The Locations and Relocations of Lusophone Studies

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"Lusophone studies," or the range of topics and methodologies centered on the study of the Portuguese-speaking world, is a relatively recent disciplinary designation with origins in Portuguese studies and Luso-Brazilian studies. As a field, Lusophone studies encompasses the study of Portugal and Portuguese-speaking countries and communities outside of Portugal, such as those in Africa (Angola, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea) and in Asia (e.g., Macau, Timor, and India) but is typically exclusive of Brazil. Lusophone studies, therefore, takes as its collective matter of analysis a vast geographical arena south and east of Portugal with a variety of cultures and national and ethnic identities that at one point existed under the umbrella of Portuguese colonialism. The extended geographical arena of the field also supports a practice of interdisciplinary scholarship that reaches outside of traditional literary studies and history to include cinema studies, diasporic studies, or gender and sexuality studies that are commensurate with developments in other humanities disciplines.

The current configurations of Lusophone studies raise the question of disciplinary labels and scholarly practices, which in turn reveal a politics of identity and even a struggle for survival of a comparatively small field in the North American academy. Entrenched biases or geopolitical realities have long affected Lusophone studies, not to mention the name of the field itself. On the one hand, shifting nomenclatures reveal a consciousness of collective identities and affiliations to national, political, or cultural realities, while on the other hand they can act as strategic attempts to delineate the specific national and cultural purviews of study that define the discipline. The common usage of these disciplinary designations has also contributed to the marginalization of certain national cultures. Portugal is a case in point here in terms of its traditional place in Luso-Brazilian and Iberian studies. From the Middle Ages to the later years of what is generally termed the "early modern" period, literary and cultural borders between the kingdoms that constitute Portugal and Spain were considerably more porous than the contemporary national divide. Literarily speaking, for instance, the poetic lingua franca of the peninsula to roughly the mid-fourteenth century was Galician-Portuguese, a language employed by poets such as King Alfonso X of

Castile and King Dinis of Portugal. The long centuries of cross-fertilization between the regions of Spain and Portugal definitively advocate for an understanding of "Iberian" studies that locates Portugal squarely in this domain, but this is all too frequently not the case, since many scholars understand "Iberia" to mean Spain exclusively. As a field, however, Portuguese studies has existed independently of Spanish studies, yet Portuguese studies often exists under the shadow of Spain or Spanish studies. From the perspective of literary studies, Pedro Schacht Pereira justifiably laments that "Portuguese literature is often considered—falsely—as a development peripheral to Hispanism" (22). Pereira identifies a perception that has dogged Portuguese studies in modern times, while not relinquishing a hope that the remit of the newer institutional field of Iberian studies might eventually be more inclusive of Luso-Brazilian content (23).

Yet "Luso-Brazilian" is not without its own intricacies of identifications and affiliations in the ambit of Lusophone studies. Luso-Brazilian is arguably the most common designator of the field in North America and, at least lexically, indicates a discipline that equally encompasses Portugal and Brazil. There is no doubt that the study of both Portugal and Brazil under this label has been a tradition in academe, but it often exists by favoring Brazilian studies, given US interests in Brazil. If the term "Luso-Brazilian" is conceptually problematic for a scholar like Pereira, who notes that the "Luso-Brazilian commonality of ideas and purposes, as well as the self-perception of Brazilian and Portuguese elites, effectively ceased to exist by the second decade of the twentieth century" (25), the scholarly and institutional practices surrounding both Iberian and Luso-Brazilian studies has at times created a double marginalization of Portugal in its "home" disciplines. Overall, Luso-Brazilian studies—with either a focus on Portugal or Brazil or both—has institutionally existed under the umbrella of other language-centered studies, such as departments of Spanish or more broadly Romance languages and literatures. Few North American universities can boast of stand-alone departments of Portuguese studies, with Brown, the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth and the University of Massachusetts-Lowell being notable exceptions. The existence of such individual departments, apart from an institutional commitment to the discipline, is also a result of long-standing diasporic patterns that saw the migration of Portuguese nationals to the northeastern US and the interest of immigrant communities in their culture of origin. In Canada, Portuguese studies at the University of Toronto has historically benefitted from the sizeable Portuguese immigrant community in the city (see Boschilia and Andreazza; Marques and Marujo) and the support of Portuguese consular services.

