a journal in culture & criticism

Journal x • Volume 6 • Number 2
Spring 2002

Volume 6 • Number 2 • Spring 2002

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Journal x

A Journal in Culture & Criticism

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The editors of *Jx* invite submissions of scholarly and/or reflective essays on topics of interest to scholars working in the fields of English and American literary/cultural studies. Submissions should conform to the *MLA Style Manual*. Send two copies to The Editors, *Journal x*, Department of English, The University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677. Please include SASE. Submissions received in the months of June and July will be held for consideration in August.

Journal x is published biannually in Fall and Spring by the Department of English of the University of Mississippi. Subscription rates are $8 (individuals) and $24 (institutions). For all subscriptions outside US add $3 per year, remittance to be made by money order or check drawn on a US bank. Write to the Business Manager at the above address. E-mail: kraber@olemiss.edu or atrefzer@olemiss.edu. Fax: 601 232 5787. Changes of address should be reported to the Business Manager.

Journal x is set in Caslon typeface and printed on acid-free paper by the University Publishing Center at The University of Mississippi. The *Jx* logo was designed by Susan Lee.

 ISSN: 0278-310X

Haunted Houses

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> Camoes timidly suggested the possibility of a haunting.
>
> —Salman Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh*

The discourse on nationalism and the nation was always already a discourse on ghosts. Especially the discourse *of* nationalism, for which it becomes necessary to conjure a certain spirit of the past in order to bring about the desired national community; but also the discourse *about* nationalism which is only accomplished by still subscribing to a rhetoric of haunting, even when the intention is to exorcise some nefarious specter, by pointing to its fantastic provenance, its blood-thirst, or its immateriality.

Most contemporary theorists of nationalism and the nation agree on its modernity, whether they see it as the natural, that is, logical, development of industrial and capitalist forces, or, conversely, as their condition. Only in a few cases, and then in the guise of exceptions, are some nations pointed to as having existed in a homogeneous fashion before the advent of the French Revolution or the industrialization process. Sometimes England, in distinction to the present United Kingdom, is considered such an exception. Much more rarely does one come across Portugal, in spite of its eight hundred years of almost uninterrupted ethnic, linguistic, territorial, and political unity. Yet, even if what appears precisely distinctive about nationalism is its modernity, it has also become common to point out what appears as a paradox, the seeming need of such a modern movement

to disguise its novelty and future-oriented teleological constitution by cloaking itself in the armature of centuries.

Already Heinrich Heine, at once implicated in the Romantic movement and its obsession with national spirits, and the first to try to distance himself critically from it, had pointed to the ghostly character of national imaginings. Understanding himself as a mediator between German and French culture, and as keen on certain German attributes as he was weary of the dangerous turn any nationalism can take when it becomes xenophobic, Heine clearly recognized nationalism's symptom — its need to deal in and with ghosts. In the "avant-propos" to the first French edition of his book *De L'Allemagne* (The German version was titled *Die romantische Schule*) of 1835 Heine makes explicit the link between nationalism generally, as opposed to a specific German nationalism, and ghosts.

He begins the preface with the curious story, a "Romantic tale," of how the emperor Otto III went to visit the mausoleum of Charlemagne. Finding the cadaver still intact, except for the point of the nose, Otto took care to manicure it, cover it with a white robe, and set a gold piece on the nose. Before leaving, Otto removed a tooth from the mouth of his illustrious predecessor, who appears to Otto the following night in a vision so as to prophesize Otto's coming death without heirs. After declaring that this is the record of "les *traditions allemandes*" (259), Heine provides a similar example derived from French tradition, in which Francis I also opens the tomb of Roland so as to verify whether what the poets sang of his predecessor was true; and yet another tale in which it is the Portuguese King Sebastian, who visits the tombs of his ancestors before leaving on his ill-fated African campaign (259).[1] And this is what interests me at the moment, for in his Portuguese example Heine clearly already links nationalism with colonialism and does so through the issue of ghosts.

