing glasses*" (which was an unusual thing in the primitive village). Their arrogant ways immediately denounce them as "city people". After taking measures and writing them down in papers (another odd behaviour to the eyes of the villagers), they ask for the name of the place. No villager answers the city men, for nobody had ever thought of naming the place. It is the midwife, witch-daughter, queen and seer, who, after an inspiration telepathically sent by the madwoman, finally answers the city people, saying the village is called "Serrano". Her individual answer is collectively taken as law, and this moment amounts to the naming ceremony of the village. This episode establishes the isolation of the village, and the power of the interference of the city to make the village self-aware, for it only gave itself a name, first stage in claiming an identity, when it was pressed to do so by the city people. It also confirms the absolute authority of the midwife, and her strong bond to the spiritual leader, the madwoman.

After the naming ceremony a second change occurs in the village as a consequence of this new contact with the city: a man starts arriving regularly to claim recruits for the army, for a period of thirteen months. Jerónimo, one of the main characters, is the only one who stays in the army (and in the city) for four years, because of an unhappy affair with the captain's daughter. He returns a changed man, who craves a city life as mechanic. Apart from having projects and ambition, there are other features that mark Jerónimo as a different man, with little resemblance to the other villagers. He is very sensitive and correct, he has a strong character, and he is ethically very developed, though naïf and not very educated. Jerónimo lives the typical drama of the Cape Verdean citizen, torn between the desire to leave, and the sense of allegiance to the place where he was born, and where his family lives. Out of solidarity towards his parents he will try to accommodate to the village after his life in the city, but he is an unhappy, divided man. Among the villagers, Jerónimo is the only man who wishes to transgress the boundaries that separate the village from the city.

You can read the represented relation between village and the city as a metaphor of the tension between accepting or rejecting foreign influences, a theme that, considering the isolation of the Cape Verdean archipelago, induces reflection on the exchange of influences between the little Atlantic state and its neighbours, always across the ocean. Secondly, given the high emigration rate, this novel can be read as a necessary piece of encouragement to adapt to a new, usually urban, world. Finally, city and village can also work as a dichotomy that opposes purist, nativist frames of mind (unchangeable and focused on a past age), to modernisation and the adoption of new ideas. In this case, one is not necessarily considering foreign influences, but the dominant mentality of a local culture, which can be more open to innovation or more devoted to the preservation of local ways. In any case, the village of Serrano features as an exemplary projection of a negative "insularity", lack of mobility or inability to evolve. In these three senses, corresponding to the three interpretative hypothesis, the problem in the behaviour of the villagers is the accommodation to known limits, or the lack of a drive to leave and learn, being as they are afraid of everything that is new.

In contrast to the villagers, city people act, plan and decide. The main narrative of the city life turns around Filipa, the other main character, a thirty three year old businesswoman who runs a small, but elegant hotel, with a famous restaurant. As close family, she has a thirteen-year old daughter and a young (twenty-three) stepsister. As the plot unfolds, the reader realises that Filipa is quite non-functional in emotional terms, though she has life-long and reliable friends. Basically, she lives to work, though she is a kind person who tries to be correct towards other people. Filipa's capacities of introspection and perception, together with her city-like ambition and fighting spirit, are in stark contrast to the villagers' avoidance of any serious kind of reflection, living as they do, totally dependent on habits and routines.

In spite of the binary opposition between the city and the villagers, Filipa has links to both worlds because she was born in Serrano. Like Jerónimo, her step-father, she is the other character who breaks the barriers between village and city, connecting two contradictory worlds. In order to make the reader understand the circumstances of Filipa's birth, the narrative goes back in time, to the adolescence of Genoveva, her mother.

Genoveva San Martin was the only daughter of one of the richest and most powerful families of the city. The power of this family is generations old, allying material privilege to class prejudice. Hence, Genoveva's infatuation with a young friend without "the proper background", would never be acceptable. A trip to another city, to perform in a cultural festival, gives the young people an opportunity for an escape but the plane crashes into the mountain of Serrano, and no survivors are found. Genoveva, who alone survived the accident, has lost both memory and reason, and ends up caught in a fence of barbed wire, in a field, wounded and almost three months pregnant.

Jerónimo, young and sensitive, dreaming of becoming a mechanic in the city, finds Genoveva (suffering from severe amnesia), and falls in love with the glimpse of the city world he gets through her. Sensitive Jerónimo never touches Genoveva, for she is out of her mind and he does not think it is fair to abuse her state, but, as the wounds heal and Genoveva starts moving around, he realises he no longer can leave her in the small barn in the field as he did for the first month. She may get lost or be found by a less kind heart. Though he is married, Jerónimo brings Genoveva to the village and the obvious signs of her pregnancy immediately make her accepted, for Jerónimo's wife (Maninha) had been unable to conceive, and that is enough of a motive to justify an affair, which will provide the much sought (by his parents and wife) progeny. The fact that Genoveva is a city girl, as her manners show, is enough of an explication: she has to be promiscuous, according to the

prejudice of the villagers. They do not care to know more about her. Confined to the care of Jerónimo's parents, the mindless girl accepts their protection until she unexpectedly gives birth to a premature daughter (Filipa). Since Genoveva is not in her right mind, Jerónimo's mother takes care of the baby, releasing Genoveva from that responsibility.

Jerónimo alone knows the child is not his, so, in town, he secretly puts the name of the mother in the birth certificate of the baby, in case her right family wants to claim her. Filipa becomes Filipa San Martin (Jerónimo found the name in a gold locket, Genoveva wore around her neck). Soon after birth, Genoveva instinctively enters, unseen, the truck of a travelling salesman, and leaves Serrano to the next city, where somehow she must have felt she belonged. A sequence of coincidences returns Genoveva to her family, treatment is provided and, gradually, Genoveva recovers her functional self, but she will remain prone to depressions, nervous and haunted by memories of a birth scene she cannot place. She marries, has a son and, many years later, divorces a husband that becomes a good friend. In 1994, the present time of the plot, she is forty six (she had Filipa while a fourteen year old teenager). This absent mother (physically, emotionally and in terms of sanity) leaves Filipa with her step-father and the moving relationship between daughter and father, Filipa and Jerónimo, is the main line of the plot in terms of psychological depth. Both are outsiders to the village community, and that is one of the stronger bonds uniting them. Filipa is the child of the crazy city woman and Jerónimo is the villager who craves for wider horizons. She is a "foreigner", he would like to become one.

The only other friend of Filipa is the madwoman, a spirit that appears as a nine year-old child, grows with a generation of villagers until she is thirty-three, disappearing at that age, to return cyclically, again as the child, until she is again thirty-three. This spiritual being becomes the guardian angel of Filipa, companion of every game, confident for every secret.

Jerónimo also has a special bond with the other woman with supernatural gifts in the village: the reigning midwife. He is her first man, and this was very important for the newly appointed midwife who has the double function of initiating every man in the village and assist to every birth. Has her first experiment with her new functions and obligations, Jerónimo is the only man who sees the midwife crying and silently comforts her.

These intimate moments link a group of individual characters that stands apart from the collective representation of the "villagers". All that is positive about them is reversed in the construction of the collective anti-hero, an amorphous whole that hates everything that is foreign and new (actually, that is why Jerónimo hesitated in bringing wounded Genoveva to the village). Their rejection of novelty is a rejection of change, and implicitly, of the possibility to improve their living conditions, of developing their minds:

"Quem andou por lá depois que tudo foi cumprido, deixou perceber que os aldeãos só estavam enquadrados no sistema que regia os outros humanos pelas circunstâncias comuns que os definiam e nunca se aperceberam que os outros viventes se tinham coberto de imaginação e andavam vivos pelas esquinas, conquistando espaços, procurando novas formas de existência, alargando aos poucos as algemas que os prendiam. Mas isso só acontecia fora das fronteiras de Serrano."

(1998: 108)

"Whoever walked around there, after everything that had to be came to pass, hinted that the villagers only related to the references which determine the life of other human beings by the shared circumstances that defined them as such, and they never realised that the other living humans were enveloped by imagination and walked alive through their everyday places, conquering new spheres, searching for new ways of being, gradually letting loose the handcuffs that held them. But that could only happen outside of the borders of Serrano."

(my translation)

This quote not only spells out, beautifully, some of the mental barriers that separate "villagers", anywhere in the world, from the pulse of life (replacing geographical isolation for a deliberate frozen, solitude), but it also exemplifies, in a clear way, how the writing style of Dina Salústio suggests that truth is hidden, always receding from the grasp of the reader: this comment is a "*hint*", by "*someone*", that returned to Serrano after "*everything that had to be came to pass*". Only at the end of the novel, when all the threads come together does the reader realise why truth was so scaring that it could only be guessed through half words. At this stage, suffice it to say that the madwoman always said that Serrano would end one day, but everybody refused to believe her, as they always did, when they could not handle the truth. Yet, the foretold curse becomes true, through the interference of the city:

The government projects a dam that will submerge the village and the people of Serrano are made to leave forever. Some move to the next towns, initially in tents provided by the army, while others depart to the city, and it is in this way that Jerónimo, and his wife Maninha, find themselves in the city, as he always wanted. The construction of the dam and the displacement of the villagers is further evidence of the disruptive and lethal power of the city, justifying to a certain extent the fear, resentment and rejection the villagers always felt towards it.

The fact that the destiny foretold by the madwoman comes to be, proves that she is not mad. In fact she knows everything and always has all the answers, only people, and readers, do not understand her words the first time they are heard (read). Like a sibyl, she talks in riddles. As one follows the plot of the novel, the madwoman becomes rather a prophet, unrecognised by those she has to guard. Yet, the distance between guardian angel and villagers is completely accepted by the madwoman, who is exasperated and disappointed with those the mountain has put under her charge. Mixed with this superficial contempt, there is real concern, and this mysterious prophet also understands how scared, powerless and ignorant her villagers are. Hence, to make her existence easier on them, she accepts her marginal status, posing as mad.

As the plot develops, you learn to rely on the madwoman to get signs that allow you to guess coming events. In making you (reader) follow her hints, Dina Salústio skilfully makes this character your prophet, as well. For instance, the fact that the madwoman had previously opened the door of the barn where Jerónimo lays Genoveva suggests that this encounter is approved of by the supernatural forces that rule the village, which amounts to say that Filipa, the foster product of this affair, is expected to play some important role.

From the beginning, the novel mixes the level of reality with a parallel, spiritual world that interferes with reality, although it is not clear which are the aims or the logic of this supernatural dimension. The two worlds are connected through the magical water of the fountain of the village, the midwife and the madwoman. The title (A Louca de Serrano) marks the madwoman (a louca) as one of the central figures of the novel.

The language of the novel is manipulated to create the same effect of uncertainty and doubt concerning the reality of the village. Pieces of several stories are told several times, revealing a bit more of truth in each new version. Still, the impression conveyed during the whole narrative is that the reader is never totally aware of what is going on. Some explanations concerning this spiritual sphere are never provided, while, by opposition, the pieces related to the lives of the main characters fall into place perfectly, in a spiral of events that relies (too much, in my opinion) on perfect, timely coincidences.

Magical realism is an obvious aesthetic influence in this novel, for it follows the same aesthetic codes as Latin American literatures, combining a realist plot (which respects

an intention of verisimilitude) with the punctual intervention of fantastic or supernatural dimensions, as if there were other worlds, spiritual, magical, waiting for particular moments (of crisis) to interfere with the real world through certain people, objects or places. In the case of this novel, Serrano is one such place. Its water has got magical effects and both the midwife and the madwoman are the active "doors" linking the concrete and the supernatural worlds.

Within the frame of the realist line of the plot, the two conflicts at the centre of the plot are the construction of the dam, which finishes with the village of Serrano, and the separation of Jerónimo and Filipa a trauma that stops her emotional life at seven, when she fell seriously ill and had to go to the city for treatment. Father and daughter lose track of each other because the San Martin family fears blackmail from the poor peasant (in public terms, that pregnancy never happened and Genoveva never dishonoured her family) and that is the reason why they malevolently manage to have the priest contacted by Jerónimo, transferred to another parish, so that the link between Serrano and the city is lost. Filipa is given to a foster-family, who receives a fat monthly allowance to take care of the girl, and the family lawyer is asked to make sure she finishes her studies and is well treated. In the city, Filipa goes through five adoptive families, unable to adapt to any of them. She was never harmed nor offended. She was simply indifferent to them, until, both foster family and lawyer decided it was time to try another family. When she reaches Maria Helena, her fifth stepmother, Filipa decides it is time to settle, study, and wait until she grows up to search for Jerónimo. When she finally can afford it, Filipa hires a private detective to find her father (although there is a misunderstanding until the very last moment to create suspense) and, in the last scene, Filipa gathers everybody, including Genoveva, at the Christmas party of the Samar hotel in 1994.

The narrated process of re-conquering one's past to feel comfortable with the present combines time adjustment with integration in a new environment, creating a new sense of home. That is why the moment Filipa succeeds in having Jerónimo back in her life she finally feels happy, with her present life, in the city… In this way, both main characters achieve a full transition to new grounds, completing a process of dislocation and re-territorialisation. At the end of the journey, the ever present guardian angel, the madwoman, appears to Filipa one last time "*between shadow and light,*" in the terrace, to say good-bye.

Together with the history of Serrano, and the corresponding critique on insularity and isolation, Dina Salústio wrote a novel that invites reflection on the arrogant and abusive relationship between cities and the village, making defenceless villagers even more suspicious and provincial. Implicitly, Salústio is defending the necessity of a greater concern and dialogue between these two worlds, so as to go around the fears of the villagers, bringing new ideas and changes in such a way that it is not aggressive or destructive to their lives.

Finally, while writing about the urban space, Salústio composes a harsh picture, torn by class divisions that generate the same sort of resentment against the backward poor as the reader was led to feel towards the villagers. This time, in the city, the priest replaces the madwoman, as link between reality and supernatural powers, but his exasperated reaction is the same. He has no patience for the stubbornness, alienation, lack of hygiene and stupidity of the poor, and yet, he sympathises and is moved by them, trying to sheer them up with some passages of the Bible, improvised inspiration for story-telling. In private, the priest has bad-tempered, loud dialogues with God, complaining with Him for being so mean to poor people, always on the side of the rich. It is then, in this small, simple passage, which reproduces the insults the madwoman (and the narrator) addressed to the villagers, that all

the impatient anger of the prophet/angel is deconstructed, to reveal sheer love and sympathy with the limits of the innocent, suffering people over whom she had to watch. Contempt and impatience were the reaction to the unbearable impotence confronting those with wider horizons of comprehension, but unable to interfere and cause change.

III.2.4 Growing Up in a Cursed Village with a Guardian Angel Gone Mad

The fantastic mountain village imagined by Dina Salústio has the exact same number of men and women, composing two rival "teams" divided by sexual differences. In the case of rural Serrano, and contrary to the city world represented in the novel, women seem to have managed a more positive arrangement, as the village is ruled by a dynasty of midwives. When the old midwife dies, the next one will naturally move forward at the moment of the next birth, proving through her ability to deal with that situation, that she is the next "chosen one". The challenge to cope with the critical situation of seeing another woman through the ordeal of giving birth, and succeed in it, is something "normal" village women will not even attempt to do. Thus, the talent to act as a midwife has to be given by the mysterious forces that rule over that haunted place. Motherhood is also the event that marks the full membership of any village woman among the members of the community. In the context of this matriarchy, men have their exclusive "fishing evenings", where they exchange confidences and boast of their sexual performances.

At the centre of the village, the door of the house of the midwife, the reigning authority, is the public symbol of this female power:

> "(A parteira era) dona da única porta mágica do povoado e arredores que parecia alargar quando as dimensões do corpo que entrava ou saía assim o exigiam, ou quando ela assim o decidia."
>
> (1998: 14)

> "(The midwife was) the only owner of a magical door, either in the village or in the surrounding region, which seemed to dilate whenever the dimensions of the body going in or coming out demanded so, or when she herself decided."
>
> (my translation)

This huge vagina (the measures of the door are 3, 99 meters height for 71 centimetres width), which "did not get rusty with years of usage" ("*apesar dos anos não apresentava um único vestígio de ferrugem*"[390]) is the distinctive mark of the power of the midwife, grounding it on sexuality and fertility. Since traditional patriarchies tend to connect military strength and wisdom with the *phallus*, symbolically equating masculinity with aggressiveness, reason and culture, female power had to search for alternative means of self-assertion, assembling a positive identity among the remaining elements. This is the theoretical principle which determines the strategic difference between sexual difference theories and the gender driven "equality approach": instead of trying to prove you are "as good as" men, simply look for alternative forms of empowerment and self-assertion, improvising with what you have at hand. In the fictional construction designed by Dina Salústio, which I read as a feminist thesis, the midwife, in her proximity to nature, and natural processes (as opposed to "culture"), explores the type of knowledge assigned to her feminine identity by phallogocentric discourses, constructing the very base of her authority in "nature". Since the survival of the community, materialised in the next generation, quite

[390] *Op. cit.* Salústio, 1998: 14.

simply depends on her talents, nature/feminine proves more fundamental and necessary than culture/masculine. This is a point with far reaching implications in the promotion of women's status, value and self-esteem. Within this same line of argument, the companion figure to the midwife is the madwoman, local ghost, ignored prophet and buffoon, whose "madness" celebrates unreasonable forms of intelligence, opposed to phallogocentric reason. Besides, the fact that the madwoman disappears and comes back in cycles of thirty-three years is another instance of the connection between women, madwoman, midwife, pregnancy and nature, since all of them are ruled by cycles. Finally, the huge vagina image publicly exposed as the symbol of Serrano's matriarchy, takes one back to the feminine body and bodily metaphors, encouraging women's self-assertion through their own nature, cycles and alternative wisdom.

And what about the men of the village? In Serrano, children do not look like their parents, and it takes several years until a couple succeeds in getting their first child. But stranger things happen: men are intermittently afflicted by impotence, relying on the witch-doctor (or other) talents of the midwife to function properly again. The knowledge that women do not have these problems, being totally efficient in their sexuality, is deeply resented by the men, who feel diminished by it. Consequently, the importance of conceiving children is related to the necessity of proving to the whole village one's ability to do so.

The power given to women is the necessary arrangement in exchange for their gift of fertility. When there are problems in getting pregnant, the woman is always blamed, shunned and insulted by her husband as "unworthy". The unhappy wife is then expected to go the midwife who, with the help of the city doctors always manages to make a couple succeed. The men do not like anything that comes from abroad, but the visit to the doctor is something accepted out of necessity.

This whole lie is exposed at the end of the novel, when the construction of a dam in the village river leads to an analysis of its water. It is discovered that the water of Serrano has the ability to make men who drink it during childhood sterile, and intermittently impotent. This amounts to say that "going to the doctor" means to sleep with a (any) city man, returning to the village with the conceived child, pretending everything is normal.

The knowledge of the dependency of these men and the continuity of the village on women is what explains the established matriarchy. The "fishing evenings" are the equivalent of a collective session of "group therapy" to make the men cope with their lack of virility by boasting of their sexual performances. At the same time, with hindsight, the narrator blames the simplicity of the isolated world of Serrano, their lack of capacity to change, reflect, improve, diversify and evolve on the fears of these men, who feel so disempowered by their impotent/sterile body that they refuse any other kind of challenge or confrontation. Women comply with this collective lie, relying on the midwife to learn of this truth after they are married, taking advantage of the necessity of this lie to reach for empowerment. The tremendous irony in this arrangement is that Salústio is reducing men to their bodily nature, as well. All the transcendental flair of masculinity, as epitome of reason, spirit and culture is undone, displacing the basis of patriarchal power to bodily, natural grounds, exactly in the same way as phallogocentric discourses construct feminine identities (confined to the body, natural cycles an unable to attain transcendental reason).

The only woman who refused to live by the collective lie ruling Serrano was Gremiana, who dared to scream the truth of their situation to the men of the villager, when she found her husband publicly commiserating for having a barren wife. She did not want to sleep with another man, not even to have a child, and she claimed her right to refuse any man she did not desire. She will not violate her "self" to save the public honour, asserted through virility, of her husband. Gremiana becomes a cursed name in the village as the men, in panic and despair at their loss of a fabricated status, drag the screaming woman to the

river and drown her. Until the moment she died, she repeatedly insulted them. Years later, when Serrano is abandoned because of the construction of the dam, and the water is analysed, truth is not revealed beyond the hidden scientific report (extending the habit of concealing male weakness to the city space). However, the dam is called "Gremiana" by the responsible team, as homage to the one who refused to pretend. "Gremiana" eventually explodes because of a flaw in the construction, drowning some of the men who had taken part in the murder of the other, human, "Gremiana" (a symbolical refusal of late consolation in the name of a preferred revenge).