Interdisciplinary affiliations between Portuguese studies and other humanities disciplines, coupled with academic interests in postcolonialism, partially motivated the renaming of the field in ways that reflected tendencies in the academy to move away from a Eurocentric focus to a valorization of cultures and nationalities that had existed under Portuguese colonialism. Ana Paula Ferreira and K. David Jackson published essays calling for a consideration of disciplinary labels that, in part, reflected an awareness of the influence of the legacy of imperialism in shaping academic fields. Ferreira opted for "Luso-Afro-Brazilian studies" as a way to convey "a transnational, trans-regional and, above all, post-colonial interdisciplinary formation held by the Portuguese language as historically sedimented,

thus multi-voiced and multi-layered, ground of critical negotiations and transits but, also, of conflictive, non-translatable, or resolvable differences" (74). This statement identified an expanding scope of Lusophone studies away from the "Luso-centric worldview . . . at the academic level" (Pereira 27). Ferreira writes that "the rise of new geo-political, social, and cultural realities in the new millennium has already begun and will continue to press for disciplinary and . . . even departmental re-organization" (75). Jackson's overview, along a similar line of thought, notes that the twenty-first century's first new sovereign state, East Timor, becomes part of the purview of the field because "through language, East Timor unites its Southeast Asian and Oceanic reality to the heritage of a global Portuguese world" ("History of the Future" 14). The study of globalization has become an increasing presence in Lusophone studies. *Globalization* can mean many things to scholars, depending on critical approaches or objects of study. It can refer to evolving conceptualizations of the globe and currents of intellectual culture in early modernity that were the consequence of oceanic voyaging. A more political understanding of the term is as a synonym for overseas imperialism, a point I will return to shortly.

The emergence of Lusophone studies was roughly coterminous with the study of Lusophone Africa and its postcolonial literatures, so the name is an indication of a widening purview that de-emphasizes a European paradigm. In its initial phases, Lusophone studies took mainly literary texts as its basis of analysis, evident, for instance, in the anthologies and individual studies edited or published by Patrick Chabal. In a volume on the literature of the five African countries previously in the Portuguese colonial domain (*The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa*), Chabal notes that the five countries have very little in common apart from a Portuguese colonial past. In considering the relationship between language (i.e., Portuguese), written literature, and culture, Chabal argues that "literature is a central component of the cultural identity of all modern nation-states" (4) and that "European languages will be appropriated in Africa by the local cultures and re-shaped to serve their linguistic and cultural needs" (6). Each of the chapters of Chabal's anthology are dedicated to one Lusophone African nation and are heir to the studies of scholars like Manuel Ferreira and Russell G. Hamilton.

In 2011, Fernando Arenas published *Lusophone Africa: Beyond Independence*, a monograph that seeks to decolonialize the study of Portuguese-speaking Africa. While retaining an interest in literary texts, Arenas's book brings Lusophone studies more definitively into interdisciplinary dialogues that had been animating other areas of the humanities. Arenas presents his book as "a multi-disciplinary approach drawing from the fields of popular music, film, literature, cultural history, geopolitics, and critical theory" (xv), and in so doing provides an important moment of the interdisciplinary scholarship that Ferreira and Jackson foresaw. Arenas aims to present "a kaleidoscopic vision that is culturally grounded, historically and geopolitically situated, as well as theoretically informed, which captures the multidimensionality of the five African Portuguese-speaking countries as they have been shaped by the myriad phenomena associated with postcolonialism and globalization" (xv). Arenas's book succeeds in fulfilling this objective, and along the way provides indications of how scholars

in Lusophone studies might understand postcolonialism and globalization as shaped by their field.