Attempts at defining nationalism and the nation invariably confront the difficulties inherent in trying to establish the nature of facts that despite appearing indisputably solid dissolve into a tangle of contradictions, wishful imaginings and airy ideological constructs. Benedict Anderson, in spite of the great contribution which his *Imagined Communities* brought to the clarification of nationalism, especially through his connection of nationalism with print-capitalism and his view of nations precisely as dependent on narrative processes, concedes that "it is hard to think of any political phenomenon which remains so puzzling and about which there is less analytic consensus" ("Introduction" 1). Remarking on the causes for such a lack of consensus Hobsbawm rightfully points to the very shiftiness of the terms used for conceptualizing nationalism: "language, ethnicity or whatever — are themselves fuzzy, shifting and ambiguous, and as useless for the traveller's orientation as cloud-shapes are compared to landmarks" (6). Thus, the very concepts with which one would attempt to ground the phantom of nationalism turn out to be as airy as the idea of the nation itself.

Understandably, contemporary theoretical reflections on the question of the nation try to distance themselves from the exaggerations of romanticism or those of militant nationalists. If Ernest Renan already defined the nation foremost as a "spirit," "a soul, a spiritual principle" (52) — which is not the same as

a ghost but also not far from it — it is only fitting that Hobsbawm compare nationalists to fundamentalists when he warns that "Nationalism requires too much belief in what is patently not so" (12). Or, as Benedict Anderson has phrased it, when dealing with Nationalism what one has to do with are the "ghostly national imaginings" (9). Thus, even while striving for lucidity and objectivity, current theorists also cannot totally escape the logic of the phantasmagoric which is pervasive to the discourse of nationalism.

In the case of Portugal, during different periods and for different reasons, the question of the nation was inseparable from the concept of Empire, at least since the Estado Novo, the dictatorial regime which came to be headed by Salazar, was inaugurated in 1926, officially confirmed in the 1933 Constitution, and would last until 1974. In this case, where the teleology of the nation certainly required colonialism for the nation's very survival and immortality, the issues are perhaps even more difficult to separate: one might as well speak of the colonial ghostly imaginings as of the national ones, and colonialism, however vital it was understood to be was also always already enmeshed in a web of mourning and trauma. The disappearance of D. Sebastião does provide an appropriate founding ghost story for the Nation, but even the infamous "mapa côr-de-rosa," the pink map symbolizing the dispute with England over control of subsaharan Africa that culminated in the British ultimatum of 1890 and Portugal's inevitable submission, could be invoked as a ghost of the national trauma. In this paper my concern is rather limited as it is my purpose to focus on a narrow topic: the use of images of houses in relation to such a phantasmagoria of national-colonial projections, and, more specifically, how those images have been deployed, foremost by one writer, Lídia Jorge.[2]

Granted, ghosts do not seem the most appropriate subject for scholarly debate and yet I can hardly imagine a discussion of nationalism and colonialism that does not have to confront the issue of ghosts. That now, twenty-five years after the Revolution of 25 April 1974, which restored democratic rule to Portugal and initiated the process of complete decolonization, one would investigate those specters seems only adequate. And such an investigation should not be confined to an analysis of the postcolonial, if by that one would have in mind a narrow centering on the cultural artifacts produced by new nations. Rather, I believe that such an investigation should direct itself precisely to the writing produced in the former metropolis because it is there that the ghosts might be more visible. Perhaps classifying contemporary Portuguese literature as a postcolonial literature will appear exaggerated to some and yet, the processes of colonialism, the wounds of which in many cases have not yet turned to scars let alone started healing, are everywhere visible in Portuguese letters and social conditions. In his defense of an analysis of "the ghostly," Avery Gordon is very clear when he states:

> If haunting describes how that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities, the ghost is just the sign. . . . The ghost is not simply a dead or missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. . . . The

> way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening.
>
> (8)

It was Carlos Reis, Director of the National Library, who, in a recent "Trabalho de casa" or "Homework," his regular column in *Jornal de Letras*, suggested the utility of investigating Portuguese literature through an analysis of the way houses are represented. Very possibly, given his specialty on Eça de Queirós, the celebrated nineteenth-century realist writer, he might have had in mind one particular illustrious house. In one of his last novels, *The Illustrious House of Ramires*,[3] published posthumously at the turn of the century, Eça already provides a paradigmatic example for a haunted house which explicitly makes the link between nationalism and colonialism. Portugal's teleological view of African colonies as its possibility for regeneration is presented from the point of view of a medieval tower haunted by the ghosts of Ramires' ancestors, themselves older even than the nation. The following citation clearly signals the importance that Eça's novel assumes for any study of the discourse on ghosts of nation and empire:

> Despido, soprada a vela, depois dum rápido sinal-da-cruz, o Fidalgo da Torre adormeceu. Mas no quarto, que se povoou de sombras, começou para ele uma noite revolta e pavorosa . . . voltou derreadamente à cama: e readormeceu logo, muito longe sobre as relvas profundas dum prado de África.
>
> (119-121)

> [When he had undressed, blown out the candle and hastily crossed himself, the Nobleman of the Tower went to sleep. But his room filled with shadowy shapes and there began a dreadful, frightening night . . . He returned in exhaustion to his bed and went straight off to sleep again, far away on the lush green of a meadow in Africa]
>
> (Stevens 43-44)

Turning now to Lídia Jorge, I would like to start by affirming that one of the principal structuring elements of all her novels is precisely the figure of a house and that her houses are always either haunted or haunting and frequently both. The one novel that explicitly addresses the issue of the ghosts of empire is *A Costa dos Murmúrios [The Murmuring Coast]*. However, her other novels also focus on images of houses in order to explore the problematics of national and personal identity. An analysis of those other houses can help us see how all of Lídia Jorge's novels are fundamentally novels of memory and that all of her houses in a sense are linked as Houses of Memory. Sometimes her houses are constructed so as to reflect more on individual questions. Such is the case with the Casa da Arara in *O Jardim sem Limites [The Garden Without Limits]*. But even when the issues seem to be strictly individual, a national allegory is never absent, as can be seen from the *Casa do Leborão* in *A Última Dona [The Last Lady]*.[4] Her latest novel, *O Vale da Paixão [The Painter of Birds]*, represents per-

haps her most complex attempt at weaving the personal with the collective, the national with the imperial past.

A Costa dos Murmúrios remains one of the most important novels that thematize the colonial war and among all of Lídia Jorge's works it is the one which has received most critical attention. It is a complex narrative, set in Mozambique, during the time of the colonial war, and divided in two parts. The first part, titled "The Locusts," is almost an independent short narrative about the wedding of a young woman, Evita, to a young officer and his subsequent death. The rest of the novel, is presented as if it were a monologue in which the narrator, Eva, reflects on her life when she was younger. This second part greatly expands the information provided in the first part; it criticizes the linear view of events presented there, and problematizes questions of narrativity, historiography, identity, and memory. Eva frequently refers to her previous self, Evita, as if she needs to remind herself and the reader that these two names refer to the same person. This is particularly so since there is a great temporal and affective distance between the narrator in the present of the narrative and her former self. Eva recalls the processes by which she and her husband became estranged, how he abandoned his idealism and, in his admiration for his captain, became a sadistic killer; she also recalls how she was shown this reality by Helena, the captain's wife, who also attempted to seduce her. One key aspect that distinguishes this novel from other literary representations of the colonial war is precisely the emphasis on the activities of the women who had accompanied their husbands into Africa and whose domestic activities were tainted by the presence of war.

Readers will have no problem identifying the *Stella Maris*, the hotel where the Portuguese officers and their wives stay and where Evita celebrates her wedding, as an important site within the signifying universe of the novel. Most readers will probably also have no difficulty remembering how the *Stella Maris* is described at times as being in ruins, or how it is the stage for some of the key events narrated in the novel. Certainly the speech proffered by the blind captain on the greatness of the Portuguese nation, having as its background a reproduction of the invincible armada, will be understood not only as tragically ironic, but as a form of haunting of the past as well. But the *Stella Maris* is not the only significant house in that novel. Helena's house, the house where she is kept as a prisoner until her husband returns from action, is also where the photographs documenting the atrocities committed by the Portuguese army are kept. Those photographs certainly can be seen as haunting ghosts. Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag both directly link the photographic image with death and its effect with a form of haunting return of the dead from the past. I would argue that not only is *A Costa dos Murmúrios* one of the most haunting texts on Portugal's colonial role but that its houses are themselves, in a sense, haunted houses.