The only other character who screams the truth of this dependency of men on women is the madwoman, but…she is "mad", so, she is not taken seriously (like a stereotype of the king's buffoon, from whom she picks the mark of madness, she can say the truth that is forbidden to others). Being the character whose name gives the title to the novel, I take the madwoman as the main figure/figuration of the novel, reaching for a mythical status. While the midwife allows you to reinterpret feminine identities through the female body, recovering a positive and empowering self-image, the madwoman as another currency, as a revolutionary, unreasonable metaphor. Since the madwoman has the power to know the future and interfere with the life of the villagers, screaming prophetic words and providing for those under her guard, I see it as a sort of female Christ, as is suggested by her cyclical death at thirty-three, and her go-between position between mankind an higher supernatural identities (in this case "the mountain").

Both midwife (as an image of women's self help and bonding) and a mad female Christ are powerful figures to condense a certain liberated female subjectivity, standing for empowerment and self-re-creation. In this sense, as striking images that captivate one's imagination, I would claim these two characters as tentative feminist myths, following sexual difference theories and their focus on positive assertions of women's self in order to heal the primal narcissist wound inflicted by the continuous confrontation with hegemonic patriarchies.

As I said in the previous section, the novel A Louca de Serrano is structured upon an opposition between life in the village and life in the city. The city, or, urban space, is a world where the law of the father is dominant. The purity of the women exchanged between males is such an issue that family honour depends on it. That is why the San Martin family does not hesitate in sacrificing the child Filipa to live with foster families instead of uniting her with her mother. In the name of public respectability that maternity out of wedlock, never happened. The fact that Genoveva (Filipa's mother) is traumatised by dreams and unfocused memories of her plane crash, the amnesia and a partially remembered teenage motherhood, all of that emotional stress is deemed equally irrelevant. This strict (actually murderous) connection between the control of women's sexuality and the assertion of class lineages is another theme that links the work of the two Cape Verdean women writers studied in this section. Both of them write about a repressive social world controlled by patriarchal mechanisms, and I find important to note that Orlanda Amarílis also connected the excessive concern with respectability to high-class families (usually a conservative force in society) and to an older generation of Cape Verdeans, probably more Lusophile and Catholic. Yet, this is an unsuccessful patriarchy because all the women characters rebel, inscribing changing patterns of social reference in the life of the archipelago.

III.3 Mozambique: Literary "Guerrilheiros" and Other Survivors of the Apocalypse

> "Quando os brancos vieram para a nossa terra nós tínhamos a terra e eles tinham a Bíblia; agora nós temos a Bíblia e eles têm a terra."[391]

In my approach to the context of the literature of Mozambique I will follow selected roads attuned to the scope of this research. In the case of India, the two axes that helped me to narrow down the field to be covered were the choice for a language (Indo-English literature) and the option for women's literature as a segment of contemporary postcolonial literature. I will use the same two criteria here.

There are few women writers in the literary universe of post-independence Mozambique, deemed to have 35 active writers inscribed in the corresponding Association[392] (hopefully, a growing number even as I write), which made my selection of a case study an easy matter. As for the language used to write literature it is a creatively appropriated Portuguese, sometimes mixed with words from local African languages. Note that the literary mapping of Mozambique coming out of this study is less partial than the case of Indo-English literature for India. For that other case, the relevance of this study has to be understood in relation to the application of a feminist frame to its traditional view of feminity, while the relevance of approaching India through postcolonial concepts comes from the fact that it is a key case, having inspired much of this same critical frame in the first place, and in the language that started the whole subject as a field of research.

For basic references concerning the history of Mozambique as a postcolonial location see Appendix III.

In the same way as it happened with the literature of Cape Verde, the first "literary" texts, in Portuguese, written by people living in or from Mozambique appeared in the *Almanach de Lembranças*[393]. This light periodical published texts sent from every part of the empire, and the collaboration of women was well received. This positive reaction to women writers should not be mistaken for the expression of a fair and open-minded attitude from the Portuguese literary establishment. The matter is rather that the Almanach was a practical and entertaining publication without high pretensions, and a significant number of women would probably be among the readers.

The beginning of a Mozambican modern (written) literature is not related to a clear literary movement, or generation, organised around a magazine as it happened in Cape Verde and Angola. Some literary magazines were published, solid witnesses to the interest of the local literate community (*Msaho*, 1952, one issue; *Itinerário*, 1941-1955; *Paralelo* 20, 1957-1961[394]) but these magazines did neither have an aesthetic line nor an ideological direction.

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[391] "When white people arrived in our land, we had the land and they had the Bible. Now, we have the Bible and they have the land". Old African saying quoted by Eduardo Mondlane, Lutar por Moçambique, Livraria Sá da Costa, Lisboa, 1975 (1969).

[392] *Op. cit.* Corsino Tolentino – *Anais*, volume 2, número 2, Agosto 2000.

[393] *Almanach de Lembranças*, (anthology co-ordinated by Gerald M. Moser), editora ALAC, Lisboa, 1993 (1854-1932).

[394] In 1951, the anthology Poesia em Moçambique, was organized and circulated by the CEI (Home of the Students from the Empire), in Lisbon. Its anti-colonial, resistant intention is already quite clear. Nevertheless, though related, this event is not the factor promoting the simultaneous scene in Mozambique. A Gradual postcolonial awareness expressed in literature had been happening there of its own accord.

They simply amounted to occasional publishing market open to isolated poets. The exception to this general states of affairs is the newspaper *O Brado Africano* (1918-1974), the longest lived of these periodicals, and the one where a first generation of postcolonial poets more intent on constructing a distinctive body of Mozambican written literature (with unavoidable nationalist tones) found a stimulating home. The founders of *O Brado Africano* were the brothers José and João Albasini, Estácio Dias and Karel Pott, who deserve to be referred to here as a sort of midwives of most of the literary talents that emerged around the 1950s, in Mozambique. In order to understand the importance of this newspaper one has to realise that there were not many other opportunities to publish poems or short stories (the two traditional literary forms) on this particular colony. Even the possibility of getting primary education was not as available there as in other "overseas provinces". As a matter of general practice, the Portuguese did not invest as much as the French or the British in the education system of their colonies, and even within the frame of Portuguese colonialism in Africa, Mozambique does not feature as well as Cape Verde or Angola. In 1950, for a population of 5 738 911 (according to the official records of the colony), 5 615 053 were illiterate people, which amounts to 97,86% of the population.

It is from this restricted universe of literacy that a tentative literature started to emerge by the end of the 1940s, mostly in the capital city of Lourenço Marques. The assertion of an independent African/Mozambican identity was one of the main sources of inspiration for this first generation of postcolonial writers, who actually were the first generation of (modern) Mozambican writers (note that story-tellers are not "writers" though they produce literature). Printing facilities were available only in 1854[395] and the high rates of illiteracy in the colony did not encourage literary activities, except among the "milieu" of a certain intelligentsia that was concentrated in the capital. Besides, censorship was castrating. Considering these facts, I was reminded of Eduardo Mondlane's dismissal of literature as a form of cultural warfare[396]. His point was that the number of people that could be reached by poetry seemed irrelevant. Still, he recognises the work of these 1940s/1950s writers as the first attempt at creating something like a national consciousness in the colony.

The leader of FRELIMO, Samora Machel, who became the first president of independent Mozambique, had a different view of the power of the written word to mobilise people, and he never wasted an opportunity to circulate committed texts, although the quality of the anthologies of "fighting poetry" (Poesia de combate) published by FRELIMO does not rise above political propaganda (though literary texts by acknowledged writers would be included among less achieved pieces).

In the Mozambique of the 1950s, neighbouring South Africa was an important focus of cultural attraction, especially for those individuals that were curious to know what was happening internationally, apart from the controlled information that the dictatorship of Salazar allowed in the colonies. Censorship was tight under the Portuguese, and South Africa became an intellectual home for individuals looking for wider horizons, in spite of apartheid. For example, writers like Noémia de Sousa or José Craveirinha have said that though their writings fit the Négritude project of re-discovering African cultures, at the time they were writing (late 1940s, 1950), they had been inspired by what they had read in English because no publication regarding what was happening in the Francophone colonies had reached Mozambique. Instead, through English publications from South Africa, colonised Mozambicans had come to know of the struggle of American black people and

[395] Orlando de Albuquerque, José Ferraz Motta, "Tábua Cronológica", História da Literatura em Moçambique, APPACDM, Braga, 1998.
[396] *Op. cit.* Mondlane, (1969) 1975: 111-123.

Pan-African ideals (mind that for Angola and the two archipelagos the influence of the Francophone world was much stronger).

Noémia de Sousa and José Craveirinha are the first names in the canon (i. e. the corresponding consolidation of a corpus of texts that may work as a flexible and open set of references for quality and achievement) of the written modern literature of Mozambique, together with Rui Knopfli and Rui Nogar. The clarification of some of the names in this first generation of postcolonial writers was not free from polemic debate, becoming the object of lively discussions among scholars, either in Portugal or in Mozambique. The problem is a known and frequent one, which Biodun Jeyifo so succinctly and effectively phrased[397]. Different critical lenses lead to different conclusions. In Mozambique, the national struggle and political commitment have been considered the main parameters to establish literary achievement. In Portugal, other names, equally talented, less politically committed, have deserved critical attention and praise, while in Mozambique they were marginalised. Time will answer this dispute. For this research, the task of selection was easy: those writers that would be more interesting to introduce a first generation of Mozambican poets are those that are accepted and recognised by everybody as "the parents" of the modern written literature of Mozambique. Together with Noémia de Sousa and José Craveirinha as founding figures, it is worth mentioning, still in the frame of the first generation of writers, the later work of Luís Bernardo Honwana because among poets he was one of the few trying his hand at narrative, the genealogical tradition that concerns this study. His anthology of short stories, Nós Matámos o Cão Tinhoso[398], has received extensive critical attention.

As I have repeatedly said above, I am dealing with a second generation of postcolonial writers, whose work no longer reflects this first nationalist moment. Currently, the most acknowledged name in the literature of Mozambique is Mia Couto (a man) but I am working with women, searching for their particular view of historical events and the circumstances of life in current postcolonial locations. Hence, my choice fell on Paulina Chiziane.

In any genealogy of women's writing in Mozambique, the history to tell has to start in the 1950s, when a core group of writers started resisting the colonial situation. Among this first generation of Mozambican postcolonial writers one of the key names is the poet Noémia de Sousa (Carolina Noémia Abranches de Sousa Soares, 1926-) who published her poetry in several journals and anthologies, mostly in the 50s. Her committed literary pieces address the self-assertion of the culture and peoples of Mozambique, denouncing the exploitation and violence enforced on them by colonialism. Her poems also encourage the freedom fight and repeat the necessity of terminating the slavery of one's "motherland" (see "Let my People Go", transcribed in section III. 1. 2). In terms of style, Ana Mafalda Leite[399] underlines the repeated importance of metaphors of the "body" as "instrument" to project a located voice: De Sousa writes of an essential African identity as the site for the mediation of emotions and ideas that give meaning to the voice projected by the body. This means that the body is represented as the basic requirement for subjectivity, and consequently, through the continuum that links idea and emotion to action and experience, for activism.

De Sousa has an established place in every anthology of Lusophone poetry. However, I was pleased to find out that in The Heinemann Book of African Women's Poetry, an anthology that tries to "*break new ground in African poetry, where women poets*

[397] Biodun Jeyifo, "The Nature of Things: Arrested Colonisation and Critical Theory", *in op. cit.* Mongia, 1996.
[398] Luís Bernardo Honwana, Nós Matámos o Cão Tinhoso, Edições Afrontamento, Porto, (1964) 1988.
[399] Ana Mafalda Leite, Oralidades & Escritas nas Literaturas Africanas, Edições Colibri, Lisboa, 1998.

have been marginalised and neglected" [400], integrating both the Islamic Arab north and "black Africa", the women poets Noémia de Sousa and Alda do Espírito Santo (from S. Tomé e Príncipe) featured as two of the key names in African poetry, and flattering comments to their international status are not spared[401].

When the liberation struggle started in 1964, the impact of the independence war made writers become more nationalist, which is only a natural outcome for a situation of conflict that makes you reflect politically and define a position in relation to events: you find your friends and pick your foes. It is equally true that most writers in Mozambique, during the 1960s, definitely started to write committed literature inspired by the independence struggle, promoting it as an epic fight for freedom. In these texts, the "guerrilheiro" is represented as a hero, the glorious one who risks his life to free the people and the land. But the tide would turn bitter on this figure, especially after independence, with the beginning of the raids of RENAMO (in English, the MNR, National Resistance Movement), sponsored by Rhodesia as a reaction to the open support of FRELIMO to Zimbabwe's independence struggle. When Rhodesia ceased to be, South Africa picked up RENAMO and used them to destabilise the first tentative steps of Mozambique to stand on its own. Until the beginning of the nineties (actually from 1977 to 1992), the population would know several periods of civil war, coldly programmed to spread terror, to the extend of including ritual killings and black magic in their methods[402], thus using the set of cultural references of the local population to feed Renamo's destructive/paralysing logic.

This is the bleak picture I encountered in many academic studies on Mozambique and which was replicated, with an amazing intensity, on the novels of, for example, Bahassan Adamodjy Milandos de um Sonho[403] and Paulina Chiziane's Ventos do Apocalipse[404].

"War", be it liberation struggle or civil conflicts that followed, became a central topic, inspiring a significant part of the literature produced in Mozambique in the seventies and eighties. Currently, this literature is reviewed as "testimonio" ("witness") literature. Hilary Owen[405] has worked on this topic, considering "testimonio" literature a *genre* that

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[400] Stella and Frank Chipasula (eds.), The Heinemann Book of African Poetry, Heinemann Educational Publishers, Oxford, 1995: xvii.

[401] It is curious that there is no single available edition of de Sousa's work in Portuguese libraries. Her anthology, Sangue Negro, with 43 poems, circulated as a private, copied edition among activists and students in the 1950s. No publishing house would dare to print such polemic work. Later, her best poems where published in several anthologies, together with other writers, and an exclusive edition of her work was always postponed. The fact that de Sousa stopped writing certainly does not contribute to a renewed interest in her work. She did write a requiem for the death of Samora Machel, which was adapted to drama, but, this text was another isolated pearl.

[402] On this subject, see "witch hunting", the "occult imaginary and the "re-traditionalisation" of Africa, mentioned somewhat superficially, but repeatedly, in Postcolonial Identities in Africa by Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1996). What impressed me was the reference to these subjects as current vocabulary in the discussion of the politics of Africa, while I would connect these issues to a less institutional ground. Paulina Chiziane, one of the writers analysed in this research, also wrote a novel on the eruption of black magic among urban élites in Mozambique (see O Sétimo Juramento, Caminho, Lisboa, 2000). In Recolonisation and Resistance is Southern Africa, (John S. Saul, Africa World Press Inc., Trenton, New Jersey, 1993: 78) there is also a reference to "cultic violence", "ritualised destruction" by "Renamo" and the "practice of magic and ritual by Frelimo". He refers concretely to Mozambique, as a world where "spirit possession" and "ancestor worship" are key cultural references, certainly translated into local war conflicts.

[403] Bahassan Adamodjy Milandos de um Sonho, Quetzal Editores, Lisboa, 2001.

[404] Paulina Chiziane, Ventos do Apocalipse, Caminho, Lisboa, 1999.

[405] Hilary Owen, "Re-membering the Nation in Lina Magaia's *Dumba Nengue*", work in progress on women's writing in Mozambique, author's manuscript, 2000.

invites a close identification between writer, text and reader, since the focalisation of these texts has the aesthetic of a snapshot, or a film. It is very visual: you are a witness of events happening in front of your eyes. Usually, the nature of these events is traumatic, and you are made to share these experiences, externally represent by a third person narrator, exactly as if you were standing there, seeing the scene from a particular angle. Deliberately not many explanations or comments are included in the text: the frame to understand it (war) is as obvious as harsh. Nelson Saúte, the editor of one of the best anthologies of short stories[406] from the literature of Mozambique also mentions "*literatura que testemunha*"[407] as one of the features that still brands literary production ensuing from this postcolonial location.

The production of the postcolonial literature from Mozambique was influenced, in the sixties and seventies, by the mobilisation campaigns during the long period of war. As mentioned above, FRELIMO was keen on the circulation of anthologies of "poesia de combate" ("fighting poetry") to keep the spirit of the troops high, and a text that could serve this purpose would be praised. One of the most curious cases to illustrate the strong bonds between historico-political context and the diffusion of certain texts is the collection Eu, o Povo ("I, the People") supposedly found by the side of a fallen guerrilla soldier, but written by a sympathetic[408] Portuguese poet and painter, António Quadros (under the pseudonym of Mutimati Barnabé João). In the introduction to Eu, o Povo, Mutimati is presented as the "individual voice that speaks for the collective voice" ("*a voz individual que corporiza a voz colectiva"*) encouraging identification with and allegiance to the freedom fighter. Later, in Portugal, the poem from the anthology which has got the same title ("Eu, o Povo") became the lyrics of a song by a famous Portuguese activist, song writer and singer, Zeca Afonso[409], closing a circle of fluid collaboration as was the case between those that resisted the dictatorship in Portugal and the ideologues of the liberation movements.

Currently, in the post-war period, Maria Fernanda Afonso[410], like Hilary Owen, defends that the consolidation of contemporary Mozambican literature is composing a recognisable pattern of "first hand record" of historical events (testimonio). Nevertheless, past history (including reflection on episodes of the colonial period and references to the heritages of several first nation cultures) is becoming a powerful thematic source in the latest developments of this African literature. This literary revision of past history connects the literary production of Mozambique to a larger pattern in postcolonial literatures, namely, the revision of history and the re-interpretation of past events from the point of view of those that were colonised, thus confronting Eurocentric narratives of conquest and glory.

Among the first generation (1950s) of postcolonial writers in Mozambique there was great care to locate literary production within its own regional, African context. That is the

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Hilary Owen, "Noémia de Sousa: Engendering the Nation" *in* A Mulher Escritora em África e na América Latina, Martinho, Ana Maria Mão-de-Ferro (ed.), NUN, Évora, 1999.

[406] Nelson Saúte (ed.), As Mãos dos Pretos, Publicações D. Quixote, Lisboa, 2000.

[407] *Ibid*, 2000: 19.

[408] This part of the recent history of Portuguese literature is out of the scope of this research. Still, it is worth mentioning that many intellectuals, artists and scholars, in Portugal, were really sympathetic to the liberation fights of the colonies. Both groups of people were oppressed by the fascist régime and there are common histories of resistance and even co-operation.

[409] José Afonso, "Enquanto há Força", 1987, Movie Play, Lisboa.

[410] Maria Fernanda Afonso, "A Reescrita da História Colonial na Literatura Moçambicana", communication presented at the seminar "Segunda Jornada Sobre o Ensino e a Investigação do Português Língua Estrangeira nos Países Baixos e Flandres", 18th May 2002, University of Utrecht.

opinion of Francisco Noa[411] who defends "territorialisation" as a foundational element in Lusophone literature. In part I, when presenting my set of working concepts from postcolonial criticism, I mentioned this literary turn, which is in stark contrast to multicultural and deconstructive winds that blow over European literature (see section "We All Live in a Postcolonial Age but You do not Disseminate Before you Consolidate"). This need to "territorialise" was connected to self-assertive (nationalist) practices. In literary terms, "territorialisation" meant the effective creation of a new, modern, postcolonial literature grounded on the realities of one given location, including social critique, the representation of social types and reflection on its history, politics and cultural practices. Hence, it is during this stage of "territorialisation" (1940s and 1950s), while raising postcolonial awareness and breaking with political alienation that many writers definitively stopped replicating European aesthetic patterns, refusing romantic and modernist literary influences[412]. This was an essential step because one of the main distinguishing features that define and consolidate the existence of a postcolonial literature is, precisely, the elaboration of locally grounded aesthetic deviance, away from available European/colonial references. Thus, an effort at constructing African "territorialisation" in postcolonial literary trends is what would define local literature as something other than an endlessly self-annihilating (because never "quite like the great original") European replica.