Postcolonial Africa is but one area of Lusophone studies that counters an imperialist history of the field. The role of the Portuguese language in this history is far from neutral or non-controversial. Consider the concept of *lusofonia* or Portuguese as a basis of communal identity outside of Portugal. The language maintains bonds with the home culture while also serving as the medium of expression of diasporic experiences. In the case of countries that were formerly Portuguese colonies the language itself can be a surviving link to imperialism that must be resisted or modified in order to shed its colonial grip. Onésimo T. Almeida is one scholar who provides a critical assessment of the uses and misconceptions surrounding *lusofonia*, and signals the intention of some artists who live and work in Portuguese-speaking societies to banish the shadow of colonialism by appropriating and reshaping the language. Almeida refers to a few well-known African writers in support of this point. Paulina Chiziane, the Mozambican writer, once declared, "One thing I make very clear: standard Portuguese, never! I am not interested!" Meanwhile, Luandino Vieira, the Portuguese-born Angolan author, wrote "I have no doubt . . . our children will not speak the Portuguese of Portugal. We do not understand yet how it will be . . . but the result will be different" (qtd. in Almeida 11). The many dimensions of *lusofonia* and the elastic understandings of the term exceed the scope of this article, but even a cursory search for bibliography on the topic produces a wealth of studies. What figures like Chiziane and Vieira signal is the necessity to displace "standard" Portuguese as essential to *lusofonia* and to grant an autonomous identity to the language as it evolved in Africa.

If the imposition of a standardized language may be regarded as one of the legacies of imperialism, then studies centered on the early modern Portuguese empire are largely responsible for the creation of Portuguese studies as a discipline and its survival in academic programs. While it is difficult to identify one particular historical moment as the inception of Portuguese studies, the many editions of Luís de Camões's *Os Lusíadas* (1572) in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are decisive in elevating Camões and seafaring imperialism to a national, canonical status. Many Portuguese programs have the study of Camões and the culture surrounding his epic poem as a centerpiece; the subject of course is as legitimate a topic of study as any, but what has been questioned institutionally and in the work of individual scholars is the conservative perception of empire as a triumphalist or heroic enterprise. For decades, imperialism has been translated into academic practice, and scholars have begun to work against this strain of thought by examining previously ignored aspects of empire that dismantle its "victorious" interpretation. While there is a substantial body of scholarship, for example, on slavery as a persistent and violent aspect of Portuguese Atlantic exploration/exploitation, recent studies such as Herman L. Bennett's book demonstrate not only how the Iberian/Portuguese dimension of the early modern Atlantic adds considerably to knowledge of the field but also shows how Africans exercised their agency in early modern empire, which unsettles traditional perspectives on colonial power dynamics.

One means by which Lusophone studies has begun to loosen the strictures of traditional or conservative categories of research is through the multidisciplinary affiliations undergirding the maritime humanities. The study of the world's seas and oceans as the basis for literary, historical, or cultural practices transcends fixed disciplinary taxonomies and promotes alliances between previously discrete traditions of thought. Portugal is the best-suited of any European nation for this field. Consider the "Iberian Atlantic" as a distinct entity and focus of scholarship, of which the "Lusophone Atlantic" was a major component (Bethencourt 20). The sphere of influence of the Lusophone Atlantic was not limited to the Atlantic Ocean alone but included other maritime domains central to Portuguese history, namely the Indian and Pacific Oceans (18). Brookshaw notes that the axis of the Lusophone Atlantic was Angola-Brazil (38), "a space in which goods, products, cultures and human beings are traded, transported and transformed through the medium of the Portuguese language" (40–41). The slave trade and the early modern black African diaspora were central to the establishment and persistence of the Lusophone Atlantic as a distinct oceanic realm of historical experience. The presence of black Africans on Iberian soil, while long an established area of historical scholarship, has begun to be brought into dialogue with critical race studies, as evidenced by Nicholas R. Jones's *Staging Habla de Negros.* Jones argues that, in early modern theatrical performances, the presence of black African characters was not based on stereotypes intended for humorous effect (a critical commonplace) but rather were representations of black African agency and subjectivity. The future of critical race studies as a component of Lusophone studies has just begun to be explored.