Jorge's novel invokes the imperial, national ghosts but not so much to exorcise them – her text does not have the same cathartic effect as those of the early Lobo Antunes such as *Memória de Elefante* and *Os Cus de Judas*[5] – but rather so as to confront them. And yet, in her complex way, Eva in *A Costa dos Murmúrios* also attempts to deny those ghosts or to destroy them when she states

the imperative not to let any of those shades pass on to the future, even to the point of stating once that there is no point in looking for ghosts among the ruins: "De nada vale querer que existam nos escombros os fantasmas" ["It does no good to wish there to be ghosts amongst the rubble"] (111). I shall return to this issue in the conclusion, after taking some brief glances at Jorge's other haunted houses. Through the confrontation with imperial ghosts, and more precisely with the specters of the colonial war, Jorge seems to circumscribe them, to enjoin them to dissolve and not return. Her subsequent novels do show a much more tenuous relation to the colonial order, but her houses still remain haunted.

Of all of her houses, perhaps the Casa da Arara in *O Jardim sem Limites* [*The Garden Without Limits*] is the most fantastic which might have to do with the utopian project of a community the house represents. In this novel Lídia Jorge focuses on a group of young people, drawn together because at one point they all live in the same boarding house. They seek thrills, which they feel Lisbon's provinciality when compared to other large cities, denies them. The story is narrated by a woman who writes at first just with the help of an old Remington typewriter, but soon afterwards she writes on the walls of the house, too. Lídia Jorge who clearly comments on the role of writers as witnesses of their time, also criticizes the way in which documenting often prevents intervening directly in events. The entire novel oscillates between the poles of extreme apathy – the main goal of one of the characters, known as "Static Man" is being completely immobile in public – and forced activity, such as the notorious crimes that happen. Without reducing the novel to this one level, we can say that Lídia Jorge problematizes certain conditions of Portuguese society in the period after democracy was restored and after Portugal, no longer the large anachronistic empire it had once been, sharply renegotiated its own identity as a small European nation.

Although appearing to be a normal edifice, located in Lisbon in the Rua da Tabaqueira – the novel's cover provides an imaginary map of Lisbon with the street names altered to represent the names of different characters in the novel – the Casa da Arara is anything but normal. Its importance for the novel can be deduced by the fact that the narrator begins the novel precisely by mentioning how she had decided to move to that house and what it represented for her:

> Durante o Verão de 88, eu era um dos hóspedes da Casa da Arara, uma vasta fachada com dois renques de janelas donde se viam pela manhã os batelões subirem Tejo dentro, arrastando as gigantescas cargas. Se os vidros estivessem lavados, neles se espelharia a sua passagem silenciosa como nas imagens dos sonhos. Mas o que me conduziu, numa determinada manhã de Fevereiro, até um desses quartos semelhantes a casernas abandonadas durante uma operação militar, faz parte do mistério da minha própria vida.
>
> (7)

> [In the summer of 88 I was one of the tenants in the House of Arara, a vast façade with two rows of windows from which one could see in the

> morning the barges pulling immense loads up the Tagus. Their silent passage would have mirrored itself as dream images on the glass panes if they had been washed. But what took me, on a certain February morning, to one of those rooms, similar to military barracks abandoned during a military operation, is part of the mystery of my own life.]

What is most significant in this description is the way in which the narrator intrinsically links the house with a barracks and with her own condition of being. Indeed, the centrality of the house as an extension of the narrator's self is evident as the reader gradually picks up more knowledge about the house from the narrator who already in the first paragraph announces it as something similar to a first home, "alguma coisa de semelhante a um primeiro lar." Were it just that, it would be banal as houses have always been seen as extensions of personal identity. The notion that one's home, more precisely, something like one's first home, might be a deserted army barracks is peculiar and might already point towards a tenuous link between the self and the colonial past. Even more significantly, the house functions as a boarding house in which an odd assortment of young people come to share their lives, and the house itself becomes the text of their experiences and dreams. We should add that Jorge's various houses share that characteristic of being both private and public at the same time. That is, they are neither strictly individual residences nor hotels but always a mix of the two, as if it would be impossible to have any completely private individual space or as if even the most public of houses, the hotel, would be transformed into a series of private residences, so that public and private become fused and the individual is always enmeshed in collectivity. Perhaps for this reason Jorge's houses are such important elements in her configuration of national identity.