Literary territorialisation may include the appropriation of the coloniser's language itself, marking the text with the local alternative to the former usage of the metropolitan norm. That is the case of Mozambican literature written in Portuguese, a postcolonial literary system where African languages have been less appealing for local writers than the former colonial language. Ana Maria Mão-de-Ferro Martinho[413] reckons that one of the motives for this fact is the continuous investment, on the part of governments, in the production of homogeneity. This process started with the colonial education system, was succeeded by the influence of the media, and lives on in current formal education. Martinho thinks the current promotion of Portuguese as the official language is neither adjusted to the multicultural universe of Mozambique nor does it reflect different cultural memories, diverse ethnic references and regional linguistic features.

In Mozambique, the main regional languages are Nyanga, Yao, Shona and the group Ronga-Tsonga-Tswa. This is one of the most complex linguistic universes in the Lusophone world. Other postcolonial contexts include several Creoles based on Portuguese, like Cape Verde (a Portuguese/Creole bilingual situation) while the Creole of Guiné-Bissau (spoken by 44% of the population) is a sort of *língua franca* among several regional languages. In Mozambique, to the above list by Mão-de-Ferro Martinho, I would add the especial case of Swahili (the national language of neighbouring Tanzania), Macua, Sena, Chope and Changana, though Shona and Tsonga are equally used by a part of the population that speaks these other languages[414].

In literature, the local language that has been the most used, and even so, mixed with Portuguese, is Ronga, the language of the region around the capital where the most active

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[411] Noa, Francisco, Literatura Moçambicana: Memória e Conflito, Universidade de Eduardo Mondlane, Livraria Universitária, Maputo, 1997.

[412] This concern for territorialisation is the equivalent for Mozambique of the *Claridade* movement in Cape Verde when the slogan directing literary production became "Stick to the land" (*Fincar os pés na terra)*. See introduction to section III. 2.

[413] Ana Maria Mão-de-Ferro Martinho, "A Língua Portuguesa e as Línguas Africanas, Bantu e Crioulo, na África de Língua Oficial Portuguesa" *in* Educação, Empresas e Desenvolvimento em Moçambique, Pendor, Evora, Proceedings of the Seminar "Seminário em Metodologia de Investigação Aplicada – Educação, Empresas e Desenvolvimento", Universidade Pedagógica de Maputo, Abril de 1995.

[414] *Africana Studia*, number 1, Mário Vilela, "A Língua Portuguesa em África: Tendências e Factos", 1999: 185.

literary "milieu" is based. However, instead of "Africanising" Portuguese, the current (second, post-independence) generation of writers seems more cosmopolitan minded (achieved "territorialisation" is taken for granted), trying to claim their place in an international Lusophone or Anglophone world. Still, this opening up to wider cultural horizons does not mean that, in terms of education, the teaching of Portuguese should in any way obliterate or interfere with the learning of other linguistic and cultural universes which reflect the community the child is coming from. I certainly agree with Mão-de-Ferro Martinho that it is necessary to adapt and integrate any school in the surrounding social world from where children/students pick their basic references.

The usage of Portuguese in the postcolonial literature of Mozambique exhibits a remarkable level of creative appropriation. The greater and most interesting differences in relation to the European variant are not only neologisms but also striking alterations in the pattern of syntactic order. Although I note these facts, I am not in a position to relate these variations to the influence of any local language since I know none of them. I can only recognise deviation from metropolitan Portuguese, my native tongue.

Another of the most common strategies to "Africanise" Portuguese has been to allow interferences from oral patterns of speech. However, in the three continental literatures of Africa to speak of interference from oral patterns of speech immediately draws into this picture a scheme of intertextuality between oral literatures and written literatures. How should one go about these complex matters?

Ana Mafalda Leite[415] notes that Western critical approaches to oral literatures have had a certain tendency to essentialise the reproduction of patterns of oral speech in written literature as an unmistakable and exclusive mark of African literatures. Mafalda Leite does not deny that traditional[416] oral literature may be a powerful source of inspiration for postcolonial writers nor does she claim that oral literature is irrelevant to carry out comparative studies exposing vital contaminations between these two modes of regional literatures. Nevertheless, as she rightly points out, one has to make explicit on which theoretical and ideological grounds oral literatures are being invoked. It is perfectly reasonable to use oral literatures to explain certain formal and structural aspects of written literature, to assess innovative appropriations of the European language inherited from the colonial encounter and to extract relevant sociological and anthropological information from oral literatures, just to name a few possible examples of relevant studies. What Mafalda Leite rejects is the more or less obvious ideological polarisation, which opposes African oral, "genuine" literature to written modern literatures, taking the latter as the hybrid product of colonial influence (which it partially is). This reasoning, if not carefully handled, may create an essencialising myth, out of the suggestion that if left alone, African literatures would keep their static, "natural" form, that is to say the oral one, as if writing was ontologically alien to African peoples. What happens is that currently African literatures can draw from two rich traditions, the oral and the written forms, and, certainly, there are contaminations and intertextual relations between the two of them, which should be adequately assessed by specific comparative studies. Within Africa itself, apart from European colonial influence, older sources of inspiration concerning written literature came from Egypt, Ethiopia, the Arab world and India, affecting the North and the East coast of the continent the most.

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[415] Ana Mafalda Leite, Oralidades & Escritas, Edições Colibri, Lisboa, 1998.

[416] By calling oral literature "traditional" I do not mean that it is not equally modern. It is impossible to claim that oral literature would survive in total isolation from the modernity of Mozambique, such as it is currently lived. I mean "traditional" as an expression of local culture within the forms and patterns created by the first nation peoples. Oral literature is in continuity with pre-colonial cultures of Moçambique, and it is in this sense that I oppose it to other cultural influences inherited from European colonial modernity.

After having focused on the linguistic universe of Mozambique and the possible interference of oral literatures in their written counterpart, I also find relevant to consider the influence of traditional literary forms, such as poetry and the short story, in the development of this postcolonial literature. The influence of oral story telling is probably responsible for the fact that most Mozambican writers have opted for writing anthologies of short stories[417] but further research on this connection, between the writing of short stories and the tradition of story telling, still has to be done, at least as far as this specific national literature is concerned.

In what concerns poetry there are two factors to take into account. Within the frame of colonialism, and the cultural warfare that began around the 1950s, the choice for poetry served strategic necessity: it eluded censorship more easily. But there is another (far more important) reason to be found among local literary heritages. One of the languages of Mozambique, Swahili, is the product of the second wave of literacy in Africa[418] which came with the spreading of Islam to the oriental coast of Africa, brought by Arab emigrants, many centuries ago. Though Swahili is not Arab it evolved under its influence. The way oral cultures negotiated the arrival of literacy is important to understand the preference for some literary forms instead of others. Swahili literature is predominantly made of narrative poetry about the life of the prophet Muhammad and his fight against Christians. Secularisation, in the XIXth century, expanded the themes of these poems to include the struggles between sultans and the governors of neighbouring cities, or the resistance of local peoples to European presence. This bit of history suggests that poetry has a long tradition in the oriental coast of Africa, equally promoted by songs of praise, one of the main genres in regional oral literatures.

All this information allows me to suggest that the novel is indeed a foreign form to the literary tradition of the oriental coast of Africa, just as it happened with the appropriation of the novel in Indian literature, through the influences of modernism and the English education system.

The novel I have chosen to discuss in the next section is the last case study of this research. In this way, I close my small cartography of writers in Portuguese and my micro-genealogy of postcolonial women writers. The selected text is called Ventos do Apocalipse[419] (Apocalyptic Winds) and it was written by Paulina Chiziane, a younger writer from the second generation of postcolonial writers of Mozambique. The choice was easy. Other women writers like Lília Momplé or Lina Magaia are writing short stories (actually Magaia writes a sort of "fictional journalism"). Paulina Chiziane has had the merit of being the first woman to write a novel in Mozambique, and what is more, a polemically feminist first novel. In an interview with Patrick Chabal, Paulina Chiziane[420] says that she considers her début novel, Balada de Amor ao Vento[421], still immature in terms of writing technique and style, but she goes on to add that she would not have changed what she "had to say":

"É um livro que fala da condição feminina (…) os nossos problemas, o amor, o adultério, a poligamia. E eu sinto que a visão do mundo existente hoje, pelo menos em termos de escrita, é o

[417] That is the opinion of Patrick Chabal. See The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa, Hurst & Company, London, 1996.

[418] The first wave of literacy came with Ghe'ez and Amharic, from Ethiopia, the second, in Arab, was due to the spreading of Islam, and the third was the consequence of European colonialism, during the XIXth and XXth centuries. Albert Gérard, (translated by Wanda Ramos) "1500 Anos de Literatura Criative na África Negra", *África*, n^{o} 8, II^{a} série, Abril/Junho 1980, Lisboa.

[419] Paulina Chiziane, Ventos do Apocalipse, Caminho, Lisboa, (Maputo, 1995), 1999.

[420] Patrick Chabal, Vozes Moçambicanas, Lisboa, Vega, 1994a: 67.

[421] Paulina Chiziane, Balada de Amor ao Vento, author's edition?, Maputo, 1990.

ponto de vista masculino. (…) Falei com mulheres mas também conheço histórias já seculares. (…) Portanto a minha mensagem é uma espécie de denúncia, é um grito de protesto."[422]

(Chiziane, 1994: 298)

Paulina Chiziane's mother tongue is Chope but she writes in Portuguese. She studied in Maputo, where she also had several odd jobs, got married at nineteen, and soon became the mother of two. From her childhood, she remembers attending story telling sessions and being deeply impressed by them. Her own grandmother was a story-teller (in "Chope") who would gather all the children on moonlight nights, outside, around the fire, to listen to her narratives[423]. The memory of these story-telling sessions will be important to approach the novel that I have picked for detailed discussion here, Ventos do Apocalipse (1999)[424], which is Chiziane's second novel. Meanwhile, she already published her third title: O Sétimo Juramento[425].

Paulina Chiziane

III.3.1 The Apocalypse According to Chiziane

Ventos do Apocalipse (Apocalyptic winds) is a title that immediately invites a parallel reading of the Apocalypse (also known as the Book of Revelation), the last book of the Bible[426]. Whenever that intertextual dialogue is relevant, I will make concrete references to the biblical text, but on a meta-level, the relation between the Apocalipse and Chiziane's novel is made via a scenario of war and destruction which has held Mozambique for several decades (ten years of liberation war plus sixteen more of "guerrilla" civil war). The sustained metaphor equates a punishing God, who sends evil plagues and disasters to sinners, to the plague of war released over the people of Mozambique by their rulers and international power games. However, while God is punishing sinners, the people of Mozambique are innocent victims and they certainly do not deserve this suffering.

The prologue to the plot of the novel is a written session of "story telling", the first paragraph of which includes the loud invitation the story teller would address the gathering audience: "*listen*", "*come and sit down*", "*I want to tell you ancient tales*". In epigraph, the prologue contains another invitation of the same kind: "*Vinde todos e ouvi*", "*Vinde todos com as vossas mulheres*"[427] ("come and listen", "come, all of you, with your wives"*)*. After the invitation, the story-teller asserts his wisdom, makes a reference to the time of the year in which (or because of which) the session is going to take place, and then he qualifies his mood, which sets the tone for the tale. After that, the expression that marks the beginning of the tale is uttered "Karingana wa Karingana". At the end of the tale, this expression will be repeated, as if to tell the audience the tale is over, and the flow of reality goes on. Paulina

[422] "It is a novel that discusses the social position of women (…) our problems, love, adultery, polygamy. And I feel that current, mainstream worldviews, at least in terms of writing, are shaped by a masculine point of view. (…) I have talked to women but I also know centuries old (patterns of life) stories. So, my message is a sort of denunciation, a protesting scream". *In* Patrick, Chabal (ed.), Vozes Moçambicanas, Lisboa, Vega, 1994a: 298.
[423] *Op. cit.* Chabal, 1994a: 300.
[424] *Op. cit.* Chiziane, 1999.
[425] Paulina Chiziane, O Sétimo Juramento, Caminho, Lisboa, 2000.
[426] In all the future references to the Book of Revelation I will be using The Holy Bible, authorised King James Version, Eyre & Spottiswoode Publishers, London.
[427] Quote at the beginning of the prologue, *op. cit.* Chiziane, 1999.

Chiziane respects this tradition in her writing. Seven pages later, the prologue ends with "*Karingana wa Karingana*"[428].

The wise story-teller is an old man, who impersonates "destiny", a supra human entity whose wisdom shall not be questioned. While telling the tale, he becomes the one who is "all ages old, and still younger than all the children and grandchildren that are going to be born"[429] ("*tenho todas as idades e ainda sou mais novo que todos os filhos e netos que hão-de nascer*"[430]). "Destiny" tells his tale at the end of time, when the fruits of the earth are to be reaped[431]. The mood of his tale is sad, a lament from the soul.

"Grandfather" tells three small tales.

One about "a cruel husband" that in time of hunger and drought did not share the food he found with his wife and children. The wife found out, but she kept silent, and felt bitter. When the harvest was abundant again, the wife, always mistreated, organised a family party where she announced she was deserting such an unworthy character, after the hard time she had stood by him. The desperate circumstances they survived together were not met with the same degree of solidarity by both of them, and this difference in behaviour gives the wife the authority to interpret his selfishness as "murder" (by negligence), thus putting her husband to public shame.

The second tale is a tale of resistance. A hundred years ago, the army of the kingdom of Gaza (where legendary Gungunhama fought the Portuguese), made of Nguni lords and Changane troops, spread terror among other peoples, including the Portuguese. Those who were running from the approaching army had clear rules: you do not talk, sneeze, move or cough when hiding. But small children do not understood these rules, of course. One single cry would call the attention of the predatory warriors, and no life would be spared. So, husbands and wives had to decide when it was necessary to suffocate a child, so that the whole group could survive. The only available consolation is the old saying inherited from the kingdom of Gaza: "kill this one. Tomorrow we will make another."

The third tale, "A ambição de Massupai" is the legend of Massupai, the most beautiful woman of the Chope land. She was a prisoner of the warriors of Muzila, from the old empire of Gaza. All the warriors coveted her but she liked power, so, she picked the general. He bestowed upon her honours of first wife and ignored his other wives. Then, the general asked Massupai to kill her children from other men and sleep with Chope warriors, spying on their plans. Hence, the Ngunis and their general won battle after battle. In compensation, the general abandoned all his other wives and conspired to become emperor, promising to make Massupai his empress. In anger, the abandoned wives denounced the general to Muzila (the emperor he was conspiring against) and he had his general assassinated. He spared Massupai out of mercy for her spying services and because she was a woman, hence, irrelevant as an enemy. Massupai went mad out of frustration and revolved the earth in search of the children she had sacrificed to her ambition.

The concluding remark that closes the session of story-telling ("history repeats itself, Karingana Wa Karingana"), links the three tales to the main plot of the novel, as if the latter were an expansion of the three former pieces.

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[428] *Ibid*, 1999: 22.

[429] Which is also a re-phrasing of the words used to refer to God in the Apocaplise: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty". Book of Revelation, chp. 2:8.

[430] *Op, Cit.* Chiziane, 1999: 15.

[431] Again, this is an echo of the Apocalypse, referring to the moment when God's wrath sets his angels free to reap life from the Earth. Book of Revelation, chp. 14: 14 - 20.

As can be deduced from these introductory tales, the main narrative will deal with hunger and lack of solidarity, with resistance and stamina to survive and, finally, with greed and betrayal.

The main plot of the novel starts with a nightmare foretelling awful events. The troubled character awakening from this unpleasant experience is Sianga, deposed aristocratic authority, half king and half high priest, who lives with the remaining wife of the nine he had. In the context of Mozambique, to have been able to afford nine wives implies that Sianga must have been rich, very rich[432]. Changed fortunes made his wives leave, and only Minosse, who was put under his guard when she was a teenager, remains. She has no clue of any alternative place to go, and then, there are the children Manuna (son) and Wusheni (daughter).

According to tradition, as a means to calm the ancestors sending the nightmares, Sianga offers them corn, rappee and "aguardente"[433], which he throws to the ground. Sianga, the deposed ruler is a flawed character[434] resenting the change from "régulo", that is, the revered traditional authority, to "nobody". During Portuguese colonialism a system of indirect rule was established and the régulo used to be a collaborator. Evoking this colonial memory, the narrator comments that Sianga did not mind the presence of white colonisers, running their farms worked by convicts, and getting rich, respected and powerful with the profit he made from this co-operation. Independence has meant a transfer of power to the local secretary of the party and malevolent Sianga is very displeased.

Minosse, always abused and mistreated, is the scapegoat. The first scene of the novel is an argument between the couple because Sianga wants Minosse to turn to prostitution in exchange for food. She refuses. While they argue, it is meaningful that a group of playful boys manages to catch a crow, a bird that, in previous times, would be sneered upon as unfit for food. That is no longer the case. You eat everything that does not eat you. The reason for the starvation afflicting the villagers is the drought. Late rains mean no food to eat or to trade.

While Minosse and Sianga talk of the lack of rain and of food a third problem looms in the background: they also mention rumours of wars affecting other villages. At this stage, the only concept of war the villagers have are the epic narratives of the Ngoni warriors, which belong to the realm of legend[435].

Soon, the first hint of real war enters the lives of the villagers as Minosse finds boot footprints around the store-room (and no-one in the village has got a pair of boots). Next, Sianga feels the cold touch of a knife on his neck and the elderly couple turns around to meet a strange character. A skinny, young man, in rags, dirty, with a "beast's eyes" (*olhos de fera*"[436]) and a brand new machine-gun, staring at them. He has a message for the "régulo Sianga". As one finds later on, this message is an invitation to co-operate with the mercenaries. They promise to restore Sianga's power if he manages to steer the village away

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[432] "In much of the country a man pays *lobolo* (bride price) to the woman's family. Once it is paid, he owns her labour and that of the children she produces. In a society where farming is almost entirely done with hand tools and where there are no landless labourers to hire, a wife represents *the* major capital investment. Greater production is gained by investing more capital to buy more wives." (Joseph Hanlon, Mozambique the Revolution under Fire, Zed Books Ltd., London and New Jersey, 1984, 1990: 150.)

[433] A sort of brandy.

[434] *"É ambicioso, ocioso, solitário. O ódio e a vingança acasalaram-se dentro dele e escolheram o ninho do lado esquerdo do coração que se desequilibra para o ponto negativo."* (*Op. cit.*, Chiziane, 1999: 63)

"He is ambitious, lazy, solitary. Hate and revenge mated inside him and chose the left side of the heart to nest, creating an unbalanced inclination towards negative things." (my translation)

[435] *Ibid*, 1999: 34.

[436] *Ibid*, 1999: 35.

from its support to the government. Sianga's choice to trade his fellow villagers for power starts the chain of events that will bring Apocalypse to the lives of the villagers.

It is remarkable the ability of Chiziane to construct the image of this encounter between old couple and boy soldier in such a way as to condense several layers of meaning with so few means. Note that the age of the soldier introduces the problem of the kidnapping of children to be trained and used as soldiers, a particularly hideous aspect of this war, and at the same time, the contrast between the shiny machine gun and the poverty of the starved soldier, in rags, spells out an implicit inversion of the normal social logic that should define the priorities for government expenses. The suspension of a functional order is precisely the main theme of the novel. The representation of a scenario of war, from the critical angle that Chiziane expresses, does not promote mobilisation nor supports nationalist causes. Instead, she writes of the disruption of social tissue that inscribes in the future of Mozambique the impossibility of the nation that should have been constructed after the liberation war. This is a total reversal of the ideals inspiring the previous, first nation of postcolonial writers. Utopia turned bitter.

At night, in a secret meeting with his closest allies, Sianga conspires against the villagers. Note that the meeting takes place at night, and seven are the men inside the hut (one of the numbers systematically alluded to in the Book of Revelation). The animals, popularly believed to have sharper instincts on the supernatural than humans, are restless. They feel the invisible ghosts around the hut and they know that something evil is approaching.

The metaphor of war as the Apocalypse is supported by the inclusion, in the body of the novel, of a secondary, fantastic narrative. Like the Cape Verdean writer Dina Salústio, Paulina Chiziane follows the creative patterns of magical realism, inserting a parallel supernatural universe in the flow of her otherwise realist novel. This supernatural, secondary narrative is about the four knights of the Apocalypse.

In the Book of Revelation, the knights of the Apocalypse are thus referred to:

"*2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given onto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, come and see.

4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him to sat thereon ***to take peace from the earth****, and they should kill one another: and there was given onto him a great sword.*

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, come and see. And I beheld and Io a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, a measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, come and see.