The early modern Lusophone Atlantic and Indian Ocean were also incessantly traveled spaces that saw the movement, exchange, and creation of ideas in various intellectual traditions (for a survey of some of these, see Blackmore, "Travelers"). The late medieval and early modern engagement with the ocean—either in the form of imperial expansion, individual travel, or a prolific, imaginative literary culture—unsettled clear distinctions between traditionally discrete intellectual disciplines, and in this way was an early indication of the disciplinary fluidities and reconceptualizations of such disciplines that have been occurring in contemporary critical debates. To invoke again the example of Camões (one of many writers and thinkers we could cite), in both his epic and lyric poetry it is frequently impossible to separate poetry from cartography or cosmography, or to isolate historiographic narrative from the imaginative or speculative conceptions of an expanding world-space and its peoples. To repeat: the maritime humanities promotes lines of thought that reveal unexpected affinities between ostensibly unrelated—or at the very least, traditionally separated—disciplines. The fluidity of borders of oceanic space motivates a porosity of forms of thought and critical methodologies. In the early modern period, one example of the breakdown of taxonomies in the Portuguese/Iberian experience of the ocean is shipwreck, where the many shipwreck narratives of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries record crises in received knowledge or the mastery of nautical science as well as inversions of value systems and of political and social hierarchies. Maritime disaster becomes an icon of Portuguese culture itself, and the communities

on board ships were anything but homogenous and suggest that even a term of collective identity like "Portuguese" must be cautiously employed. The seaborne collectives recorded in shipwreck literature include nobles, imperial administrators, scientists, merchants, slaves, interpreters, Africans (or "Moors"), priests, and scholars. Such collectives were thus multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-national, and from all walks of life.

The legacy of Portuguese empire in Africa and India has produced studies informed by a postcolonial perspective. Arenas's *Lusophone Africa* is one such study, while K. David Jackson's *De Chaul a Batticaloa* examines cultural traditions that evolved from Portuguese maritime empire in India and Sri Lanka. Other studies, by scholars who have made gender and feminism cornerstones of their research, have contributed to the postcolonial conversation which is now part of Lusophone studies. *Gender, Empire, and Postcolony: Luso-Afro-Brazilian Intersections* (Owen and Klobucka), for instance, offers a thematically and methodologically wide-ranging swath of studies, including critical responses to Brazilian sociologist-anthropologist Gilberto Freyre's theory of "Lusotropicalism," cinema, postcolonialism, the visual arts, and women's studies. These studies demonstrate possibilities of expanding prevailing notions of modern postcolonialism in other national or regionally-defined scholarship, while posing questions as to the nature of Portuguese postcolonialism and how it might enrich our understanding of the field.

In the past two decades, Lusophone studies has made inroads in LGBTQ/sexuality studies, a development that is another bold move against more conservative critical approaches. If we compare other national literary traditions that have participated in LGBTQ studies (or queer studies) since the 1980s, Lusophone studies is a relative latecomer. This was at least partially the result of an initial reticence to engage in what would have been considered a risky endeavor in a small and still predominantly traditional discipline. 1999 saw the publication of *Queer Iberia* and *Queer Sites*, each with chapters on Portugal. *Queer Iberia* sought to bring medieval and Renaissance Iberian studies into dialogue with prevailing critical approaches and formulations in sexuality/gender studies, while *Queer Sites* approached gay sexuality from a historical standpoint. Anecdotally, I can say that, as one of the volume's coeditors, even in the planning stages *Queer Iberia* was welcomed by many scholars and execrated by others. To use "queer" as an adjective for "Iberia" was, for some, crossing the line, even though earlier volumes on modern queer Hispanic studies had met with critical success. The volume challenged a disciplinary rigidity and conservatism that had largely characterized medieval and early modern Iberian studies. The overall positive reception of the volume indicated as much a shift in possibilities of disciplinary research as interest in the topics of the individual essays.

The records of the Inquisition, which contain numerous confessions of male "sodomites," are one of the more extensive archival attestations of homosexual presence in premodern Portugal and the social circles of what we would now call gay culture (see Higgs, "The Historiography"; Johnson and Dutra; and Mott). Interestingly, the Inquisitorial *cadernos do nefando* ("record-books of the nefarious sin") provide a wealth of detailed information about the various practices of male "sodomitical" sex across social classes. In transcribing the confessions of

sodomites, Inquisitorial secretaries employed a detailed lexicon to describe the manners and variables of male-male sexual contact. Consequently, these confessions have bequeathed to scholars the first working vocabulary of alternate sexual practices in Portuguese history. In the early twentieth century, many sexological studies were published in Portugal and are what we might consider precursors to modern LGBTQ studies. Monteiro's *Amor sáfico e socrático* is one such example: published in 1922 (by the Institute of Forensic Medicine of Lisbon), the book surveys homosexuality in western Europe, beginning with the Romans, and includes chapters on forensic medicine and law. Asdrúbal d'Aguiar published medico-pathological studies of homosexuals, lesbians, and cross-dressers, some illustrated with photos.