It would be an exaggeration to pretend that the Casa da Arara is haunted in a traditional sense. Lídia Jorge does not indulge in any form of gothic horror in this novel. But perhaps because of that the novel is all the more fantastic and haunting. The first unusual event to take place in the house is a general flooding. Even though presented prosaically enough as occasioned by a simple act of forgetting, it radically transforms the lives of its inhabitants by linking them together as an odd community with few private markers or barriers while at the same time revealing the house's powers: "A inundação, ocorrida num sábado de tarde em que ninguém se encontrava em casa, assumiu aspectos de catástrofe e acabou por desencadear revelações para além de todas as expectativas"(10). [The flooding, which took place on a Saturday afternoon when no one was home took on the guise of a catastrophe and ended up occasioning revelations beyond all expectations]. Even before this flooding, which will lead all of the guests to leave the doors to their individual rooms permanently open in a continuation of the mingling brought about by the waters, the narrator had started writing on the walls a secret map of her conjunctures about the other guests. After the flooding and the breaking down of the material borders of individual privacy, that map is continued and augmented and spreads to all of the walls of the house.

The flooding, however, also has other consequences. It is difficult not to read the narrator's description of the house after the flood as an allegory of a

national and colonial past, a past which might have been dissimulated but which the waters bring to the surface in all of its putrefaction:

> [N]a verdade, nos dias que se seguiram, levantou-se das madeiras e dos panos um grande fedor. A princípio era apenas um cheiro a coisa alagadiça, como se estivéssemos a viver sobre um pedaço de charco, mas depois, a sensação que se teve foi bem mais forte. A água havia-se entranhado nos interstícios das paredes e nos buracos das tábuas, e matérias que possívelmente aí esperariam para se decomporem e transformarem noutra substância, tinham visto chegar a sua hora com a ajuda dum fim de Abril encoberto e quente.
>
> (16)

> [Truly, in the days that followed, a great stench rose from the wood and the canvas. In the beginning it was only a smell like from something such as still waters as if we were living over a puddle, but afterwards the sensation became much stronger. The water had seeped into the fissures of the walls and into the holes in the woodwork, and that matter which might have waited in there to decompose and turn into something else had reached that point with the help of a hazy and hot end of April].

At other points in the novel Jorge also refers to the way in which the house appears to emanate phosphorescent gases as if indeed it were a corpse. The narrator further describes the house as if it were a boat — the spent image of Portugal's sea vocation, "Várias vezes, ao acordar, julguei que íamos deslizando mar fora num velho navio desamarrado" [Several times, on waking up, I thought we were drifting through the sea on an old ship let loose]. She also describes it as a colony, its decrepitude compared to wounds:

> Era um edifício com dois séculos e um revestimento de azulejos que atestava viagens feitas pelo mundo. Alguém havia conhecido o entrelaçado das trepadeiras tropicais e a sombra esguia das palmeiras. . . . Ao longo da mancha azul que forrava o que fora um vestíbulo, havia largos troços donde os azulejos tinham sido retirados ou simplesmente varridos como cacos. Junto á escada, apareciam palmeiras sem copa, jacarandás sem pé. À luz crua do exterior, essas feridas tornaram-se visíveis.
>
> (16-17)

> [It was a building two centuries old, covered with tiles that referred to voyages made through the world. Someone had known the weave of tropical climbing plants and the narrow shade of palm trees. . . . All along the blue stain which covered what had been an entrance hall there were places where the tiles had been removed or simply swept away as shards. Next to the stairway topless palm trees and jacarandas without a base appeared. In the raw light from outside those wounds became visible].

The house proper has an extension, the shed that serves as office for the landlord. The way in which the house itself becomes an infinitely changing text and a national-colonial corpse is duplicated in the shed, which, like a veritable palimpsest, is covered with layers of documents all referring to acts of resistance and denouncing individuals and groups as traitors who must be made accountable. The house's function as a site of memory and as a refuge of ghosts is made explicit by the words of the narrator when s/he is allowed to see the shed for the first time:

> Era um recinto quadrangular, só duma água . . . Mas lá dentro, aprisionado, existia um mundo intenso, amontoado, exposto por camadas como numa fractura geológica. . . . Mas o que mais admirava é que em torno das paredes, discriminando aquela multidão de fantasmas oriundos do seu país, datada dos idos anos 70, a mapeação era explícita. Uma coluna ainda estava encimada por uma epígrafe suave – "Estes São os Que Não Devemos Esquecer."
>
> (152-153)

> [It was a square space with just one floor . . . But inside it, imprisoned, there was an intense world, piled up, exposed by layers as in a geological fracture. . . . But what was more surprising is that around the walls, sorting out that multitude of ghosts from his country, dated from the gone-by 70's, the mapping was explicit. A column was still topped by a soft epigraph – "These Are the Ones Whom We Should Not Forget."]

