

## PERFORMING PORTUGUESENESS IN GERMANY

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This paper explores representations of “Portugueseness” in the diasporic community of Hamburg, Germany, and unpacks the politics around a major festival featuring Portuguese folk culture held annually in the city’s Ethnographic Museum. A central question is how arguments about this form of national self-representation have, over the past four decades, played out within the migrant community, the wider field of German society, and the still wider transnational nexus of Portugal and the Portuguese diaspora. While these folkloric representations of Portuguese culture have heightened the visibility and pride of the Portuguese migrant community, they have also, simultaneously, helped to conceal conflict, contemporary agency, and persistent forms of inequality. Highly visible folkloric performances in a prestigious German space were not, in this case, accompanied by increased access to political power.

The Ethnographic Museum in Hamburg has very publicly weighed in on the contentious arguments about the place of cultural difference in contemporary Germany. During the violently xenophobic aftermath of reunification in the early 1990s, for example, a huge banner hung across the Museum’s entrance proclaimed in bold letters, *Wir sind alle Ausländer* or “We are all foreigners.” This assertion of solidarity with the non-German residents of the city, stretched across the imposing neo-classical façade of this solidly entrenched German institution, was strikingly visible to visitors and passers-by. During this turbulent period, the Museum also began hosting high profile cultural celebrations by Hamburg’s numerous immigrant communities. The most elaborate of these events to evolve over the past decade is the Portuguese festival or, as it has become known to Portuguese and Germans alike, the *Arraial*.<sup>1</sup>

In this paper, I aim to unpack the politics around the representations of “Portugueseness” within the Ethnographic Museum, an institution whose central mission since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century has been to display cultural otherness to Germans. I first encountered the *Arraial* in 1998 during one of my periodic return visits to Hamburg.<sup>2</sup> Many things had changed since my initial field research in the mid-eighties: the two Germanies had reunited and the Cold War ended; Portugal had become a full-fledged member of the EU

<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to my conference co-organizer, João Leal and the participants in “The Politics of Folk Culture” conference for providing such a stimulating and welcoming context in which to explore these ideas.

<sup>2</sup> Research in Hamburg during the summer of 1998 was supported by the Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth.

and migrants from Portugal could freely circulate within European borders; and Hamburg's non-German population had increased dramatically with large influxes of people from Africa, Asia, and the former East. In the context of these far-reaching transformations, many things have obviously changed for the migrants who first arrived in Hamburg in the late sixties, early seventies. In the following pages I focus on a very specific set of changes, namely shifts in how Portuguese folk culture was presented, deployed, and understood. Using the *Arraial* as primary grist for the mill, I trace over time how the politics of folkloric representations of national selves play within this particular corner of the Portuguese diaspora as well as the wider field of German society and the still wider transnational nexus of Portugal and the Portuguese diaspora.

During my initial fieldwork in the mid-1980s, I had watched Hamburg's various *ranchos folclóricos*, or folkdance troupes innumerable times in crowded rented halls, church courtyards, or parking lots outside the city's various Portuguese associations. Some fifteen years later, a dramatically different venue for these performances had developed and I found myself watching the same *ranchos* in the Ethnographic Museum, an imposing and very German space, a place I had never entered during the course of my first years of fieldwork, and a place I doubt any of the Portuguese I knew had ever visited. Although folk culture still constituted the symbolic repertoire for national self-representation – couples dressed in “peasantish” outfits still whirled around to lively “traditional” Portuguese tunes – the specific content of the performances had shifted noticeably from those I had observed in the mid-eighties. Concerns with authenticity and historically accurate representations of regionally specific traditions had replaced the admittedly invented images of the generic Portuguese peasant.

What, I ask in the following pages, is the significance of these changes? What did it matter that the Portuguese of Hamburg were now performing folkloric representations of self in museum foyers rather than parking lots and dance halls; that the composition of the audiences and their relationship to the performers and performance had shifted; that the ways of representing “Portugueseness” within this diasporic outpost had been recast? In puzzling over these changes, I examine the local, national, and transnational politics in which the representations at the *Arraial* were enmeshed and consider the ways in which the relationship between “those who see, and those who are seen” remains fraught with unacknowledged assumptions and consequences (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1991: 434).

Multiple agendas and disputes are expressed in any exhibition or performance and different relations of power characterize the arenas around any particular cultural display. As will become clear in the following account, representations enacted within museums, especially in the prestigious institutions located at the centers of power, often reflect hegemonic conceptua-

lizations of culture and hierarchies of difference. Although the *Arraial* was developed within articulated agendas of minority empowerment and heightened the visibility and public pride of the Portuguese migrant community, I argue that these representations of Portugueseness simultaneously covered up conflict, inequality, and contemporary agency.

### A bit of background

The Portuguese along with others from southern European, Turkey, and erstwhile Yugoslavia were initially recruited to Germany in the 1960s and 70s as temporary laborers to help fuel the burgeoning post-war economy. They and most everyone else expected it to be a brief sojourn. The large majority of Portuguese migrants came with the intent of working a few years in Germany in order to finance a better life in Portugal and their presence was contingent on the fluctuating needs of the German economy for cheap and malleable labor. A small number also came for political reasons, fleeing Salazar's dictatorship and induction into Portugal's long and bloody colonial wars. Many have, over the years, returned to Portugal, some content with their gains, others disillusioned and frustrated by the duress of life abroad.<sup>3</sup> A significant number have, however, remained in Germany, become increasingly entrenched within German society, and established visible and vibrant communities. The majority of people have continued to work in the service and industrial sectors of Germany's economy, but the community has also developed a small elite of social workers, teachers, and business people. Since Portugal's full incorporation into the EU in 1992, there has also been a steady increase in the migrant population and there is currently much more frequent and often circular movement across national borders (Baganha 1999). At the time of the Museum event in 1998, the Portuguese population in Germany overall totaled about 125,000, not quite two percent of the total foreign population. The population in Hamburg, which constituted a significant concentration within Germany, totaled about 10,000.<sup>4</sup> Towards the end of the nineties, the first generation was approaching their fifties and sixties and had spent the large part of their adult lives abroad. Many of the second generation had grown up in Germany and were beginning families of their own on German soil. And there was a newly arrived generation that had come in the wake of the border openings within the EU.