Modern LGBTQ studies were initiated with Quinlan and Arenas's *Lusosex*, a collection of essays that focus on the (mostly modern) Lusophone world, including Brazil. Scholarship published in Portugal at the same time also began to open Portuguese studies to the lines of inquiry of queer studies. Pitta's *Fractura* constitutes one of the first analyses of homosexuality in contemporary Portuguese literature. The critical anthology *Indisciplinar a teoria* (Cascais) casts Portuguese queer studies in a broadly comparative context and addresses the applicability of theorizations of the "queer" to Portuguese literary culture. The life and work of modern poet António Botto, the first openly gay Portuguese poet as well as friend and collaborator of Fernando Pessoa, have been the subject of many studies by literary and LGBTQ scholars. Klobucka's 2018 book, *O mundo gay de António Botto*, examines Botto's literary output and connects it to discussions in queer/LGBTQ studies in general. Other studies on gay and lesbian literary figures in Portugal (such as the work of Botto's contemporary Judith Teixeira) have been important contributions to the continuing vitality of the discipline.

Numerous feminist and gender studies are another indication of the unique additions Lusophone studies has to make to ongoing critical debates and interdisciplinary thought such as postcolonialism. A special issue of the journal *Portuguese Studies*, "Transnational Portuguese Women Writers," (vol. 35, no. 2, 2019) testifies to the still-expanding remit of gender studies in the Portuguese-speaking world. *Antigone's Daughters?* (Owen and Pazos Alonso) represents another advance in this area, and women's studies constitutes a major skein of work on Lusophone cinema studies to have emerged in the past decade. The edited collections by Liz and Owen, Nair and Gutiérrez-Albilla, and Rowland and Conley, for instance, exemplify the forward-looking research on Lusophone cinema and how women filmmakers are increasingly playing key roles in this discipline.

In a field as relatively small as Lusophone studies in the North American academy, publication venues are as vital to scholarly survival as the work of individual critics, since Lusophone studies so often labors under a tacit mandate by North American academic presses that it is only of interest if it can intersect with other nationally-based studies or more interdisciplinary configurations of the humanities. The field has benefitted enormously by several journals (*Journal of Lusophone Studies*, *Luso-Brazilian Review*, *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies*, and *Portuguese Studies*). A useful tool for tracking the many topics and critical methodologies in the field are the biennial compilations "Lusophone Studies: A Cumulative Area Bibliography" in *Portuguese Studies* (King's College London). The journal of

the American Portuguese Studies Association, originally titled *ellipsis*, was, under the editorship of Vincent Barletta, renamed the *Journal of Lusophone Studies* and is a major force for the progressive evaluation of the discipline. Tagus Press, located at the Center for Portuguese Studies at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, publishes *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* as well as the Adamastor Book Series, edited by Victor K. Mendes, which counts on its list a number of translations of Portuguese literary texts into English as well as scholarly monographs.

Lusophone studies has entered a new period of vitality and growth over the past couple of decades and has kept pace with developments and interests in still-burgeoning fields such as women's studies and sexuality studies. As the academic landscape in general responds to pressing social and political currents in North America and beyond, Lusophone studies is poised to make still further contributions to crucial areas such as critical race studies, a topic especially germane to the Portuguese-speaking world from the late Middle Ages to the present, with the Portuguese presence in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Continued work in postcolonial studies and on diasporic communities will be central to modifying the contours of the field in ways that de-emphasize imperialist perspectives by exploring how cultures or collectives move away from an assumed and homogenous Portuguese-ness to create distinct forms of language (such as creoles) and new identities arising from contemporary geopolitics. The centuries-long Portuguese engagement with the ocean is a basis for continued scholarship in the maritime humanities, not to mention a promising springboard for ecocriticism and the environmental humanities (Mendes and Vieira's *Portuguese Literature and the Environment* marks a milestone in this regard). The many histories, experiences (personal and collective), and cultural perspectives embraced by "Lusophone" will undoubtedly animate scholarship that will increasingly reach scholars beyond the field itself.

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