8 And I looked and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth."

(chapter 6, Book of Revelation)

Being no expert in religious text, I can only take this symbolical account at its most superficial level, which is enough for the matter that concerns Chiziane's novel. Notes from *De Bijbel* (Willibrord translation, Katholieke Bijbelstichting, Boxtel) were equally helpful.

It is quite clear that the fourth knight is the embodiment of all the suffering mankind fears, and he will be given free hand over a part of the earth. This punishment comes with judgement (the third knight), so that if you are not among the "chosen ones" protected by God, your destiny is to endure this suffering (mind that the story-teller of the prologue, impersonates "destiny"). As concerns the two first knights, possible interpretations are more ambivalent. It can mean either war[437] or Christ, according to the established Catholic interpretation (notes of *De Bijbel*). The interpretation that fits the text under analysis here, equates the second knight with war and the first one with Christ, the saviour that can undo the deeds of the other three envoys. Moreover, when reading the Apocalypse, one notes it is the second knight who takes peace away from the earth (see bold in the transcription), while the first, though he is equally a warrior image, is a conqueror, which can be a positive epic reference to his power and to the spreading of Christianity. No evil is necessarily linked to this first knight. Moreover, being the "first", he also has a superior status, emphasised by the "white" colour of his horse, the colour that seems to represent purity in these visions, since all mentioned heavenly creatures are clothed in white linen.

Back to Paulina Chiziane's version of the Apocalypse, while evil Sianga and his companions prepare to doom the village, there are knights flying in the sky, at the sound of trumpets, above hailstorms. They are descending from the sunset, majestic, strong, remorseless and invisible. The fourth and the third knights already landed on earth and they are making arrangements to receive the second knight who waits, galloping in the curves of the wind. The function of this second knight (like the third and the fourth ones) is to serve the first knight loyally, the leader and most divine of them all. The mission that was given to the second knight is genocide.

Meanwhile, skipping careful arrangements, the gallant first knight decides to land on his own, but he is detected by the radar of the anti-aircraft brigade and a missile is shot at him, striking his horse in a paw, which makes it bleed abundantly. Though the knight is unharmed and unshaken, both horseman and beast have to make an emergency landing on a cloud. The worried knight (Christ) sends a message to Heaven for help, but help is late. At this stage of the narrative, he is left in this undecided situation, worried about his horse. Meanwhile, the second knight is preparing to land: "*the rhythm of his gallop resembles the sound of weeping, and he floats in waves of blood from innocent martyrs* (…)"[438].

The mixed military and religious references which are used to refer to the knights consistently emphasise the general metaphor that equates "war" with the Apocalypse, throughout the whole novel. That is why the first knight is recognised on earth as if he were a warplane, having a missile fired at him**.** This metaphor is significant to evoke the suffering of the people of Mozambique as the epitome of all the worse imaginable things. In this way, Chiziane defines the main topic of her novel, namely, the human, civilian price, of wider political war games. Clearly, this novel dismisses the worth of any national project as enough of a reward to pay for such horror as that inflicted on the rural populations of Mozambique. In fact, the construction of an extended metaphor mixing war references with religious scriptures establishes other parallels between history and the divine. As the reader follows the fall from innocence of the villagers of Mananga it seems that their simple village life becomes a "paradise lost", and their expulsion from Eden is the destruction of their village turning them into war refugees on the run. The only detail that does not fit the

[437] If the first knight is Christ he is conquering the world from the red knight, evil. If the first knight means "war", the second one means "civil war".

[438] "(…) o ritmo do seu galope lembra o som de soluços, e ele flutua em ondas de sangue de inocentes mártires." *Op. cit.* Chiziane, 1999: 55.

retributive justice of God's punishment is that the villagers are totally innocent. One among them sold is soul to the Devil[439], one alone, but Sianga's choice will doom all.

Another point worth is that the Apocalypse is a Catholic reference, belonging to the heritage from colonialism. Though Portuguese presence is seldom mentioned in the novel, the anti-colonial line concerning Catholicism is very clear: symbolically, the Catholic God that was brought to Africa by colonisation is the one who is sending down the knights of the Apocalypse, instead of helping people to mend their suffering lives.

In spite of this ironical re-interpretation of the protection granted by the white God, Ventos do Apocalipse does not turn to African religions either. According to the local value system represented in the novel, late rains mean the ancestors are displeased with the ways of young people, who no longer worship them, parting with tradition. But the high priest, Sianga, does not believe in these traditions either, and he only spreads the idea that it is necessary to perform a "mbelele" to take advantage of the villagers.

While presenting his plan to his co-conspirators, Sianga mentions (as bait) the corn and the chicken they will demand from everybody as payment. Since they are the elders, and Sianga was the former high priest, sure it is to them people will come asking for the "mbelele". Some of the old men find the idea repulsive. They are humble to admit they no longer know how to perform a "mbelele", and they vehemently protest on misleading people that are already desperate. Yet, Sianga manages to overcome all counter-arguments and they all end up swearing loyalty to the plan.

Chiziane partially explains a problematic relationship to God, as the product of straining circumstances. Imagined from a world of drought and starvation, even God's dignity has dwindled. To the eyes of the villagers, if there is such a divine being, one look around you will prove that you cannot rely on him for help:

"Deus é um refugiado de guerra (...) andrajoso, com o ventre farto de fome e a morrer de diarreia"

(1999: 191)

"God is a war refugee (…) in rags and dirty, with the swelled belly of the hungry and dying of diarrhea."

(my translation)

Nevertheless, though rejected, abused and disbelieved, Gods still mean "last hope", in desperation. It is the villagers' necessity to believe that they will get help, even if supernatural, that makes them so vulnerable to the idea of the "mbelele". They eagerly crave it, once they hear of it. It becomes the subject of every talk and even the sceptics relent in the end.

The "mbelele" has not been done for a while. The last time it took place, characters comment that "*grandmother says she had started menstruating*"[440], which indicates a break of several decades with these old traditions. The break with traditions really happened under the influence of both colonialism and the postcolonial Marxist-Leninist regime. It is an established historical fact that the first postcolonial government marginalised the church, ancient traditions (like initiation rituals), leisure associations, local lineage systems, and, finally, sent dissidents to re-education camps which might have been well meant but

[439] Sianga actually declares himself a worshiper of Satan. *Ibid*, 1999: 66.
[440] *Ibid*, 1999: 59.

degenerated into grim realities[441]. Consequently, from the last decades of colonialism, when Portuguese presence penetrated deeper than ever in this colony (see Appendix III), to the liberation war (a disruptive factor in itself) and the Marxist-Leninist policies of FRELIMO, there is a continuous destruction of traditional life styles and their systems of belief in Mozambique.

Government oppression directed at ancient tribal cultures has left many villagers with a fragmented, even contradictory worldview. As if trying to counterbalance this erosion of tradition, Chiziane provides a lengthy description of the ritual of the "mbelele" and its meaning, performing a work of preservation and recovery that must be urgent. Oral cultures rely on memory, not on written records, which amounts to say that they literally die with older generations. Since nowadays' youth has not been interested in learning these "*backward, primitive things*", as the young boys talking to venerable Mungoni call them, the effort of Chiziane at keeping track of a disappearing heritage sheds light on a bigger project that could accommodate other writers.

At this point in the analysis, an apparent contradiction seemed to emerge from the arguments of this novel when considered from a postcolonial frame of mind. On the one hand, Chiziane took great care in preserving traditional cultural references through her writing; on the other hand, the representatives of this traditional wisdom are the evil traitors who will doom the village. What would be the value appointed to local cultural traditions at the end of this plot? Is Chiziane supporting the erasure of first nation cultural heritages because they mislead the people, just as Sianga does? If that were the case, Chiziane's novel would escape several guidelines of interpretation suggested by postcolonial theories. All the discussion concerning self-assertion in the literature of Mozambique would have to be severed (for the analysis of this particular case) from the effort at "territorialising" postcolonial literatures. However, that would be a self-denying move for a literature that is set to reconstruct cultural heritages violently disrupted by colonisation.

I think Chiziane has chosen a third way, beyond these two apparently conflicting claims, asserting the necessity of keeping records of tradition but creating critical distance in order to interpret the wisdom these old philosophies and legends offer, without falling for blind superstition and witchcraft.

Take as an example of this selective recovery of tradition the worth of sacrifices. Sacrifices are offered during the "mbelele": a bull, a chicken and a rooster. Since Sianga and his partners are charlatans, this sacrifice is a gross and cruel waste in terms of supernatural value. This is a very important point to question the legitimacy of sacrifices, especially if they involve more than animals as suggested by the cryptic dialogue on this subject[442] that makes one think of other times, and other "mbeleles"... The plot proves the point that the "mbelele" is worthless for it brings not rain, nor was it intended to bring.

A second example, almost at the end of the novel, is the fight of the nurses against the belief that diarrhea is caused by black magic or evil eye. As long as people do not believe that it is the water of the river which is not fit to drink, the nurses will never convince the villagers to change their habits.

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[441] For a detailed study of these facts see A Experiência Socialista em Moçambique (1975-1986), by João Mosca, Instituto Piaget, Lisboa, 1999.

[442] "-I cannot see what is the problem of sacrificing a rooster and a chicken.
-Don't you understand? A rooster and a chicken.
-Oh, I see! A rooster and a chicken. That is awful. Will it be like that?
-If it has to be, so be it. The sky has to send down rain.
-And if one of your children is chosen?
-Shut up "aunt". Don't torture me.
(my translation, *op. cit.* Chiziane, Caminho, 1999: 60)

On the whole, and in spite of a critical re-evaluation of tradition, Ventos do Apocalipse drinks its inspiration from local cultural heritages, which is a very important strategy to sew together a postcolonial literature, the very identity of which has to distinguish itself from a copy of European aesthetic patterns. Furthermore, the text is "territorialised" by the described rural landscape, the life style of the villagers, the patterns of social interaction displayed in the novel, even the particular, appropriated usage of the Portuguese language. On another level, the discussion of real problems affecting Mozambique locates this postcolonial text in relation to very specific geo-political co-ordinates.

After the decision to perform a "mbelele" is settled, the council starts "witch-hunting" to purify the land. Women are turned into easy scapegoats (this point will be addressed in the next section) having to be punished for invented sins, while, for a week, villagers are expected to observe sexual abstinence, the silencing of music and the prohibition to eat any food that implies the spilling blood. The way Paulina Chiziane constructed the characters presiding over the ceremonies corrodes any credibility such a ritual might have for the cynical witch-hunting tribunal is more than pleased to purify anybody in exchange for a chicken, corn eggs or the fattest goat one has. It is mere extortion and the villagers see through that, but…just in case it may bring rain they go ahead with the offerings. In any case, Sianga is very sure he will not have to answer for anything if the drought goes on. Soon, the village will be attacked by his allies, and he expects to become the reigning despot.

A second part of Sianga's deal with the mercenaries was the recruitment of young boys to their army. He has sent his own son Manuna, together with other boys from the village, but both parents and teenagers were misled as they were told by Sianga that he had arranged a job for them at the mines in South Africa. That was not the case. The narration of the moment when the trained boys return to attack their own village is another passage where the talent in Chiziane's writing shines through. She has a unique ability to compress a very complete and balanced set of issues around one single scene, exposing a multilayered set of elements that intersect at that particular moment. Thus, through her writing technique, the reader is "activated" in a very challenging way, to understand how issues overlap and connect. For example, the moment the villagers realise what has happened to their children is the moment they come back at night to raid the village and kill their former neighbours and family. Fear, shock, disappointment and revelation are simultaneous reactions, related to different issues: the violence of war, the betrayal of Sianga, the abuse of confidence and the sad destiny of these children.

The painful circumstances that led to a massive exodus (more than five million people[443]) of the peasant populations of Mozambique to refugee camps, go beyond any pseudo-melodramatic turn of Paulina Chiziane's plot. I prefer to quote a sober account from a HEGOA[444] researcher on the activities of NGOs in Mozambique, during the rehabilitation programmes (1989, 1996):

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[443] Meredeth Turshen & Clotilde Twagiramariya (eds.), What Women Do in War Time, Zed Books Ltd, London and New York, 1998: 75.

[444] HEGOA is an expert research center on development problems and international relations between the Northern and Southern hemispheres. It belongs to the Institut for Development Studies and International Economy at the University of Euskadi (Euskal Herriko Unibersitatea). The research I am refering to was carried out by Karlos Pérez de Armiño, Guia de Reabilitação Pós-Guerra, o Processo de Moçambique e a Contribuição das ONG, HEGOA, Bilbao, 1997.

"The war strategy of RENAMO consisted of destroying the economy and all the basic services, with the intention of decreasing the support of the people to their government. That is why it was strategically important to destroy public infra-structures (means of transport, hospitals, schools) frequently attacking civilians. Terror was used as military tactic, resorting to practices of extreme cruelty, like mutilating the body of civilians"

(…)

"Though Moçambique respected thoroughly the signed agreement (Nkomati agreement), South Africa did not do the same and RENAMO intensified its raids. The agreement only meant a change of strategy from South Africa, since, from then on, instead of relying on South African relief provision, the troops had to provide for themselves, stealing guns from the army, plundering the civilian population, extorting regular payment, and building fields of forced labour."

(IV, 1.2: 37)

This tragic account of the recent history of Mozambique is necessary to put into place the connection between fictional narrative, and its similitude to real events, as a sort of "testimonio". Methodically, RENAMO mercenaries raided different villages, as it was convenient to their military movements, while as a reactive pattern, villagers run from village to village trying to escape the war zones.

The village of Mananga (the one where Sianga was the régulo) gets the news of the destruction of a nearby village, Macuácua, but these facts never make the innocent villagers pause to think that any war might ever have anything to do with them. Soon, a miserable group of refugees arrives, making the atmosphere in the village tense. The relation between the two communities is interesting on several accounts.

The fact that Chiziane opted to deal with such a theme is in contrast to the most obvious representation of racism between black and white people, which was a strong nationalist theme among the first generation of postcolonial writers. The confrontation with current postcolonial problems of rivalry between different ethnic groups has indeed been an under-represented subject, even among a second generation of postcolonial writers, probably in the wake of fears of balkanisation that would fragment the nation-state.

This is a wider issue, extensively addressed by postcolonial criticism, which is effectively handled in this novel by narrowing it down to the representation of the rivalry between two villages or clans. Patrick Chabal[445] offered the most enlightening account of the link between postcolonialism (as a historical stage) and the frequent and general accounts of ethnic conflicts happening in Africa. The first thing to consider critically is the very fact that at independence, postcolonial territories became nation-states and probably this was not the best arrangement. However, at the time, to become a nation-state (instead of, say, a federation, a set of smaller kingdoms, a group of city states) seemed the necessary option, moreover because the claim to independence was directed at another nation state, namely, the colonising state, and it was negotiated through nationalist parties[446], replicating the patterns of independence intelligible to (and recognised by) the colonisers. When the independence agreements concerning African colonies were signed, they were signed between the representatives of the colonial government and the representatives of the new government, self-fashioned as nationalist parties that represented "the will of the people".

[445] Patrick Chabal, Power in Africa, Macmillan, London, 1992, 1994b.

[446] As an instance of the strength of the hold of colonial borders mind that no secessionist movement has ever been supported by OAU (Organisation for African Unity), whose Cairo Declaration (1964) commits the new African countries to respect the borders they have at the independence moment (which are, quite often, the former colonial borders). Benyamin Neuberger, National Self-determination in Postcolonial Africa, Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., Boulder, Colorado, 1986.

Out of the necessity to invent a plausible political community, nationalists had to create a nationalist party and cement the idea of nationalist unity: "*nationalists had invented a nationalist myth*"[447]. And what reality would support the nationalist myth once independence is achieved? In fact, it appears that in the case of most African territories, there was no substance to this project. Chabal sees through the united front that most African colonies displayed when striving for independence, and exposes how "un-natural" (because truly fragmented) these nation-states were. They were not coherent at all. They were, in most cases, fragmented across other geographical, ecological, ethnic, cultural, economic, social and political sub-units. Consequently, there were many internal tensions that would certainly re-emerge, once the colonising power was expelled. A nation, to exist, has to be recognised internationally and intra-nationally: that is to say, it needs both domestic and international legitimacy. Once the international recognition was achieved (independence from European colonialism), domestic problems became a new challenge for the African postcolonial state. A serious case of "domestic fragmentation", which contradicts the nationalist myth of independence, is Chabal's explanation for many internal tensions and rivalries, which (still) affect many postcolonial African states. In terms of intra-national tension, Chabal gets the gist of a more general problem: "*the construction of the post-colonial nationality started from colonial premises. Colonial premises however, had largely been erected on the ruins of pre-colonial African nationalities*"[448]. This observation underlines the fact that during colonialism territories were kept whole under oppression. Consequently, independence meant that old pre-colonial rivalries, and also those produced by colonialism, were released at the time the new country severed its bonds from the colonial state.

The rivalry between the people of Mananga and the refugees from Macuácua is not mutual. Only the villagers resent the refugee newcomers. The refugees understand the reaction of the people of Mananga and keep to their camp on the north part of the village, revealing a more developed awareness of the sad circumstances that gathered them there. By contrast, the negative reaction of the villagers of Mananga illustrates their absolute innocence concerning "war", which is a very moving and powerful means to confront the reader with the psychological violence inflicted on these people:

"Vieram apenas para roubar-nos os alimentos, a paz e o sossego com os seus problemas. Mas onde se escondeu a nobreza desse povo? Que tipo de gente é essa capaz de abandonar a terra, os haveres, os túmulos dos antepassados por temer um conflito? As guerras existiram em todas as gerações. Eles deviam lutar e resistir, expulsar os invasores como fazem todos os povos. São um bando de cobardes, sim, em vez de mostrarem o que valem, preferem transferir os seus problemas para outra gente. A nossa terra está pobre, não tem alimentos para dar aos habitantes, como é que vai poder sustentar estes medricas que nem conhecem a lição de gratidão?"

(1999: 110)

"They just came to steal our food, peace and quiet with their problems. But what happened to the nobility of these people? What kind of people abandons their land, their possessions, the tombs of their ancestors for being afraid of a conflict? Wars took place in all generations. They should fight, resist, expel the invaders as all the peoples do. They are a bunch of cowards, yes, who, instead of showing their fibre, prefer to transfer their problems to another people. Our land is worn out, there is no food to give the village inhabitants, how can it provide for these weak characters that do not know gratitude?

(my translation)

[447] *Op. cit.* Chabal, 1994b.
[448] *Ibid.* 1994b: 122.

The above quote is very important to give ground to my claim that one of the aims of the novel is, clearly, to invite reflection on this more silent, less spectacular, aspect of war: the collective trauma affecting innocent villagers whose worldview was deeply circumscribed to their clan and their land. That is why the displacement of this civilian population is a double aggression. They not only lose their everyday, reassuring references. They lose the only available model to make meaning of their world. Once war reaches the villagers, the dimension of collective trauma is only enhanced by the inability of their rural/traditional frame of reference to define an adequate position for the "self", in relation to events. Without a sense of position it is impossible to organise defensive strategies, see alternatives, look around with hope or even plan possible futures effectively. The paralysing impact of this experience is accompanied by the parallel destruction of meaningful social dynamics, which partially explains the passive, alienated attitude of displaced people in refugee camps.

Chiziane seems to be committed to show either urban Mozambique or international audiences how sacrificial was the status of these people, in countless isolated villages, caught between a government that needs to keep the population in the area, so as to avoid effective occupation, and a terrorist army that wants to evacuate the population from the area. The plight of these villagers stands for wider national problems that postcolonial Mozambique has to confront in its process of post-war rehabilitation.

The rivalry between the two communities in the above quote, opposing a collective "us" to a collective "them" testifies to the strong feeling of "belonging to a community" or a clan, among the villagers, which explains the prominence of practices of segregation and exclusion towards foreigners. However, the moment the villagers of Mananga lose their clan, they are open to mingle with the Macuácua people since any sense of collective identity is suspended by trauma.

The raid happens during the night, very quickly, with surgical precision. Sianga still dreams of becoming "régulo" again, unaware that he has been used only to grant the mercenaries improved conditions for the attacks in the area. Several "abnormal" signs mark the beginning of the attack. Dogs haul, wind whistles, nocturnal birds of prey sing.