The role of the narrator in *O Jardim sem Limites* [*The Garden Without Limits*], as we are repeatedly told, is to remember, to record: "Eu apenas me limitava a registar" (173). [I simply limited myself to recording]. But this record is also a form of witnessing which touches on the issue of guilt — individual and collective guilt, past and present guilt deriving from the murders that take place in the novel. For the guests of the Casa da Arara, the desire for those murders might bring some animation to what they feel is the hopeless mediocrity of life in Lisbon when compared to the exciting dangers of other metropolitan centers. Guilt and desire are always at issue in the novel down to its conclusion when the narrator states, "Limitei-me a assistir para conhecer. Não sou culpada" (375). [I limited myself to observing so as to know. I am not guilty].

Witnessing is also the key function of the narrator in *A Última Dona* [*The Last Lady*] who starts the novel in a much more accusatory tone: "Sou testemunha de que antes de se atingir as praias e o caos, a poente dos cruzamentos que conduzem a Duas-Pias, deixando para trás a velha linha do telégrafo que ainda delimita a zona do sossego, *A Casa do Leborão* é um local da Terra e existe" (13). [I am witness that before reaching the beaches and chaos, east of the crossings which lead to Duas-Pias and leaving behind the old telegraph line which still marks the zone of quietness, *The House of Leborão* is a place on this earth and exists]. In Lídia Jorge's perhaps most somber novel, the house takes center stage. Its name even appears in italics in the novel as if indeed it were

the title of a book. This narrative device recalls the walls of the Casa da Arara, in *The Garden Without Limits,* which are covered with the jungle text authored by all its inhabitants.

A Última Dona is the story of an engineer who appears to be a respected family man and influential member of society, but who secretly desires to possess an idealized woman, a figure of his imagination. This imaginary woman is based on his memory of the servant girl with whom he had his sexual initiation and of a prostitute dressed as a mermaid he had seen on a trip to Amsterdam and who had refused him. Since those youthful times, the engineer always evokes in his mind the image of his idealized woman, made up of pieces of the bodies of women he would encounter casually, until he meets a singer, the "last lady," who represents for him the always imagined but unattainable perfection. Following the advice of his associates, he takes this woman to spend a secret weekend with him at a remote club, the *Casa do Leborão,* a weekend from which only he returns.

Of all of Lídia Jorge's houses it is *Casa do Leborão* in *The Last Lady* which most closely resembles a haunted house, but despite its secret passages, its masked servants, and its convenience to dispose of dead bodies, it bears no relation to the empire. It is foremost a national allegory and, of the various houses created by Lídia Jorge, it is probably the one that comes closest to Eça's. Indeed, even in the archaizing name of the main protagonist, the engineer Geraldes, one could see an approximation to Ramires. The house itself, an old country estate replete with hunting motifs and secluded in the pine woods, evokes a sense of bygone times. Curiously, it is also the only house in Jorge's novels which is not in ruins, on the contrary, it has been recently renovated. Whereas the "Stella Maris" in *The Murmuring Coast* is a hotel turned into a barracks, and the Casa da Arara in *The Garden Without Limits* is a private house turned boarding house, the *Casa do Leborão* in *The Last Lady* is a sort of hotel, run as a private club. In its extreme care to isolate all guests from each other, the *Casa do Leborão* reveals an illusory attempt to duplicate an individual, private sphere.

A Última Dona [*The Last Lady*] is most haunting because the narrative voice is that of a ghost, the ghost of the woman Geraldes took with him to the *Casa do Leborão.* She died there and despite the removal of all traces of her existence returns to haunt with her statement of witnessing: "Sou testemunha." Even though Geraldes tries to shift the responsibility of the crime to the house, complaining to the manager that it was the house that had killed his lover, he too must face his responsibility. *A Última Dona* is a serious indictment of the nation and its representative men. In its avoidance of any colonial images, however, this novel lets us believe that the imperial ghosts have been laid to rest.