In this doomed night, the second knight (war) prepares to land. He rides the back of sixty men approaching the village silently, delighted to see how conveniently the other two knights who came before him (Death and her companion Hell and Judgement/Punishment) have prepared everything for his coming. "Time", always the welcoming master of ceremonies, receives the second knight as he lands, the wings of his horse gradually reducing its reactors' speed (the mixing of the image of the knights with war planes, creating a sort of cyborg product, is constant throughout the novel). They embrace, "time" and "war knight", for it is their destiny to meet at Mananga, and though these are old companions, they only exchange a few brisk words, busy as they are with the mission at hand.

In Mananga, it is "genocide", the mission of the second knight. Some young survivors are taken with the soldiers as prisoners, and the rest, whoever does not hide or escape, is killed. The huts are set on fire, everything worth being stolen is quickly assessed and taken: food, tools, clothes, candles, etc. The villagers recognise some of their children among the butchers. They come, kill, take and go, leaving destruction behind. The morning after, one single thought unites all the villagers that survived. To leave, run away, immediately. The next village, a few days (walk) away is "Monte". That is their goal. Suddenly, the people of Mananga are reproducing the behaviour they had criticised so much to the refugees from Macuácua. These last had understood their innocence, tolerated their insults (even the burying of the death from the refugee group was resented as pollution to the

land of the Mananga clan!) and waited. Now, experienced in the process of moving around to escape war, they lend a helping hand to the survivors. The two communities become one. The mental universe of the villagers of Mananga changed, utterly, in one night, forever.

This change in the relations between the two communities is a far-reaching argument for the readers of the text. It contains a humanist lesson to remember, and a much needed sense of direction to achieve an integration of different communities through solidarity. The forms of this solidarity are many, and vital. Even small practical bits of information become priceless gifts: soldiers do not return to the same place immediately, there is time to bury the dead, pick whatever can be salvaged from the remains, look for lost cattle around the village, wait for the freshness of night to walk. But before that, people want justice, and the Macuácua group leaves the villagers of Mananga to settle their revenge: the secretary of the party has no problems in having Sianga shot on the spot, after a summary trial.

The second part of the novel is devoted to the exodus of the villagers, and their journey, on foot, across the savannah until they reach the village of Monte, twenty-one days later. Sixty survivors leave the village of Mananga. Forty will arrive to Monte: apart from two deaths because of wild animals (a lioness and a snake), adults succumb to diarrhea and children starve. On the way, they find the remains of other groups who met with the mercenaries. Extreme cruelty marks those silent testimonies. The refugees learn to covet the protection of shadowy vegetation, travelling silently, avoiding much needed rivers to hide from feared troops. Two abandoned infants are picked, the wounded dressed and transported, the dead quickly buried, while there still is energy to do so.

When the villagers reach Monte, they are a skinny, dirty, sexless, ageless group. Other refugees have been arriving before, in waves (which makes of the story of the villagers of Mananga an example of a generalised process), and the established habit of receiving foreigners already has changed the once traditional patterns of clan segregation. The reception reserved to the refugee group is quite the opposite of the one they had offered the Macuácua people: they are warmly accepted, fed, treated and dressed[449]. Many of those living in Monte know, from experience, what the newcomers must have been through. For Minosse, one of the survivors of the walk, life gains new meaning as she collects three orphans from the streets. Her new family brings her happiness and strength to recover. Everything seems set for a happy ending, especially after the good harvest. There is no hunger, people have medicine and clothes, and the land has produced so much that the peasants feel their fears and wounds healing.

This time, the link to the mercenaries is a young woman who fell madly in love with one of them[450]. They use her to spy on the village of Monte, waiting for the information that harvest is done, a fictional twist in the plot that certainly repeats a lived pattern. Remember that without South African relief provisions, mercenaries had to provide their own food. It is the beginning of a familiar scene, for both reader and characters. The novel ends with the beginning of another attack, implying a successive repetition of the same story, from Macuácua to Mananga, from Mananga to Monte. The rates of millions of displaced individuals in post-war Mozambique loom large in the guessed future of this last scene.

[449] From a postcolonial perspective, it is relevant to mention that references to international aid in the novel fall under an ironical note. Though it is desperatly needed, a few older men think of colonial times and wonder, suspiciously, at the price Mozambique might be paying for this aid because "filho de peixe é peixe, e filho de cobra, cobra é" (1999: 234, *the children of fish are fish and the children of snakes, snakes remain)*. Those who experienced colonialism find hard to believe this help.

[450] The story of this character resembles the third tale of the prologue "Massupai's Ambition" ("A Ambição de Massupai).

As for the secondary narrative, the one concerning the Apocalypse, it has its own conclusion in the very last paragraph of the text. Finally, the first knight decides it is enough of this punishment on mankind. He sets his horse to land, for it is time to intervene, bringing mercy on the sad destiny of the people who went through so many trials. As his horse is millimetres from the ground it suddenly withdraws its paws, recoiling from it. Disobeying his master, the horse beats his wings and flies up, back to the clouds, leaving the first knight baffled. Christ is totally confused, not knowing what to do to control this unexpected situation. Below, the baptism of fire goes on. This last cynical image has political connotations. Just as the Apocalipse is beyond the control of Christ, and whatever has been set loose on earth will not be stopped, so should those who think they control any war, think twice before releasing their knights.

III.3.2 Bride Price and Witch Hunting

From the point of view of sexual difference theories, I considered the disruptive effects of war on sense of identity, looking at the particular way it affects women[451]. Certainly, the loss of children and family is as painful an experience for men as it is for women, but the consequences for Mozambican women are different. Since motherhood is the basis of self-assertion and pride for the represented women, the loss of children means a loss of self-hood, as it is conceived in feminine terms, in the represented culture. The point is that in polygamous households, as is the case in the represented rural world, women belong to the family they are married to, having a single man as husband. Men, on the contrary are free to search for more wives as long as they can afford them, which means that in the case of a tragedy, a father can turn to another of his "families" for emotional support, while women do not have this plural set of alternatives. And, in war contexts, tragedies do happen.

Widespread conflict also led to the dislocation of massive numbers of people inside Mozambique, as refugees. Again, integration is easier for men because men repeatedly start new families with much younger wives, in the new places they move to. This means that the social habits of the described society make it easier for men to reconstruct their family life, and, consequently, their sense of "self" and "belonging". How are widowed women expected to solve their emotional crisis, if the patriarchal system favours the acquisition of virgin, young wives? Is the ageing body condemned to solitude? How do these women re-adjust? As far as mothering is concerned, Chiziane constructs a plot where the possibility of adopting war orphans, answers, in a positive way, to the invisibility of the ageing body in terms of heterosexual family organisation.

Another issue that is especially oppressive for women is the "lobolo" ceremony. As this is a social ritual, I thought gender would prove a better concept to think of this point. The "lobolo" is common practice in most regions of Mozambique and it consists of the price a man pays for a wife to her family. The money of the first period in the mines of South Africa is usually spent in marrying the first wife[452]. If the husband dies, women are inherited, together with other property. If the marriage breaks down, the husband owns the children.

Chiziane's novel includes a "lobolo" ceremony. It involves the whole family as witnesses of the spoken agreement between the father of the bride and the groom, or the family of the groom. This agreement creates a compromise for a future wedding between the

[451] The critical anthology Gender & Catastrophe, though not directly related to Mozambique, was important to develop my awareness of the complex and unexpected ways war, genocide or the Holocaust can affect women. Ronit Lentin (ed.), Zed Books, 1997.

[452] Joseph Hanlon, Mozambique the Revolution under Fire, Zed Books Ltd. London and New Jersey, 1984, 1990: 150.

concerned man and woman. In exchange for the gift of a bride, the groom is supposed to give a present to the family of the bride. The whole ceremony does not have to be interpreted as a business transaction, but that is what it is. The "lobolo" settles the discussion of a bride price.

Sianga, one of the main characters, has a teenage daughter, Wusheni, who is physically mature enough to be given away as a bride. The young girl provokes libidinous thoughts in the old man but, luckily, Sianga is too old to try anything. As he thinks of her desirability and his impotence, a third idea occurs to him. He may make a good business on the girl's good looks. The patriarchal logic of Sianga's reasoning concerning Wusheni will be confirmed as a wider social phenomenon by the way the "lobolo" affair develops. I call the logic of the whole "lobolo" ceremony "patriarchal" because it denies the bride any agency in deciding her future. She is not looked at as an individual with a will, dignity and recognised rights, at least not in this context. The father of the bride decides for her on the marriage agreement.

In life, Wusheni will certainly find ways to cope, negotiate and get a share of power and agency in her community, as many women before her did. I am not implying that peasant women from Mozambique would be devoid of personality. The problem is that symbolically, during this ceremony, men are in a superior position in the worldview of this culture (which confirms it as patriarchal), for brides are given away in a discussion that takes place between men. And just as daughters have to obey fathers, they are expected to obey husbands. Wusheni will eventually prove a very strong woman, and one with her own strategies to settle her future, but that is represented as an exception in the whole standard development of events, which establishes the (often forced) object/merchandize status of brides as the norm.

Sianga's plan is to marry the young girl to Muianga, a rich old man of the village. In this household, Wusheni would be the fifth wife, a position that does not promise a great margin of happiness for her future since she will have to deal with four other wives from a position of inferiority that sanctions abuse. Minosse, a caring mother, is horrified at the ill-conceived plan. She does not see how Sianga can think this is a good option for the girl. The point is that Sianga is not thinking of the girl, but rather in the amount of cows he will get for her.

Wusheni is in love with Dambuza, a street boy that was brought up on indifference and segregation (he is not from the clan, so people do not even salute him in the street). These strong practices of social exclusion concerning the "foreign boy" will be translated, in gendered terms to little tolerance to deviance. Wusheni broke every rule in falling in love with Dambuza. The couple is planning to run away together, but the date of the "lobolo" ceremony is settled before they can go ahead with their plan.

In the day of the "lobolo", family arrives at sunset (some non invited guests reclaim they are family members and appear as well). All of them come for the food that will be served, once the "lobolo" agreement is settled. Against a background of starvation, that is their only concern, eloquently illustrated by the quick catch of a passing mouse, stored in an aunt's basket, for supper. While people wait, chatting absent-mindedly, Wusheni prepares for "catastrophe"[453]. She will say no, and then "*virão as cenas de pancadaria, insultos, gritos, lágrimas, o socorro da vizinhança alvoroçada, comentários e má língua das comadres no dia seguinte, as intrigas e o resto"* ("the usual scenes of beating, insults, screams, tears, the intervention by excited neighbours, comments, gossip among the "aunts" for the next days, conspiracies and everything else"[454]). This comment establishes that brides

[453] *Op. cit.* Chiziane, 1999: 80.
[454] *Ibidem.*

do protest, but the community has an extensive set of means to convince them, and it certainly takes inner strength to stand up to these threats.

Sianga presides over the discussion of the "lobolo". He starts by declaring he has gathered everybody to settle the future of his children: the boys are going to South Africa to work in the mines (it is a lie for he his giving them to be trained as mercenaries, which is a part of the deal to become king again) and Wusheni is going to be married. As her father, Sianga wants to reap the reward for the "trouble of raising her" ("*todas as canseiras que suportamos pelo seu crescimento*"[455]. This formulation of the speech is extremely insulting for Wusheni, but settles the point Sianga wants to make, namely, that he should be highly compensated for his daughter. At this stage, Wusheni interrupts her father to declare she will not marry. Four times she rejects her suitor, leading to a very embarrassing dead end in the discussion of bride price. Sianga leaves the hut, asking the men to come away with him, while the elder women "convince that bitch" ("*Trata de convencer essa cabra"*[456]*)*. The women eagerly set to their task, intent on the small share of the "lobolo" they will get as payment for their "work". The traditional gesture of inviting the collaboration of elder women is considered a first "good mannered attempt". As older women fail to convince the strong-minded teenager, Sianga resorts to violence, the equally traditional second option. As Sianga is too old to perform physical punishment, Wusheni's older brother, Manuna, is called "to show the girl the law" ("*mostra-lhe a lei*"[457]). Manuna loves the opportunity to exhibit his maleness through violence and he beats her until she faints. Then it is the old women's turn again, with good words, working their victim psychologically, while they dress her bleeding wounds. Finally, Wusheni gambles her last card: she whispers a confession of pregnancy trading social exclusion for freedom. Minosse is happy with her daughter's resilience and blesses her choice, while the father declares her dead to the clan.

Later on, in the night of the raid to the village, Wusheni is killed, leaving Minosse childless, for Manuna became a boy soldier in the hands of the mercenaries. This turn of events in Minosse's life is an expression of the disruption of family life, and women's consequent loss of a functional sense of identity, which I mentioned above in relation to sexual difference theories. Women are affected in this particularly deep way because the patterns of social life do not offer them a second chance to reconstruct family life, easily. Significantly, Minosse is temporarily insane, until she adopts three street orphans. The moment she becomes a mother again, she recovers her sanity.

There is another point in the novel that is worth analysing from a feminist angle. After the decision to perform the "mbelele" is taken, the elders claim it is necessary to purify the land. "Purify" means to insult women, especially those without the protection of a man. The accusations are either gossip of licentious sexual behaviour or witchcraft, obviously two accusations that are sustainable on the most whimsical "piece of evidence" (that is, prejudice and misogyny) and, because of the nature of this "evidence", almost impossible to be counter argued. "Purification" starts with an attack on widows who are accused of having ritually killed their husbands. These wise older women simply confess, totally aware of the mechanics of the game: once they confess, the court of moralists will ask for a chicken, corn or a goat to absolve her sins, and she will be not bothered nor the accusation remembered. It is mere extortion, and women know it, but they are in a powerless position: no one wants to listen to "truth" if what the villagers are after (through these rituals) is the dream that rain will come. On the contrary, naïve women who come forward to complain that their husbands

[455] *Ibid,* 1999: 82.
[456] *Ibid.* 1999: 83.
[457] *Ibid*em.

insist on sleeping with them during the purification period are, naturally, blamed. Why? Because there are two involved in rape, so, they have to bring the court a chicken to be forgiven for their sexual allure and prevent curses on their family. The passage on this sort of "inquisition" could not be more ironical[458] towards male authority, denouncing patriarchy as self-serving institution without any claim to usefulness, truth, coherence or dignity. It is a vile show performed by second-rate actors, but it is enough: a whole traditional power structure stands behind them.

[458] *Ibid,* 1999: 92 -106.

Conclusions to Part III

Following the critical guidelines defined in part I, the above Lusophone texts were read with the intention of extracting from their lines a set of arguments and suggestions which contribute to perfect and enhance available feminist theories and our shared universe of references concerning the perception of women's issues in their different shades across geo-political, situated, cultural locations.

A feminist reading of Chiziane's novel had the merit of refining one's sensitivity to women's problems in post-war Mozambique. As priority in rehabilitation agendas, Chiziane claims the re-integration of older women, without family or clan connections, isolated in a kind of society where sense of identity is deeply communal and collective. This particular problem, less obvious than rape and displacement, is a good example of the extra value of the sensitive accounts offered by fictional micro-worlds, because seen through the "embodied experiences" of a particular character, the set of topics the writer decided to address illustrate unexpected angles of more general problems. Through literature, highly complex and abstract issues become personal, "felt" accounts, and new complications and implications are revealed.

As the reader follows Minosse, through loss, dislocation and terror, one confronts the impact of war on elderly women, whose struggle to survive is not compensated by eventual peace of mind and gradual re-integration. In close-knit family structures, in a rural landscape, there is not much a society can offer a childless individual, unrelated to any local clan. Without children and a house to care for (the two time structuring and meaningful activities for village women), survival often leaves women with a depressive emptiness. The subtle and enlightening argument of Ventos do Apocalipse is not that women suffer more than men. The point is that they have fewer opportunities to start again since the ageing body is not coded as eligible for a second marriage (and the corresponding integration in a new clan). The adoption of street kids is a happy and meaningful twist of the plot, while it also leads the reader to consider this other sad heritage of war.

It may seem that the particular perception of women's problems only amounts to a small shift in the comprehension of the overall picture, but it is a necessary shift because the problems of invisibility and exclusion of the ageing body are a current issue in post-war contexts, and the subtlety of these problems is what makes them escape identification from a point of view which is not gender oriented. While the recovering society easily accepts that older men start new lives with younger women, for older women, although this possibility is equally sanctioned, the problem is that a second wedding is often a difficult option due to the preference for younger brides. This amounts to say that women will need extra forms of support.

Another topic of feminist interest in the novel is the sanctioned violence showered upon women by traditional power structures. In the social world represented by Paulina Chiziane to beat a woman is so usual that no available social code refrains men from doing it. For instance, in the "lobolo" ceremony, if the bride does not accept the groom after the "good mannered first attempt" at convincing the girl with words, beating and insult are taken as the obvious optional method to make the young woman conform to "the law" of the group.

It is remarkable the choice of the writer to address such unexpected angles in the frame of post-war Mozambique (the ageing body and sanctioned physical violence), because Chiziane refrains from representing rape and kidnapping, the other two forms of abuse of the women's body that are already acknowledged and dealt with by governmental rehabilitation

efforts. That is probably the reason why she dealt with these subtler matters, expanding the reader's perception beyond the more stereotypical, expected problems.

The intertextual resonance between the pieces written by Dina Salústio and Orlanda Amarílis confirm the representation of the archipelago of Cape Verde as a more liberated location than India or Mozambique. The high degree of mobility that characterises the life-style of the islands breaks with the permanence of tight forms of social control, because these can be escaped while abroad. Nevertheless, both writers react against a too tight communal life in the small town atmosphere of the archipelago, where the shelter provided by a certain anonymity would be welcome. Dina Salústio goes further than Amarílis in her impatience with the narrow horizon of insular mentalities creating a very provocative and even insulting allegory against communities that are not open to changes and innovation.

Orlanda Amarílis also defends the necessity of accepting changes, moving along the spirit of the time. By representing strong generation gaps between characters, Amarílis marks the volatile nature of codes of respectability that once were unquestionable. The different mentalities displayed by older and younger characters suggest that the more liberated atmosphere of the archipelago may be a recent acquisition, especially because she includes in the represented social world a reference to "respectable families" with a conservative influence in society. Dina Salústio repeats this same snapshot of high-class prejudice associating the preservation of women's purity to the assertion of social borders, creating distance from lower, "undisciplined" classes. Because of remarkable similarities in their representation of the archipelago, both Cape Verdean writers reinforce each other's voice.

The three Lusophone writers addressed here seem more connected to the problems of working class people and less favoured sectors of the society than their Indo-English counterparts. This was the biggest difference between the two groups of writers, apart from those that are a reflex of a distinctive socio-cultural context. The everyday struggle for survival was definitively more visible in the Lusophone texts, in more basic and pragmatic forms.

With the exception of Dina Salústio, the writers addressed in part III seem more concerned to write collectively shared problems, investing less in individual sensitivity and private self-awareness as strategies of feminist resistance.

While among the Indian writers, Ghita Hariharan is the "professional myth-maker", in the Lusophone set, it is Dina Salústio who creates new figurations. Her madwoman and her companion midwife reverse established sexist prejudice, claiming the worth of unreason and women's closeness to nature and its cycles as forms of empowerment.

The postcolonial component of this study shifted the way I looked at collective patterns of identity in the represented societies, not so exclusively attuned to the position of women. Although both critical points of view are related, they direct my attention to different details.

In Ilhéu dos Pássaros an anthology of short stories marked by mobility between the archipelago and other countries, Orlanda Amarílis gradually composes a stable image of Cape Verde, as it is remembered from abroad or from a past period. In this way, Orlanda Amarílis elaborates a notion of Cape Verdean identity that incorporates mobility and de-territorialisation (in fact, the experience of emigration of half of its citizens) by becoming an "imagined community", as emulated by the constant memories of "home" that haunt all the characters of the short stories. Secondly, the amiable Creole culture represented by Amarílis negotiates its hybrid identity in non-problematic ways reflecting on the wrongs of its

colonial past while it asserts its half African identity. Thirdly, the clearest hedge of resistance in the anthology comes from the inscription of continuities between colonial period and postcolonial consolidation, with the same histories of dispossession and privilege. This continuity spells out neo-colonial threats, projecting the necessity of the same activist attitude of the past liberation struggle for the future self-preservation of the archipelago.

Dina Salústio writes a fantastic text that is less limited to the realities of the Cape Verde. The ideas she discusses have a more general range of application as they can be meaningful to analyse any isolated community, committed to the deliberate preservation of insularity, not as a geographical matter to be compensated by improved means of travelling, but as mental barriers that close people to the "other", and the new ideas the confrontation with otherness may bring.

At the same time, the tense relationship between city and village, the central dichotomy in her novel, invites reflection on the increasing gap between urban centres of decision and planning, and the marginal rural communities, ever more detached from the "big" urban world. While the novel encourages villagers to transgress borders and join the city, taking part in the full complexity of modern life (for the rewards it brings are worth the anxiety of adaptation), it also unfolds a critical argument against the way the urban world of the XXst century is dismissive of the fragility and the rights of communities under its guard.

Paulina Chiziane's representation of the plight of war as the Apocalypse for the people of Mozambique establishes once more the power of literature to promote insights on complex realities. I can only praise her willingness to confront readers with a view of recent events the impact of which is so immense.

As a piece of postcolonial literature, Chiziane's novel posed interesting theoretical challenges as it contradicted some of the main categories in the postcolonial frame presented in part I. In the first place, any contribution to international dialogues devoted to a western revision of colonial mentalities, reflection on past history and resistance to neo-colonial practices, though mentioned in isolated passages, are virtually absent from the main themes addressed by Chiziane. This matter was easily settled because there is an intra-national dimension to postcolonial literatures which functions in an autonomous way, beyond "writing back" to the west. Still, though she deals with the local national context, Chiziane does not offer nationalist arguments. On the contrary, her novel is a stern critique to the civilian price paid by "the nation" in its management of power rivalries in relation to neighbour countries. Yet again, Chiziane produces discourses that are very relevant to consolidate a sense of collective identity in Mozambique as she represents the fusion of different clans of villagers, helping each other as refugees. This is a very important idea because it encourages hope and the effort at healing deep internal scars, balancing internal (ethnic and regional) rivalries enhanced by civil war.

Another relevant point to consider Ventos do Apocalipse from a postcolonial perspective is to analyse the way it deals with issues of identity, self-assertion and self-definition, bearing in mind that postcolonial literatures have deconstructed cultural borders between communities with the same energy as they map and promote them. This ambivalence is very visible in emigrant writing, connected to diaspora and to the expression of experiences of de-territorialisation. It is less common on narratives of consolidation and self-assertion. Chiziane's novel handled a similar contradiction, between writing the destruction of the nation and asserting its identity, in a very interesting way, as her effort at recording disappearing traditions and rituals establishes a cultural heritage that projects a past identity to the future. At the same time, while writing about war, Chiziane represents the suspension of functional patterns of collective identity among displaced and traumatised communities.

The bitter tone of the last novel about Mozambique reproduces a more general change of mood in the current second generation of postcolonial writers, especially in post-war African contexts where the disappointment in relation to the liberation ideals is widespread.

Finally, a note on the appropriation of the Portuguese language by these postcolonial writers: while Paulina Chiziane and Orlanda Amarílis insert terms from local languages in their texts in Portuguese, creating a dialogue between the two linguistic systems, Dina Salústio writes standard Portuguese, erasing deliberate appropriation from her text.

General Conclusions

The analysis of the above texts has allowed a display of the mechanics of different patriarchies, in different locations, outlining the way these social structures determine a social position for women. Through the representation of the micro-universes of a set of characters, a whole, wider social landscape has been brought before the eyes of the reader, as character is made to move and interact in a social background. With the lighter exception of Cape Verde, represented by the two writers as a society that, regardless of its somewhat stern codes of respectability, grants women easy access to education and professional life, the two other locations, Mozambique and India, displayed a more constrained world, in spite of variation across different communities or ethnic groups. In these two later cases women are objectified and disposed of, regardless of their will. In the rural world of Mozambique women are regarded as an asset to be traded through the discussion of bride price, and, at least among Indian high caste or high-class communities, women are exchanged among a set of families to protect lineage borders and provide the coherence of communities. Both of these behaviours imply a point of view that does not recognise to women the same "value" as men. Though women share the same society and families with men, they are rated "second class", as property in rural Mozambique, as a burden (because of dowry) in several sectors of the multicultural world of the Indian subcontinent.

The changes suggested by the writers analysed in this study do not amount to a denial of (patriarchal) cultural traditions, advocating an impossible clean break with the patterns of collective identity in the societies they live. Instead, what these writers demonstrate is that is possible to resist, negotiate and rebel. The promotion of forms of feminist awareness and the encouragement to risk deviant behaviours, or at least resist accommodation, are expected to provoke, by themselves a reform in dominant mentalities, allowing for a necessary re-interpretation of traditions.

In the spirit of Githa Hariharan's re-writing of The Thousand and One Nights, what these writers offer, though in different ways (that range from eroding the credibility of "respectability", to the demand for greater legal protection and widespread recognition of the affective needs of daughters and ageing widows) is ways to revise what wisdom or model of organisation was articulated by old established knowledge, shifting the basic grounds for new ideas to a less misogynous point of view. Social reform and less cruel interpretations of tradition would thus be possible.

Contrary to current accusations of "westernisation"[459], by the most conservative sectors of these postcolonial societies, what is at stake in the committed writing of a literature attuned to women's issues is a participation in current social transitions, brought about by the constant flow and exchange of information in our media world, together with the increasing incorporation of technology in people's life styles. Modernisation has an unavoidable social impact. However, modernisation does not mean erasure of local identity, reducing it to a replica of western society. The proof is that everywhere all over the world (where a natural process of modernisation has not been reversed by a fundamentalist intervention) each region is finding its own adapted formulas, mixing local and global, to produce their own special glocalised brand of situated modernity. Somehow, in this natural process, women's changing social position is resented by conservative, traditional minded sectors, as if historical change could be contained in isolated spheres of influence. The fact

[459] On this subject see Uma Narayan, Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions and Third World Feminism, Routledge, London, 1995: 209-228.

that all the texts mention strong conflicts across generation gaps is a point that confirms the pace of quick change across the time span of the last decades, confirming that changes in traditional role models are already happening.

The awareness of different interpretations of modernity, permeated by material circumstances and systems of belief is important to think current feminist theories and agendas, and what is more, to understand how one's theories can be problematic for others. With this research I hope to have contributed to defend the importance of a mental discipline that is willing to shrink western theoretical frames to their more or less restricted range of application, in dialogue with unexpected views and alternative priorities. In this way, the fundamental importance of investing in cultural translation across different geographies is thus proved, and a bigger responsibility falls on the shoulders of writers, the most gifted translators of all.

Apart from mapping the mechanics of local patriarchies, the novels analysed in this study also offered an impressive set of resisting characters, figurations of deviance and survival. Characters like Sonali, Ammu, Rahel, Shahrzad, Dilshad, Dunyazad, Luna Cohen, the midwife, the madwoman, Filipa, Minosse and Wusheni amount to a resourceful, creative and seductive set of new role models that map a distance from more accommodating women, or from endurance of abusive males, within each of their respective worlds.

Since I am dealing with a second generation of writers, writing a few decades after independence, the nationalist struggle no longer is a central issue. This amounts to say that all of the selected writers moved away from topics related to nationalism or nativism, as if these were not reliable allies for the set of arguments they wanted to address in their fiction, either in terms of the postcolonial context of the nation-state or concerning women's issues. In fact, both nationalism and nativism are rigid, purist concepts, and, in this way, uninteresting to think reform, social criticism and improvement.

Evidence that moving away from certain abusive or demanding traditions is not writing against the consolidation of one's national or communal identity is provided by all the self-assertive gestures contained in the novels of the above discussed women.

Countering Obioma Nnaemeka's[460] fears that nationalist politics would de-politicise women's politics, the work of these writers brings back an extensive set of women's issues to the forum of postcolonial debates. Though nationalism subsumed women's activism, it is coming back, and with a vengeance. The studied writers represent a vanguard to think future improvements in women's rights and status.

The main difference between the Indo-English writers and the Lusophone writers addressed in this study is due to class perspective. Lusophone writers are closer to everyday people, though mobile along social classes and hierarchies. Even though Roy is very concerned with untouchability, Sahgal with working class people and Hariharan with the lives of the people of the city (outside the walls of the palace) the three of them have a perspective of events from above, where the struggle for everyday survival has not been felt, nor is it narrated. In this sense, Chiziane's war refugees, Amarilis' working class emigrants and Salústio's villagers are narrators of more "popular" lives and perspectives. Consequently, the agendas for change and reform imagined by the writers in part II and part III, address women from different social classes.

Other relevant differences between the arguments put forward by each of the women writers have to be assessed while reading the analysis of the literary pieces, because only by travelling conceptually to the patriarchal world represented in each narrative can one realise

[460] Obioma Nnaemeka, The Politics of (M)othering, Womanhood, Identity and Resistance in African Literature, Routledge, London, New York, 1997.

how complex is the organisation of systems of power intimately linked to life styles, geography, family structure and dominant goals or priorities in life.

With this work, I have tried to construct a sort of cosmopolitan geo-political literacy in terms of feminist issues, which has to start from humble curiosity and openness to be confronted and questioned. Only through this confrontation with other cultures, comparing life-styles and priorities, can women achieve much needed insights to negotiate alliances, shared commitments and consensual thought. In other words, this work contributes to fragment any rigid idea that a universally shared interest or identity is a pre-given reality. Alliances are certainly possible, but you have to start by establishing what connects different groups of women. Otherwise, the under-assessment of differences will always cancel the possibility of any productive alliance because it will not start from a realistic basis. A lot of work still waits the European intellectual committed to contribute to a wider recognition of the importance of differences in the co-ordination of efforts to make of this world a better place for more people. To begin with, you have to ask yourself if you even know what this "better place" would look like to the eyes of those you have to share your planet and resources with, hopefully in peace.

Another of the strategic lessons for the production of feminist theories confirmed (once more) by this study, is that women's issues cannot be understood in isolation from other cultural and political factors (that is why the combined approach with postcolonial theories proved useful). In relation to India, it became obvious that women's issues have to be managed in relation to Muslim-Hindu rivalry and the frame of caste aristocracies while for the African cases, economic progress is a pre condition for further advancement (and the west has clear responsibilities in this process, if really committed to help). In war-ravaged scenarios, adequate programmes for post war rehabilitation, sensitive to women's problems, have to be urgently developed. As Cheryl Johnson-Odin[461] said, it is odd that western debates on African feminism repeatedly discuss circumcision forgetting about nutrition, infant mortality, illiteracy, health-care delivery and skill training, equally relevant areas for the addressed women.

The theoretical model presented in part I proved productive to identify key themes and topics that the selected novels addressed in particular ways. This coincidence between a set of guidelines working as magnifying glasses to note different angles of the text and react to several levels of its content was rewarding. The set of postcolonial concepts I used in this research expanded my comprehension of postcolonial literatures creating sensitivity to a quite comprehensive set of ideas. I also think critical theory permitted the creation of a more organised platform to compare diverse writers, creating intertextual dialogues between their texts.

I had no problems in adapting a stable set of abstract theories to six diverse instances of postcolonial literature because I did not use these concepts to construct a table of classifications or a pattern of similarity. Since the texts dictated which concepts among the general set seemed the most relevant to read each of the literary pieces. I never imposed any rigid pattern to my analysis. On the contrary, it was stimulating to think why such a concept as collective identity, narrated through literature as a pedagogic discourse of social reference was so much more productive than nationalism and nativism. The fact that I chose to deal with a second generation of postcolonial writers explains the loss of appeal in the two later categories, as a post-euphoria feeling of disappointment is setting in southern regions. By contrast, all the writers tried to construct some alternative form of community or collective

[461] Cheryl, Johnson-Odin, "Common Themes, Different Contexts" *in* op. cit. Mohanty, Russo and Torres, 1991.

allegiance, even if it was through the creation of dissenting characters, looking for their own alternatives niches. Similarly, categories like self-assertion and resistance where much more productive than hybridity for the cases analysed here. India does not promote hybridity as it lives fragmented across multicultural compartments. Post-war Mozambique is trying to reconstruct a functional society from scratch, promoting discourses of unity and co-operation - in the future, it may be a multicultural or a hybrid society (it depends on how the little pieces and the diverse cultural references relate to each other), but at this stage, hybridity is a hypothesis that only time and rehabilitation projects can answer. On the contrary, cultural self-assertion through the recovery of traditional heritages is a current project, and all of the selected writers co-operated with it albeit in different ways.

In the case of Cape Verde, hybridity seems to be outshined by a craved cosmopolitanism. Both of the two writers studied above encourage openness to change and nurture innovation as an important source of vitality and balance for the future identity of the archipelago.

The shifting set of issues addressed in this research, as the study moved across different locations and different arguments was intended to confront my own Eurocentric limits, trying to establish a critical dialogue with voices speaking from a different worldview (mind that I said "dialogue with", not "speak for" or "appropriate"). In the sections where I developed a critical analysis of the selected texts, I follow a close reading method, letting each writer speak for herself, and I mark my own reactions to this voice, so that the reader can follow both of our lines of reasoning and decide for himself/ herself of the worth of this dialogue in terms of the information and insights it offers.

Postcolonial literatures definitively emerged from the above analysis as committed writing, the loyalties of which are clearly grounded, and not de-territorialised at all. This aspect may deserve a further comparative study with diaspora literatures from emigrant communities, since these are more inspired by liminality, in-betweeness and hybridity. However, when dealing with national and regional dimensions of postcolonial literature, self-assertion, resistance and the loyalty that prompts stern social criticism (because it expresses a well-intended effort to improve circumstances) define very clear co-ordinates to understand current, situated postcolonial identities.

The combined approach articulating feminism and postcolonial issues expanded the ability of this study to understand more deeply diverse dimensions of the considered postcolonial location. The intersection of the two critical models illuminated unexpected angles of the researched themes, shedding light on particular symbiotic links that would have remained invisible if it were not for this kind of study.

Theoretically it was a good exercise to manage borders between different (though compatible) critical models. You are provoked into problematising your methods of work and your research objects in productive ways, wondering what is the best option to approach the main issues encountered in each literary work. Actually, the answer to this question was very interesting because there is never any confusion between the priorities of the different critical models. The same scene can mean different things and stand for different arguments. I just had to develop my discipline to change critical lenses in a coherent way, which sometimes was a bit of a schizophrenic experience. The final point in this line of argument is that the since none of the two critical frames proved redundant, and since no analysis exhausted all the arguments of each text, then, critical approaches that had followed a single theoretical orientation would have produced a more partial perception of the research object.

I want to finish this study with a sentence from the Mozambican writer Mia Couto. It invokes the main reasons which made me feel I wanted to learn to look at the world through postcolonial literatures, unlearning Eurocentric habits of thought that still determine a

tradition of segregation of differences, a biased working discipline and arrogant limits on what to learn:

> "Só um mundo novo nós queremos: o que tenha tudo de novo e nada de mundo."
> "Only a new world we covet: that in which everything is new and nothing worldly."
>
> Mia Couto[462]

[462] Mia Couto, Cada Homem é Uma Raça, Caminho, Lisboa, 1990.

Appendix I

Portuguese Colonialism and the Context of the Independence Wars

Portuguese colonialism had roughly three phases: in the XVth and XVIth centuries it was a mercantile network devoted to the spice trade, with India as the key overseas contact. New European competitors made this business less profitable and risky. As a reaction, from the XVIth to the XIXth centuries Portugal rather concentrated its initiatives in Brazil, becoming, for all pragmatic purposes, a "monocoloniser". This strong investment in Brazil absorbed the limited demographic resources of Portugal[463] and motivated the massive transportation of slaves from Africa to Brazil. The independence of Brazil (in 1822) marks the beginning of a new phase in Portuguese imperial policies. It is at this stage that Portugal starts taking its African colonies more seriously. Angola was going to be the new key possession during the rest of the XIXth and XXth centuries.

The nineteenth century was the moment when it became obvious how "decadent" the Portuguese empire was because this is the moment when organised exploitation of the colonised territories and people starts on another scale, enhanced by industrialisation and a growing international capitalism. Portugal delayed its own industrialisation (until the 1950s), missing the transition to the next stage of colonialism. Beyond late industrialisation, another factor that distinguished Portuguese colonisation is its fragmentary nature, since it was made of a set of colonies in distant, different parts of the globe, and Portugal had fewer demographic resources in terms of settlers and administrators. The trade network created by the Portuguese was organised around key points and one of the main strategies to keep a stronger Portuguese hold on a particular spot was to marry some settlers with local women thus creating family bonds that made the Portuguese welcome and supported. This fact made Portuguese presence "fade" into the local landscape, keeping its colonial network subtler, less visible to rival eyes.

As Ania Loomba put it:

> "The Spanish in America and the Portuguese in India settled down in the lands they colonised, adopted local manners and inter-married in a way that the English derided. (...) Class was also an important factor in inter-racial marriages, with poorer "casados" marrying locally and the elite keeping mistresses, but also maintaining their marriages in Portugal. (...) British colonialism, on the other hand, did not allow for easy social or sexual contact with local peoples."
>
> (Ania Loomba[464])

Many of the Portuguese settlers indeed became part of the land where they settled. The easy fortunes the Portuguese made did not help to keep strong ties to Portugal, where they had been poor, marginalised or arrested and deported (another strategy to increase the scarce number of settlers). Bluntly put, the successful plantation owners of Brazil, the inland warlords controlling a local set of caravans and business routes and the sea merchants who retired to Goa once they had "made it" trading along the Eastern coast of Africa were not dreaming of returning to Portugal. They married local women, raised families and traded. To the eyes of Portuguese authorities, the problem was how to manage this trade network and

[463] Portuguese population in 1527: 1.100.000 to 1.400.000 (vol. III, page 180), in 1640: 1.300.000 to 1.500.000 (vol. IV, page 183), in 1801: 2.931.930, in 1854: 3. 499.121, in 1890: 4. 660.095. (vol. V, page: 425). *In* José Mattoso (ed.), História de Portugal, Editorial Estampa, Lisboa, 1997.

[464] *Op. cit*. Loomba, 1998: 110, 111.

keep it profitable for the metropole first and foremost. Even the organisation of a functional administrative network alone was the source of a constant demographic haemorrhage, spreading emigrants all over the world. Thus, the monarchy was more than pleased to support inter-marriage, as this practice granted the status of a Portuguese presence, materialised in the building of fortresses (feytorias), the establishment of business practices and the effective control of certain coastal territories, without the necessity of sending too many men to the same place. The colonial administration remained more loyal to the crown than the bulk of the settlers, since the former intended to return to Portugal after serving their term (and some men were remarkably committed to their job although there was a general pattern of corruption endemic to all the European empires). In Portugal, the feudal aristocracy that lived off both colonies and the lower classes was not too worried about changing Portuguese society, and a comfortable bourgeoisie managed its business, either through the colonies or through the exploitation of the Portuguese lower classes themselves.
In the XIXth century, going back to the moment when "decadence" and fossilisation were obvious to alert, foreign eyes, there was, in the Portuguese colonies (where internal slavery as "contract labour" was a reality until the XXth century[465]) and in spite of all the racism, a certain political openness to share power with an assimilated class of local people. The "assimilated" individual (who should speak, read and write Portuguese, accept the colonial regime, and break with the life-style and the belief system of his race) was allowed to take part in the colonial administration, but all the decisions and executive power remained in the metropole. Yet again, even though leadership remained in the metropole, it was not in the interest of the colonial power to increase the number of such assimilated individuals greatly. Colonial administration believed that a rural population, more or less marginal to the business of colonial institutions was less prone to cause political unrest, and time would prove these colonial fears right for it was the local intelligentsia and the half privileged assimilated middle-class that promoted and organised the struggle for independence.

In the urban centres of the Portuguese colonies, the mulatto (black and white couple) or *mestiço* (Indian and white couple) middle classes were among the first groups to press for independence. The white settler population was divided. Most looked up to Portugal as their home, others would have preferred their share of power in the new African state. When the political situation deteriorated in Angola and Mozambique, many settlers returned to Portugal and some emigrated to South Africa where there still is a significant Portuguese community (about 300 000).