If one takes a brief look at *O Vale da Paixão* [*The Painter of Birds*], one can see that imperial ghost surfacing again, however in a modified form. In this novel, the patriarchal house functions like all of the other houses: it is a private house as well as a communal place sheltering several generations of family and employees. The Casa de Valmares is described almost as if in ruins and haunted. Much more explicitly than any other house, it is a direct allegory of the nation, the state, and the empire in decay: the narrator states that "O dono de

Valmares achava que a sua casa era uma empresa sólida . . . à semelhança dum estado" (46). [The owner of Valmares thought that his house was a solid enterprise/business . . . similar to a state]; and he asks, "Seria que a sua casa, a sua empresa, a sua representação de império . . . se tinham reduzido àquela decadência?" (98) [Could it be that his house, his enterprise/business, his representation of empire . . . had become reduced to such decadence?]. The ghost in this novel is the youngest son, Walter, the soldier who "dishonors" the family, goes to India, and joins the colonial army as a way of escaping the responsibility of having made a local girl pregnant. The patriarch wishes this son away, as much as he wishes that his other sons, who emigrated to the Americas, would return. But the only one who always returns, as ghosts do, is Walter, the father/uncle of the narrator, who already in life is understood principally as a ghost.

There is nothing morbid about Walter. On the contrary, of all the Dias – an enterprising family from the patriarch bent on expanding his "empire" to the sons who work hard in the fields and then emigrate – Walter is the one who goes further in his search for liberty and artistic freedom. Walter's taste for life makes him attractive to the local girls, but when he is confronted with the consequences of his love making by the pregnant Maria Ema, who had been abandoned by her own family, he decides to flee by going as a soldier to Portuguese India (74-76). The text denounces patriarchal order at several levels. Maria Ema's father abandons her and blames the girl as well as his wife for what happened (70-74). Walter's father at first attempts to deny his son's involvement, then insists that Walter assume his responsibility, and in the end agrees with the army commander that sending Walter to India is the best for the young man's future (74-75). Even Walter, who starts by seemingly defying the social order, ends up confirming it by serving in the colonial army. Having abandoned the daughter who will be born to Maria Ema, Walter reinforces the patriarchal order on an even more profound level. His absence, experienced by the narrator as traumatic, becomes far stronger than any real presence because it is fantasmatic. The narrator, will subsequently try all she can to assume the figure of the father, symbolically, sexually, and as creator of the very image of Walter that is given to the reader. Significantly, the steamer that takes Walter to India is named "Pátria," nation, country, or homeland (76).

Walter is represented as a ghost because his absence, in the daughter's eyes, and his rebellion against the patriarchal order are seen by that very order as an incarnation of evil (60). An inaugural scene depicting the way the daughter imagines her father is Walter's rebellion against his own father when Walter refuses to collect manure like all the other sons. Francisco Dias, in his attempt to enforce his authority, nearly kills Walter who does not resist. The family tragedy is only prevented by the intervention of a washerwoman who reminds Francisco Dias that none of that would happen were his wife still alive (56). Because all the other sons try to follow the father's injunctions, it becomes clear that more than the father's own authority is at stake. From that moment on it is as if Walter had returned his life to his progenitor. The rift in the family unit that starts then cannot be mended, and it is clear that Francisco Dias must try to save what he can by excluding Walter. Walter's horse carriage, which he uses

in his amorous escapades is soon dubbed by all as the "Devil's cart" (80).

The last time Walter physically returns to the family home, in 1963, he secretly meets his daughter at night in her bedroom. In this visit he is described as if he were an apparition, a ghostly visitation his daughter can invoke in her mind at will (9-13). The car that Walter uses during that same summer, a black Chevrolet that substitutes for the black horse carriage, symbolizes the family's visit to Sagres, the mythical place where Portugal's imperial destiny started with the creation of a nautical school in the fifteenth century. Walter's Chevy not only allows for the tenuous illusion of a reunited family, but more significantly for a space where the social and moral order can be confronted. The Chevy — that "moving house," that "big black barge," that "continent" (120-121) — allows Walter to be with Maria Ema as if they had never gone away from each other, as if she had never been abandoned by him, had never been forced to marry his older brother, had never had to present their daughter as his niece. It is as if the Casa de Valmares had been substituted by another space where freedom would not be gagged by hypocritical social custom. "The car was a marked space." As expected however, the moment of collective insanity, when the borders of conventional morality are transgressed, cannot withstand the established order, and Walter's exchange of Maria Ema for colonial India, the exchange of his familial duty for the national one, is abolished. Subsequently designated as a "funerary car" and as a "cozy ghost" (132-135), the car is undoubtedly a key image uniting the supposedly contradictory conditions of domestic comfort and ghostly anxiety that mark the idea of a haunted house.