The first liberation war started in 1961, in Luanda, the capital city of Angola. In 1963, Guiné-Bissau started its independence war (a relevant date for this research because events in Guiné are related to the independence of Cape Verde), and in the following year, in 1964, Mozambique was the third colony to opt for violent means to conquer its liberation. Heavier casualties happened in Guiné, where the independence conflict took the fiercest turn. In Angola and Mozambique independence wars were more circumscribed to border districts, with the guerrilla controlling some parts of the territory and co-ordinating the fight from neighbouring friendly nations. For example, while war in Angola was going on inland, in the more coastal, urban areas, life proceeded with relative normality, and there were even increases in production. For four of the ten years of the independence war in Mozambique, it was circumscribed to the provinces of Cabo Delgado and Niassa (with the guerrilla organising itself in Tanzania, across the border). FRELIMO, the pro-soviet "Frente de Libertação de Moçambique", initially thought to place some units of its guerrilla army in the provinces of Zambézia and Tete (a key province, the most profitable for the Portuguese in terms of cash crops) but the government of Malawi preferred to support the Portuguese and

[465] Though slavery had been abolished by the Portuguese in 1836 and by the British in 1807.

did not allow FRELIMO operations from its borders. Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) was equally hostile to FRELIMO, just as South Africa, who would eventually train and support RENAMO (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana) the post-independence opponent to FRELIMO's government in the long civil war that followed.

Things were quite different in Guiné-Bissau. The territory was small, so there was not a great geographical distance between the front line of war and the population. Besides, in Guiné, the Portuguese lost a lot of the territory immediately at the beginning of the war, which improved the strategic position of the guerrilla and made it more aggressive. Still, technically, the three independence wars of Moçambique, Guiné and Angola had come to a dead end by the beginning of the seventies. The guerrilla could not kick the Portuguese out of the urban centres and certain key areas in the production of goods. The Portuguese could neither defeat the active guerrilla nor recover the territories under their control (which included the collaboration of peasant population, the building of schools and the production of food, making the country function almost normally behind the front line). Both sides realised that the outcome of these wars was going to be a matter of time. The development of events in Lisbon would be the real decisive factor in the colonial wars: once the dictatorship was overthrown, the colonies were sure to get their independences (it took ten years, until Guiné declared unilaterally its independence in September 1973, and the fascist regime in Portugal was overthrown by a *coup d'état*, in Abril 1974).

On the 5th April 1974, Portugal recognises the independence of the colony. Meanwhile, the tensions between the continental nation and the archipelago of Cape Verde clearly suggested that a united independent nation would not be a viable reality. The intelligentsia from Cape Verde agreed with Portugal's refusal to settle the two independences at the same time and they bid their time (it was obvious that the Portuguese regime itself was on the verge of collapsing). The negotiation of the independence of Cape Verde was still settled with representatives of PAIGC, but a committee of members from Cape Verde prepared the first independent elections of the archipelago, which certainly established the faction of PAIGC in Cape Verde as the new independent government, with 92% of the votes for the unique party running up. When a military *coup d'état* took place in Guiné (1980), Cape Verde clearly cut the ambiguous bonds that still connected the archipelago to the small continental territory, becoming a totally independent state.

The majority of African countries that became independent during the cold war period, in the 50s, 60s and middle 70s, somehow emerged between the opposite influences of American capitalism and Russian communism, siding with one of the opponent forces: it was simply impossible to avoid choosing your allies and mind your own national business. Allies were desperately needed, as investors, as relief supporters as military partners. In the case of the beginning of the three independence wars against Portugal (Guiné Bissau 1963-1973, Angola 1961-1974 and Mozambique 1964-1974), the back up of Soviet Union meant guns and ammunition, which the resistance movement would not have been able to afford in any other way[466]. China was equally an ally, where the first troops that fought the war in Guiné were trained. The intolerance of Portugal in settling any solution through dialogue has to be understood in the context of the grinding fascist dictatorship that held the country from 1928 to 1974. Salazar opted for war in the colonies and oppression at home, in the metropole[467]. Another important element in this sketch of the dynamics of the liberation

[466] Actually, Mozambique received support from China, and, closer at home, from Tanzania (this last also depended on the Soviet Union for financial and logistic back up).

[467] According to Barry Murlow, in his introduction to Africa, Problems in the Transition to Socialism, (Zed Books, New Jersey, 1986), the second wave of decolonisation in Africa, which concerns Zimbabwe and the Portuguese colonies, was different from the first wave of peaceful decolonisation processes because a

wars is the support provided by independent neighbouring nations, like Argel and Morrocco for Guiné and Cape Verde or Tanzania for Moçambique. After independence, Guiné-Bissau has led a troubled existence, with some riots and a military *coup d'état* (1980), Angola has been involved in a civil war until 2002 and only the death of Jonas Savimbi, leader of the rebel UNITA, seems to open a road for peace; the civil war in Moçambique seems to be, finally, a thing of the past, but only since the beginning of the nineties.

neocolonising option was not open as an alternative. Neither Portugal nor the settler rule in Zimbabwe had the means to face the economic competition of other advanced industrialised countries. As the sub-metropolitan power that it was, Portugal was dependent on the colonies to balance its own economy in relation to the products it imported from industrialised countries.

Appendix II

Brief Geo-historical Introduction to Cape Verde

The ten islands of the archipelago of Cape Verde have a dry climate, and some of them look like a desert landscape (São Vicente and Sal, for instance). Colonialism and demographic growth certainly contributed to the desertification of the islands, though these never had the most welcoming ecological conditions to start with. Firstly (XVIth and XVIIth centuries), herds of cattle were let free on some of the desert islands (to sell the animals to passing ships and in the local markets), allowing them to eat everything. Then, when the weak vegetation did not seem enough to feed other species of cattle, settlers realised that goats managed to survive, but only because they managed to eat roots causing the most complete desertification of the landscape. Apart from the methods to breed animals, the need for logs and wood led to an unbalanced cutting of trees in these islands. The consequent change in the vegetation influenced the climate, upsetting the already fragile pattern of rains. Four centuries later, droughts are frequent in Cape Verde and the soil is exposed to erosion due to the scarcity of the vegetation in some of the islands. The ever-blowing wind in the plane islands does not help agriculture either. Luckily, the two biggest islands are mountainous, and more fertile. Apart from Santiago and Santo Antão, most of the other islands are small[468].

The Portuguese first made contact with black West Africa around 1443, when they arrived to Guiné. Their aim was to trade (including the slave trade), find sea routes for oriental goods and spread Catholicism.

The settlement of Portuguese people in Cape Verde started around 1460. That is the date when the archipelago was "discovered" by Antonio de Nola (a seaman from Genova) and Diogo Gomes[469]. Their ships ("naus") were returning from Zaza, a seaport in Africa, and the two captains decided to travel a route a bit further to the West than usual. The first island to be sighted was named Santiago (after Saint Jacob) and the two "naus" preceded their journey to Lisboa. Later on, the other islands were added to the existing navigation maps, after exploratory tours by Diogo Afonso (between 1640 and 1642).

The colonisation of the archipelago was slow for the islands did not seem inviting to survive in abundance, nor did they promise easy profits with cash crops. Around 1500, only the islands of Santiago and Fogo were occupied. Apparently, some African people had been in Santiago before, but they did not constitute a continuous or significant settlement. As the dwelling of inhabitants in the islands became consistent, white settlers and black slaves started a process of *mestiçagem* that ended up in a Creole population, currently 90% *mestiço*.

There are striking differences between islands, although the whole of the archipelago functions coherently as a national unit. People firstly see themselves as "Cape Verdeans", and, secondly, as belonging to the island where they were born.

Simply by walking in the streets of Praia (the capital, in the island of Santiago) immediately reveals that its population is much darker than in Mindelo, the second city

[468] Santiago, 991 Km^2 – currently, the home of 45 percent of the population (Andrade: 51); Santo Antão 779 km^2; Fogo 476 km^2; Boavista 620 km^2; São Nicolau 343 km ^{2}; Maio 269 km^2; São Vicente 227 km^2; Sal 216 km ^{2}; Brava 64 km^2. (Santa Luzia and the islets are not inhabited). *In* Elisa Silva Andrade, Les Îles du Cap-Vert de la "Découverte" `a l' Independence Nationale (1640-1975), L' Harmattan, Paris, 1996.

[469] There is an alternative version, mentioned in history books, which claims that the islands of Santiago and Boavista were first sighted by two foreign sailors, the Genovese Antonio de Nola and the Venetian Cadamosto. However, since they were on a Portuguese ship, working for the Portuguese king, Portugal Claimed the islands.

(island of São Vicente). Also the dressing habits of people tell you that the first island is "more African" and the second "more Western". There are consistent histories behind these impressions:

Santiago was one of the few islands where the plantation system was possible, which means that social organisation started with many slaves working the big farms of white landlords. Together with Fogo, where the plantation system was also established, these had been the first two islands to be colonised, just after they were found. The establishment of a plantation system, with a strong social and racial division between plantation owners and slave workers explains a strong social and racial divide, which is not so clear in the other islands. In Santiago and Fogo, black and *mestiço* people correspond to the wide majority of the population (in 1950, the white population of Fogo corresponded to one percent). Other islands like little Brava and São Nicolau held a bigger number of white farmers coming from Portugal (from Madeira, Minho and Algarve). The background of white population, and consequently of *mestiçagem*, is more visible in these islands.

Most of the slaves that were transported to Cape Verde came from Guiné. Among the Portuguese who moved to the islands there were both noblemen and peasants. Although not very significant in numbers, convicts and political deportees were equally sent from Portugal to Cape Verde[470]. Other Europeans who contributed to the initial settlement of the islands were Italian settlers (De Nola, the Genovese sailor who claimed the "discovery" of Santiago was given half of the island).

The two archipelagos of West Africa (Cape Verde and S. Tomé e Príncipe[471]) had, from the very beginning, a particular role in organising the slave trade. In fact, the islanders grew very active in trading with other countries than Portugal, smuggling goods and people. The network of *feitorias* (fortresses) along the continental coast, which was the skeleton of the Portuguese colonial system, was more disciplined and more dependent on the control of Lisbon, but, in the islands, powerful Creole clans soon controlled business, while the Portuguese crown focused its efforts on collecting revenues through the organisation of a tax system and the creation of incentives to sail and trade.

In the XVIth and XVIIth centuries, Portugal centred its limited (demographic, administrative and military) resources in different strategic parts of the empire (first Goa, in India, and then, clearly, Brazil), which means that these clans of traders could rely on a comfortable margin of non-interference. Still, the Portuguese Royal companies made effective efforts to strengthen the hold of the Portuguese presence in West Africa, especially in Angola and Congo, but rival nations like France, England and the Dutch Republic[472] had started to create their own colonial networks. In spite of this scattered organisation, business became equated with "Portuguese" contacts, and, until the XIXth century, Dutch, English, and French trading houses relied on Portuguese and Afro-Portuguese personnel to manage their trade[473]. The Portuguese crown only became seriously interested in Angola, I mean in controlling the territory itself apart from letting business flow and organise the corresponding tax system (which was frequently evaded anyway), after the independence of Brazil (1822), until then, the jewel of the Portuguese crown. The XIXth century also became a period of fierce political competition for the colonies of Africa, and Portugal felt threatened by other powerful European nations. It was no longer a matter of piracy at sea, or

[470] Silva Andrade, *Op. cit.* 1996: 40.

[471] S. Tomé and Príncipe were sighted on 1470/1471, and the slave trade in Angola was soon co-ordinated from the administrative base in S. Tomé.

[472] The XVIIth century is precisely the epoch in which the Dutch Republic became a world power, being replaced in the XVIIIth century by the British Empire. Between 1579 and 1795 the United Provinces of the Netherlands prospered, after independence from Spain.

[473] Malyn Newitt, Portugal in Africa, C. Hurst & Co., London, 1981.

the dispute for this or that town, this or that fortress. The issue at stake was total political control of the colonies. Portugal turned to Angola and the two archipelagos with a new vitality. The problem is that internal political unrest almost paralysed Portugal during the nineteenth century and this lack of stability had terrible consequences in the delay of industrialisation and the development of coherent policies.

The plantation system that was applied to Santiago and Fogo was identical to the model of colonisation for the other archipelago, S. Tomé and Príncipe, but the fertility of the archipelago of S. Tomé made the history of this other insular colony a very different matter. Gerhard Seibert[474] actually explains the presence of college students from this archipelago in Portugal on account of the profits of the cocoa plantations owned by *mestiço* clans who could afford to send their children to Lisbon to study. That is the reason why, in 1900/1914, this small colony had the highest rate of students in Portugal. Mind that the climate of S. Tomé and Principe was not healthy for Europeans, so the *mestiço* families took charge of the profitable plantations of cocoa.

Cape Verde was used to grow some cash crops, but it became, very early, a source of emigrants. "People" seem to be Cape Verde's most remarkable production (demographic rates have always been very high). After the abolition of slavery (1836), the archipelago provided the work force to the plantations of S. Tomé and Principe on a regime of forced labour disguised as a normal employment mechanism. These workers were also brought to the plantations of Angola. Educated Cape Verdeans (primary and grammar school) were often employed in bureaucratic and administrative work, in other colonies[475].

During the colonial period there was a pattern of long droughts followed by famine in Cape Verde. The first famine that is documented took place in 1579-1581, but they increased in frequency and dimension during the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries. The numbers are tragic. The last long period of drought and famine, in the decade between 1940 and 1950, gradually took 30 000 lives[476] for a total population around 400 000. Not all these deaths are directly from starvation, but one should not forget that several illnesses take hold of a weak and feeble population more easily. If one keeps these numbers in mind, and the precarious living conditions they imply, it is easy to understand the natural impulse to emigrate. Another closely related factor to explain increasing emigration rates, either during the colonial or postcolonial periods, is the remarkable rate of population growth.

Between 1946 and 1959 Cape Verdeans emigrated primarily to Portugal (including Azores and Madeira), Guiné-Bissau and the United States. Then, in the 1960s and 1970s they started to go to other European countries, namely France, The Netherlands and Italy. The curious detail concerning the emigration of Cape Verdeans to Italy is that 90% of the individuals are women. Such a high rate of women emigrants is exclusive to Italy, where these women are domestic workers. Socially, the impact of emigration rates is significant for women in another way: most of them have the husband abroad and they have to run the family on their own. The emigration of men, usually between 20 and 45 years of age, creates a certain imbalance in the ratio between the sexes. In the two cities, Praia and Mindelo, the population ratio was respectively 45,34 % men to 54,7 % women (in Praia, 1977) and 43,7 % men and 56,3 % women (in Mindelo, 1978).

The city of Mindelo (island of S.Vicente) is the product of the privileged conditions of its harbour[477]. In the XIXth century, it became one of the main sources of wealth in the

[474] Gerhard Seibert, Comrades, Clients and Cousins, Colonialism and Democratization in São Tomé and Principe, Ph.d dissertation, Leiden University, 1999.
[475] *Op. cit.* Silva Andrade, 1996: 18.
[476] *Op. cit.* Silva Andrade, 1996: 151.
[477] By 1798, Mindelo only had 232 inhabitants but in 1878, with the development of the harbour, there were already 3 297 people living there (Andrade, 1996: 58).

archipelago but the inauguration of the Suez Canal (1869), the development of other nearby harbours (Spanish Canarias and Dakar in Senegal) and bad colonial management stagnated the once busy and lively resort. Nevertheless, while ships from Europe stopped at Mindelo (because of the provided support services), the exchange of ideas and cultural influences was stronger in the harbour town than in rural Santiago, whose capitals (first Ribeira Grande and then Praia) had flourished during the slave trade. On the contrary, Mindelo developed later, providing services and goods to the passing ships.

At the time of the liberation struggle, Cape Verde joined the struggle of Guiné-Bissau. The related colonial history of Cape Verde and Guiné was in fact centuries old, and it was deeply involved with the slave trade. Before the independence of Brazil, in 1822, the "slave routes" across the Atlantic, between West Africa and Brazil, called at the harbour of Cape Verde.

The hold of these ancient histories is much stronger than one might think. In the case of Cape Verde and Guiné-Bissau, the resentment that led to the fragmentation of the two ex-colonies into two different countries, thus destroying the united project of Amílcar Cabral[478] (and a much more realistic possibility of sustained independence) had to do with the centuries old movement of slaves sold along the coast of Guiné to ships that went to Cape Verde, where the mulatto slave traders had their base.

[478] Cabral to defend the necessity of a joined independence, including both Cape Verde and Guiné, because, from a strategic point of vie, the independence of the coastal territory with an occupied archipelago in front of it did not amount to a very realistic, durable option. He feared future Portuguese attempts at conquering back the territory.

Appendix III

Background References to Mozambique

Mozambique had a misleading long colonial history. I call it "misleading" because though it was long, the Portuguese did not hold a strong presence on the territory. Still, the Portuguese were the first bureaucratic form of administration extended to the whole current territory, imposing a political structure that was consolidated during the last decades of the XIXth century (after the Berlin conference, in 1884/85, and the polemic "scramble for Africa", that is to say, the division of the African continent among European powers).

The contact with the Portuguese started in March 1498, when, in search of a sea route to India, Vasco da Gama reached the coast of Mozambique. By this time, there were in the Eastern coast of Africa several Muslim sheiks and other first nation kingdoms. Some of them established cordial relations with the Portuguese sea captains, while others were aggressive to the new-comers. Mozambique became a routine stopping point for the "naus" (type of galleons) sailing around the Cape of Good Hope. Sometimes they sailed around Madagascar, directly to India, but quite often the preferred route was through the channel of Mozambique, with a stop at the Island of Mozambique where the Portuguese were based. Along the coast, lively trade was carried with inland people at some key ports. Still, the lively and ancient Muslim cities (Pate, Melinde, Quíloa, Zanzibar, Mozambique and Sofala) kept on their business, and a tense rivalry developed between the Arab princes, their trading people and these new arrived Portuguese, who, to make things worse, were Catholics, and quite intent on spreading their intolerable Christian faith.

Spices, tea, silk, cloth, animals and slaves were sold, for different goods, in different currencies. Feeling unwelcome latecomers, the Portuguese stuck to their isle of Mozambique, easier to defend, more reliable to keep stored property. For the coming centuries, that is how the situation remained.

In the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries, the Portuguese controlled the centre and north of the country. It is at this time that the "prazo" system is established. The "prazo" was a huge farm, virtually a small feudal kingdom in the hands of Portuguese and Indo-Portuguese landlords (Mozambique was managed as a satellite-department, from Goa, until 1752).

Although slavery was formally abolished in the Portuguese colonies in 1836, the fact is that in the case of Mozambique, it went on through smuggling until the 1850s. The buyers were mostly French, who wanted workers for their overseas provinces. The hold of Portuguese authority to enforce the law on Mozambique was weak, still during the nineteenth century, but the continuation of forced labour practices in the Portuguese "overseas provinces", until the end of colonisation, make one doubt there was real concern to stop this smuggling.

In Mozambique, the Portuguese did not explore the inland areas as they did in Brazil and Angola, more prized possessions. They just organised some coastal settlements, with a connection to a more inland set of small places. Furthermore, there was not a significant number of white settlers in this province on the Eastern coast of Africa until, out of fear of seeing its territorial possessions questioned by England or Germany (both of which were very interested in Mozambique), Portuguese authorities decided to invest a lot in this colony, so much so, that in the beginning of the XXth century, it was more prosperous than Angola (the British Ultimatum had been in 1890, so the reactive background of this new colonial

attitude is clear[479]). Still, the scarcity of settlers (an acute and chronic problem in the Portuguese empire[480]) and the extension of the territory explain the fact that few Portuguese, Afro-Portuguese, or other white landowners did move to this remote colony. At independence, around 200 000 Portuguese were living in Mozambique (and many moved to South Africa, while others preferred to return to Portugal). This scarcity of settlers made them absolutely necessary, and virtually "untouchable". They became the law within their "prazo"[481] plantation, later on transformed into crown companies ("Companhias Majestáticas") rented to foreign investment. Only the south province, where the capital is, was under the direct administration of the Portuguese crown, and not subjected to a company, the later version of the "prazo". Political or legal decisions taken in Portugal were more frequently ignored than minded by these inland landowners (or renters). The two larger cities, Lourenço Marques (Maputo) and Beira have a different history, but these were the places where most colonial clerks lived and worked. Hence, a stronger respect for the authority of the crown was predictable.

Another motive for the superficiality of Portuguese control on this territory, were the fierce pre-colonial peoples of Mozambique who did not give in easily, frequently challenging Portuguese authority. There had always been the Muslim sheiks, the Makua chiefs and the warrior Makondes, and also the legendary Ngoni, in the south province of Gaza. Gungunhanha is the last king of the Ngoni, who successfully resisted the Portuguese presence, on the 1880s, until he was arrested. Other peoples were more accommodating, but not these four groups. The Makua are a traditionally dominant group in Mozambique, while the epic legend of Gungunhanha makes of the Ngoni the stereotype of the proud African warrior (like Shaka's legend prompted the Zulu warrior to an epic/ mythical status among both black and white people).

From the 1850s onwards, South Africa started to have an increasingly important role in the economy of Mozambique, because of the massive numbers of labour hired from the Portuguese colony to South African gold and diamond mines. Thus, a significant part of the economy of Mozambique came to depend on the taxes paid by these miners when they returned home. In fact, the size of this massive emigration of workers to South Africa is so significant that it became a pervasive background theme in literature. There is always a brother or a friend that is or has been working in this neighbouring country. This massive emigration of miners to South Africa was established by an agreement between the Portuguese and South Africa. By this agreement, the Portuguese government received a payment in gold, corresponding to a percentage of the salary of each miner.

Health and education services were concentrated in the south province, around the capital Lourenço Marques. For the other provinces, one of the few improvements on the living conditions of the population was the possibility, granted to Mozambican farmers from the selected assimilado group ("assimilados" were Lusophiles) to explore land on their own. Still, this entitlement only became a practice in the 1950s. The assimilados could read and write and usually came from the local aristocracies, for the Portuguese were keen on respecting the stable structures of traditional power, so as to take advantage of them.

[479] Most of the disputes between European nations regarding territories of Africa were settled at the Berlim conference in 1885, when European nations divided Africa among themselves. Still, five years later, Portugal and England almost went to war because of their competing claims over central Africa. Portuguese claims were presented to the world on the rose-coloured map, including parts of Zambia and Mashonaland. In 1890, Lord Salisbury presented Portugal with an ultimatum to halt all expeditions and claims to central Africa. Portugal withdrew.

[480] See note to appendix one with Portuguese population rates through time.

[481] Concession over a big farm, granted by the Portuguese crown, for three generations.

In the XIXth century, liberal minded governments had tried to improve education facilities in the colonies but the beginning of the dictatorship in 1928 saw a step backwards in this process. Actually, there was another issue connected to the organisation of the educational system which changed with the fascist new state: after the liberal effort to organise education as an institution of the secular state, the dictatorship returned to responsibility to teach native populations to Catholic missions, following a Concordata signed with the Vatican in 1940[482].

The Portuguese did not invest in their colonies as much as other colonisers. Industrialisation and education are two areas where inertia is very obvious. Portuguese colonialism was more focused in exploring agriculture, and industrialisation had been late in Portugal itself. As for the indifference to build a proper educational system, it was believed that uneducated peasants would be more prone to exploitation.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Portuguese government tried to make some reforms to improve structural conditions in the colonies. The beginning of the independence war in Angola taught the regime the necessity of making improvements so as to win the support of the emerging small bourgeoisie and convince settlers to go/stay in Mozambique instead of emigrating to the United States and other European countries.

Finally, in 1964, by law, all children between the ages of 6 and 12, black or white, were to attend school, and a state organised system of primary schools was active. In 1963, the first university of Mozambique was created in Lourenço Marques though the number of students attending it was very small (in 1969/ 1970, the number of students attending this college was 1145, only nine of which were black).

By the end of the 60s, 494 994 pupils, of all races, attended primary school, but the number dropped radically after primary school. Only near 25 000 would attend a secondary education, and 1ess than 2000 a college education. On his study of the reforms in the educational system of the Portuguese colonies during the 1960s, Eduardo de Sousa Ferreira concludes that there was an improvement only at the level of primary education and that higher education was highly selective and meant (mostly) for white people, with a few exceptions.

When, in the 1950s, the mobilisation for the independence struggle started in the urban centres, among more educated groups, concepts such as “the nation”, or “the state”, were totally alien for the big majority of the population, 90% illiterate, 97% peasant, growing subsistence crops, integrated in “clans” as the universe of political and social forms of collective allegiance. White and mulatto population where a minority (currently, around 5%), and ethnic groups where quite clearly divided. This last information is important because different areas and ethnic groups tended to identity differently with RENAMO and FRELIMO.

FRELIMO was created on the 25th June 1962, and its first president was Eduardo Mondlane. This was the movement that organised the liberation struggle. The war started in the province of Cabo Delgado, on the 25th September 1964. Ethnic groups from both south and north provinces were strongly represented in the boards of FRELIMO, but those from the centre of the country were more marginal to this movement.

For ten years (1964-1974)[483] Mozambique carried out its long independence war against Portugal. In 1974, Samora Machel and his FRELIMO were recognised by Lisbon as the sole partners in the negotiation of the independence settlement, and full independence

[482] Eduardo de Sousa Ferreira, O Fim de Uma Era: O Colonialismo Português em África, Sá da Costa Editora, Lisboa, 1977 (Unesco 1974).

[483] For information on the transitional process from colonisation to socialism see João Mosca, Experiência Socialista em Moçambique (1975-1986), Instituto Piaget, Lisboa, 1999.

was set for the 25th June 1975. FRELIMO did not tolerate any partition of power with other parties or dissidents (sent to the so called "re-education camps").

Initially, the popular back up of FRELIMO was simply massive, but soon there were discontents: the emergent small bourgeoisie that expected to take the place of the Portuguese after their departure was marginalised; the peasants that coveted the land of the great farms saw them turned into national enterprises of co-operatives leaving them "out" of good lands; urban intelligentsia segregated as pro-capitalist; traditional aristocracies were abolished. RENAMO could count on "postcolonial discontents" to strike against the government. RENAMO was, basically, an anti-rehabilitation movement, the origins of which are not very clear. Ex-members of the Portuguese secret police, mercenaries, FRELIMO dissidents, pro-capitalist sectors inside the country, and the strategic interests of Rhodesia and South Africa, all these forces allied around the idea of an internal conflict tearing Mozambique apart to protect other strategic interests.

In 1977, FRELIMO became a Marxist-Leninist unique party system, and civil war started in that same year, until 1992. Since RENAMO managed a strong support from the population of the centre provinces on an ethnic basis, the ghost of partition hovered in the air, as the two forces were not strong enough to defeat each other. During these years, five to six million people became displaced war refugees (40% of the population), unable to develop any productive activity. Most of them ended up in city suburbs, around cities or towns that did not have the structures to receive or provide for so many people.

In the 1984 Congress of FRELIMO there was a significant change in the political line of the party. Mozambique was desperate: it abandoned Marxism-Leninism, turned to the West for help and declared itself willing to start a process of structural adjustments.

For the people of Mozambique, both alternatives have been evil (we are talking of one of the poorest countries in the world). Communism did not manage to create a society that could answer to the needs of its people, and the help of the World Bank has only increased the gap between rich and poor, leaving the majority of the population in the same subhuman conditions.

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Summary

This research argues that situated critical theory, bounded to history, geo-political locations, and cultural context, is the most productive method to approach a literary text committed to social criticism and social reforms. The choice for approaching postcolonial literature written by women doubly proved this point.

From a feminist point of view, the selected writers offer a critique of local patriarchies, advocating an agenda for social reform that would improve the position of women in the concerned society.

From a postcolonial angle, the chosen literary pieces survey the post-independence nation-state, confronting its failures and tensions, and trying to articulate the disconnection between individual and state, often compensated by alternative patterns of collective identity.

The representation of the envisaged feminist reforms and of the search for new ways of imagining communities depart from the personal crisis of a set of characters, using these problematic micro-universes to expose wider political and social issues on the considered locations.

The combined critical frame, developed out of feminist and postcolonial theories proved effective to approach the six chosen pieces of postcolonial literature, demonstrating that neither of these approaches exhausts the other. On the contrary, it was very interesting to conclude that there is a significant amount of the intellectual content of the novel which is left "in the shade" if one does not experiment to look at the same text with changed critical lenses.

This study also argues for the relevance of sensitivity to differences in order to approach such a mutant subject as postcolonial literatures, always branded by a "territorialisation" of the text, in the effort to find self-articulation and assert one's independent culture in relation to ex-colonial Europe and the contemporary threat of globalisation as a neo-colonial enterprise. Recognising cultural diversity and its expression in the corresponding literatures, this dissertation tried to use theory in non-classificatory ways, as a set of guidelines to dialogue with the texts, taking the most relevant issues suggested by the texts as the cardinal points to structure a comparative platform.

From a feminist perspective the main ideas that organised the analysis of the texts were the identification of normative role models, in order to define some of the patterns of feminine identity on the considered society. Secondly, against this background of "normality", this study followed the inner conflict of deviant women characters in their search for alternative roles as women. Their demands and aspirations constitute the offered feminist agendas.

The developed critical approach also focused on the creation of new liberated myths and archetypes to balance traditional references. In this process, fantasy and story telling emerged as "feminine" narrative modes to oppose to patriarchal historical legends, popular religious references and traditional philosophical systems.

The acknowledgement of differences in the priorities of groups of women differently situated proved the point that universal feminist theories have a limited reach, apart from producing false stereotypes or focusing on the wrong issues (because what may seem relevant from a western based point of view may not coincide with the actual needs of the women who live by other frames of civilisation).

The comparative approach to different postcolonial literatures also contributed to undo the western-centric bias that initially presided to the development of postcolonial studies. By discussing and promoting postcolonial literatures, praising their maturity and

their creative appropriation of two languages inherited from colonialism (Portuguese and English), this study tries to shrink Western theoretical discourse to its own situatedness, creating a platform of critical dialogue that tries to listen instead of labelling.

From a postcolonial point of view, the set of guidelines followed in this research to read the six selected texts were, in the first place, the revision of colonial ideologies answering back to Orientalist and "Africanist" fallacies while commenting on colonial memories and its after effects; in the second place, the possible survival of nationalist or nativist projects (in fact, these projects have lost credibility in the time frame of the addressed texts, all of them written a couple of decades after independence); thirdly, the emergence of a stern post-euphoria after the independence moment, strengthening social criticism and the search for new collective projects; finally, this study identified, in these literary pieces, the creation and promotion of self-assertive strategies aimed at consolidating postcolonial collective identities. The discussion of mechanisms of consolidation (or their absence) led this study to an analysis of forms of hybridity and multiculturalism in these societies. In some cases, like Cape Verde, the represented postcolonial society consolidated as a hybrid, Creole product. In Mozambique and India, the situation is rather one of multiculturalism, though there is tension between some communities sharing the same nation.

The representation of intra-national tension poses the problem of the current fragmentation of the nationalist project that was established at the moment of independence. At the same time, the discussion on national and communal identities implies reflection on international relations and the definition of one society in relation to others, either within a regional or a global context.

These lines of thought were used to approach six texts, three of them from Indo-English literature, and three other from Lusophone countries of Africa: the Creole case of the archipelago of Cape Verde and the continental literature of Mozambique. For the Lusophone cases, less documented for the Anglophone reader, a genealogy of the emergence of these postcolonial literatures is provided.

The selected women writers from India are Nayantara Sahgal (with the novel Rich Like Us -1983- about the Emergency Regime of Indira Gandhi), Arundhati Roy (The God Of Small Things, 1997) and Ghita Hariharan's When Dreams Travel (1999), her feminist re-writing of the famous The Thousand and One Nights.

The selected writers from Cape Verde are Orlanda Amarílis, with her anthology of short stories Ilhéu dos Pássaros (1982), and Dina Salústio's novel A Louca de Serrano (1998). The last writer studied in this dissertation is the Mozambican Paulina Chiziane and her novel Ventos do Apocalipse (1999), which deals with the impact of a civil war, motivated by international conflicts, on isolated villages of innocent peasants.

This choice of writers and texts creates a small genealogy of women's writing in the three addressed locations. Another objective is to promote the less known dimension of postcolonial literatures in Portuguese, thus improving the accuracy of current cartographies of world literatures.

Samenvatting

Dit onderzoek beargumenteert dat gesitueerde kritische theorie die gebonden is aan geschiedenis, geopolitieke locaties en culturele context, de meest productieve benadering oplevert van een literaire tekst die gestuurd wordt door sociale kritiek en sociale veranderingen. De keuze voor postkoloniale literatuur van vrouwelijke schrijfsters bevestigde dit punt op een dubbele wijze.

Vanuit een feministisch perspectief bekritiseren de geselecteerde auteurs lokale patriarchaten en pleiten zij voor sociale veranderingen die de positie van vrouwen in de maatschappij in kwestie kan verbeteren.

Vanuit een postkoloniale invalshoek werpt de geselecteerde literatuur een blik op de natie in de post-onafhankelijkheidsperiode, tracht haar mislukkingen en spanningen in beeld te brengen, en probeert de scheiding tussen individu en staat, die vaak gecompenseerd wordt door alternatieve patronen van collectieve identiteit, onder woorden te brengen.

De uitgangspunten voor de representatie van de voorgestelde feministische transformaties en het zoeken naar nieuwe manieren om gemeenschappen uit te beelden, zijn de persoonlijke crises van een reeks van personages, waarbij deze problematische microwerelden gebruikt worden om bredere politieke en sociale kwesties in de betrokken locaties bloot te leggen.

Het vanuit feministische en postkoloniale theorieën gecombineerde kritische kader leverde een doeltreffende benadering op van de zes gekozen postkoloniale werken waarbij de beide benaderingen elkaar niet uitputten. Integendeel, het was interessant om te concluderen dat een significant deel van de intellectuele inhoud van de roman “in de schaduw” blijft wanneer niet wordt geëxperimenteerd met verschillende kritische blikken.

Deze studie beargumenteert tevens hoe belangrijk het is om de verschillen te onderkennen van een veranderlijk onderwerp als postkoloniale literatuur dat altijd gemarkeerd wordt door de “territorialisatie” van de tekst. “Territorialisatie”als poging om te komen tot zelfexpressie en het opeisen van een eigen onafhankelijke cultuur in relatie tot het ex-koloniale Europa en de hedendaagse dreiging van globalisering als een neokoloniale onderneming. Deze culturele diversiteit en de uitdrukking hiervan in de overeenkomstige literatuur erkennend, is in deze dissertatie getracht theorie op een niet-classificerende wijze te gebruiken door met een reeks richtlijnen de dialoog met de literaire teksten aan te gaan, waarbij de voornaamste punten om een vergelijkend platform te kunnen structuren voortvloeien uit de meest relevante kwesties van de teksten.

De belangrijkste ideeën die de analyse van de teksten vanuit een feministisch perspectief structureerden, waren de identificatie van normatieve rolmodellen om een aantal patronen van vrouwelijke identiteit in de maatschappij in kwestie te definiëren. Tegen deze achtergrond van “normaliteit” belichtte deze studie het innerlijk conflict van “afwijkende” vrouwelijke personages die op zoek zijn naar alternatieve rollen als vrouw. Hun eisen en verwachtingen vormen feministische agenda’s.

De ontwikkelde kritische aanpak was eveneens gericht op het creëren van nieuwe bevrijdende mythes en archetypen om ze naast de traditionele referenties te plaatsen. In dit proces kwamen fantasie en het vertellen van verhalen te voorschijn als “vrouwelijke” narratieve modellen, tegengesteld aan patriarchale historische legenden, populaire religieuze referenties en traditionele filosofische systemen.

De erkenning van verschillen in de prioriteiten van verschillend gesitueerde vrouwen maakte duidelijk dat universele feministische theorieën slechts een beperkte reikwijdte kennen, en daarnaast valse stereotypen produceren of verkeerde thema’s naar voren schuiven (want hetgeen relevant lijkt vanuit een westers perspectief valt niet

noodzakelijk samen met de noden van vrouwen wiens levens in andere beschavingskaders gevormd zijn).

De vergelijkende aanpak van verschillende postkoloniale literaire werken levert eveneens een bijdrage aan het ontmantelen van de westers-centristische *bias* die in de ontwikkeling van postkoloniale studies aanvankelijk overheerste. Door postkoloniale literatuur te bediscussiëren en meer bekendheid te geven, met lof voor hun volle ontwikkeling en creatieve toe-eigening van twee talen geërfd van het kolonialisme (Portugees en Engels), tracht deze studie het westers theoretisch vertoog terug te brengen tot haar eigen gesitueerdheid, waarbij een platform voor een kritische dialoog, gericht op luisteren in plaats van etiketteren, gecreëerd wordt.

De reeks richtlijnen om de zes teksten vanuit een postkoloniaal perspectief te lezen, waren ten eerste de herziening van koloniale ideologieën als repliek op Oriëntalistische en "Afrikanistische" drogredenen en het becommentariëren van koloniale herinneringen en haar verdere gevolgen. Ten tweede, de mogelijke overleving van nationalistische of inheemse projecten (in feite hebben deze projecten hun geloofwaardigheid verloren binnen het tijdskader van de gekozen teksten, aangezien deze allemaal een aantal decennia na de onafhankelijkheid geschreven zijn). Ten derde, het ontstaan van een sterk post-euforische sfeer na de onafhankelijkheid die de kritische geest en de zoektocht naar nieuwe collectieve projecten versterkt. Ten slotte werd het creëren en bevorderen van zelfexpressieve strategieën om bij te dragen aan een collectieve identiteit na kolonialisme geïllustreerd in de literaire teksten.

De discussie over manieren van consolidatie (of de afwezigheid daarvan) leidde in deze studie tot de analyse van hybriditeit en multi-culturaliteit in deze gemeenschappen. In sommige gevallen, zoals in Kaapverdië, consolideerde de voorgestelde postkoloniale gemeenschap als een hybride, Creools product. In Mozambique en India is er veel meer sprake van multi-culturaliteit, alhoewel er binnen dezelfde natie spanning is tussen sommige gemeenschappen.

Het nationalistische project viel uit elkaar door intra-nationale spanningen na de onafhankelijkheid. Tegelijkertijd impliceert de discussie van nationale en gemeenschappelijke identiteiten reflectie op internationale relaties en de definitie van de status van een gemeenschap in vergelijking met andere gemeenschappen in een regionale, dan wel een wereldwijde context.

Deze gedachtelijnen werden gebruikt om zes teksten te bestuderen, drie uit de Indo-Engelse literatuur, en drie uit de Lusophone landen van Afrika: de Creoolse casus van de archipel Kaapverdië en de continentale literatuur van Mozambique. Omdat de Lusophone literatuur minder bekend is bij de anglofone lezer, biedt de dissertatie ook een genealogie van deze postkoloniale literatuur aan.

De gekozen vrouwelijke auteurs uit India zijn Nayantara Saghal (met de roman Rich Like Us, 1983, over het Emergency Regime van Indira Gandhi), Arundhati Roy (The God Of Small Things, 1997) en Ghita Hariharan's When Dreams Travel, 1999, haar feministische herschrijving van het befaamde The Thousand and One Nights.

De geselecteerde schrijfsters uit Kaapverdië zijn Orlanda Amarílis, met haar bloemlezing van korte verhalen Ilhéu dos Pássaros (1982), en Dina Salústio, een dichteres die haar eerste roman schreef: A Louca de Serrano (1998). De laatste schrijfster die in deze dissertatie bestudeerd wordt, is Paulina Chiziane uit Mozambique en haar roman Ventos do Apocalipse (1999) die handelt over de impact van de burgeroorlog, gemotiveerd door internationale conflicten, op de geïsoleerde dorpen van onschuldige boeren.

De keuze van schrijfsters en teksten had als doel de creatie van een kleine genealogie van vrouwelijke auteurs in de drie behandelde locaties. Een ander doel was het promoten van minder bekende dimensies van de postkoloniale literatuur in het Portugees en daarmee bij te dragen aan een beter hedendaags overzicht van de wereldliteratuur.

Index

R

S

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Curriculum Vitae

Joana Passos was born in Portugal, Santo Tirso, on the 29th November 1967. She graduated from high school, in Braga, in June 1985.

From September 1985 until 1990 she studied at Universidade do Minho, following a five year degree, at Humanities Faculty. She read Portuguese and English studies. She wrote her master thesis in English Literature, in 1996, with the title "Angela Carter and the Rewriting of Myths and Fairy Tales". This dissertation addressed Angela Carter's rewriting of Charles Perrault's fairy tales, as well as her recreation of some key myths in western culture, exploring the subversive energy of her feminist, postmodern writing.

From 1990 to 1997 she worked as a high-school teacher, combining work with the M.A. from 1993 to 1996. In 1997, she was awarded a one year grant from the Ministry of Education of Portugal, to come to The Netherlands as a member of the Women's Studies seminar, preparing her PhD project. In 1998, she was awarded a four year grant by FCT, Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology), to develop her PhD research, at the Faculty of Arts, Utrecht University.

In November 2002, she has been awarded a post doctoral grant by FCT, to pursue further studies in Indo-Portuguese literature at the Humanities Faculty, Universidade do Minho.