To conclude, in all of Lídia Jorge's novels then, haunting is the privilege of narrative and witnessing the return of repressed memory is the key to her haunted houses. In the last novel, even the ghost of empire returns, the ghost which had seemingly faded after the confrontation with the ghosts of the colonial war in *A Costa dos Murmúrios*. But Jorge's statement that there is no sense in looking for ghosts among the ruins of the *Stella Maris*, and her narrator's determination not to let any shades go on into the future, is, as it could not but be, in vain. The ghosts of empire are still very much with us, even in the peculiar form of the ghosts of the colonial war. One has only look at texts by other writers such João Santos Lopes's *Às vezes neva em Abril* [Sometimes it Snows in April] to recognize this. In Lopes's work, a group of misfits take a young black woman whom they rape and want to murder to an abandoned railway station, a site that becomes yet another haunted house of contemporary Portugal. João, the ethical voice of the play, still tries to deny that the ghosts of the colonial war, and of what some still believe was an abandoning of the colonies, are alive today when he objects, "Nós não perdemos nada. Viemos embora. É tudo. Não alimentamos esses fantasmas" (58). [We did not lose anything. We came back. That's all. We do not feed those ghosts]. But Gabriel and the other apocalyptic "angels" will not let those ghosts rest because they feed their ressentiment: "Enganas-te. A guerra não acabou ainda. Apenas mudou de local. A guerra continua aqui, todos os dias" (43). [You are wrong. The war is not over yet. It just changed places. The war continues here, every day].

There are many ways of dealing with ghosts. One can try to exorcise them, but they still return. One can try to invoke them and feed on them so as to shift one's responsibility. Or one can try to deny them, but that only serves to free

them. All nations, and certainly all imperial nations, are haunted houses replete with ghosts. Memory and witnessing are perhaps the only ethical ways of dealing with them, acknowledging their power to still shape our lives today.

Notes

1. The Portuguese King, D. Sebastião, disappeared during a disastrous military expedition in the North of Africa, leaving Portugal without a direct heir to the throne, which made it Possible for his cousin, the King of Spain, to claim the Portuguese crown as well and annex Portugal in 1580. Only sixty years later, in 1640, would Portugal regain independence but by then many of its overseas colonies had been either threatened or partially taken over by England, Holland and France. A long period of decadence followed what had been a golden age based on naval superiority and maritime trade. Sebastian became a figure of desire, on which mythical nationalism ("Sebastianismo") fed, creating the legend that he would return one foggy day to lead Portugal back to its old glory.
2. Lídia Jorge, arguably one of the most important contemporary writers, has published a series of novels and received several national and international prizes. In English only two of her novels have been published so far: *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, initially published in 1988, was translated as *The Murmuring Coast*); *O Vale da Paixão* — literally "The Valley of Passion" — has been translated as *The Painter of Birds*. A short narrative that is at the base of this novel has also appeared in English translation with the title "The Instrumentalina" in volume 68 of *Grand Street*.
3. Eça de Queirós, *A Ilustre Casa de Ramires* was published in 1900, after the death of the author in the same year. The English translation by Anne Stevens (1964) has been recently reissued.
4. "Dona" in *A Última Dona* is a charged term and translating it into English involves a loss of meaning: "Lady" is one possible meaning, but so is "owner" or "mistress" as a feminine for "master".
5. António Lobo Antunes, for long a favorite as candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature until José Saramago received that distinction, is one of the most ruthless critics of Portuguese society. A psychiatrist, who served in the Army during the colonial war in Angola, Lobo Antunes published his first two novels, which share many similarities, almost simultaneously, in 1979. Both novels thematize the colonial war and the second, *Os Cus de Judas*, translated as *South of Nowhere* by Elizabeth Lowe (New York: Random House, 1983), is still one of the most powerful indictments of the colonial war.

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