<sup>3</sup> In 1985 the German government offered to pay out pension contributions to Portuguese (and Turkish) migrants who returned permanently to Portugal with all their family members and relinquished their rights to a German pension. Almost 25% of the Portuguese in Germany took advantage of this offer, although many returned to Germany after Portugal became a full EU member in 1992.

<sup>4</sup> *Statistisches Berichte für die Hansestadt Hamburg: Official Census* (1997).

Despite their over three decades in Germany, an increasing comfort and engagement with German society and growing assumption on the part of many Germans that their erst-while guests had settled permanently in Germany, most Portuguese migrants were still firmly committed to eventually returning to Portugal. Almost everyone I knew, regardless of generation, length of stay in Germany, or class position maintained a commitment to returning “home” and refused to entertain the possibility of permanent settlement in Germany or the taking of German citizenship. Most expressed that commitment through investing in a future in Portugal, and especially the original first generation of migrants felt that moving up the social ladder and transforming financial gains into cultural capital were much more realistic possibilities in Portugal than in Germany. The second and emerging third generations were more culturally fluent in Germany than “at home” in Portugal, but by and large did not consider themselves as permanently settled in Germany; they tried to maneuver around the obstacles and take advantage of opportunities of both national spheres. By the time of the *Arraial*, the Portuguese in Germany had established actively transnational lives. Their individual trajectories, families, and communities had increasingly come to be organized across rather than within national spaces and the majority of Portuguese living in Hamburg fluidly connected German and Portuguese arenas (Klimt 2000a).

The Portuguese in Hamburg are among the smallest group of foreign residents in the city, making up only about eight percent of the foreign population. They are not particularly conspicuous on the city scene, especially in comparison to the large Turkish and erst-while Yugoslav populations and the recent influx of more visibly different migrants from Africa and Asia. There are numerous popular Portuguese restaurants and cafes scattered across the city, but there is no concentrated or particularly visible area of Portuguese businesses or residence. In general, the Portuguese community is usually apparent only to insiders and the handful of Germans specifically interested in things Portuguese. It is in this context of relative city-wide invisibility that the very prominent displays of Portugueseness at the Museum took place.

### **The *Arraial***

The *Arraial* originated with the Ethnographic Museum Director’s vision of his museum as a place in which Germans and their cultural Others could mingle and learn to appreciate one another.<sup>5</sup> In an effort to open up the museum to

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<sup>5</sup> This analysis further develops an argument initially presented in Klimt (2000b).

a wider and more diverse community and to make it a place of interaction rather than static display, he extended invitations to the city's numerous non-German populations to organize cultural events in the museum. He was very committed to bringing in new kinds of visitors into the museum as well as to using the Museum as a forum for reflection on contemporary issues.<sup>6</sup> Only the Portuguese – and Japanese – had accepted the invitation and successfully organized annual cultural celebrations. According to the Director, other non-German groups in Hamburg, such as the Turks, were either uninterested or too internally divided to organize a collective event.

Since its inception in 1992, the *Arraial* has become a much anticipated event that has grown dramatically in scope. Originally a one-day event featuring a very generalized display of Portuguese culture, it has become a very elaborate three-day celebration which focuses on a particular theme or region, takes most of the year to organize, and requires the participation of numerous groups and committed individuals to be held. The Director, an anthropologist with expertise in Portuguese culture and language, had developed a friendship with two of the Portuguese community's most respected and active intellectuals and it was largely through their initiative and collaboration that the *Arraial* developed into such a successful and popular event. The festivities draw German as well as very large Portuguese audiences and within Hamburg's Portuguese community, the *Arraial* has become the most prominent event of the year.

The theme of the 1998 *Arraial*, the focus of the following account, was the regional culture of Minho, a northern province in Portugal whose colorful folk traditions have, for Portuguese as well as Germans, come to stand in as the quintessential essence of Portuguese national culture (Medeiros 1995). The beginning of the festivities was heralded by a procession of local and visiting Portuguese folklore groups through Hamburg's fashionable downtown. They marched dressed in full regalia with Portuguese bagpipes, drum corps, and a troupe of big heads past rather startled throngs of Saturday shoppers. The point, according to the Museum Director, was to be as loud, and as visible, and as "Portuguese" as possible – although my conversations with people on the street yielded more puzzlement than recognition. Upon arriving at the Museum, which is located on one of Hamburg's elegant wide boulevards, opening ceremonies were held in the transformed foyer – specially painted banners depicting traditional Portuguese-style tiles hung from the marble staircases; the otherwise very formal hall was lined with gaily decorated food booths selling Portuguese culinary specialties; and the usual museum hush was filled with boisterous chatter and the audible good

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<sup>6</sup> Very similar trends are noted as occurring within Dutch ethnographic museums (Van Hamersveld 1998).

humor of crowds of people. Welcoming remarks were given by a series of local notables including Hamburg's senator for Social Affairs, the Museum Director, the Portuguese Consul, and Director of the Portuguese Catholic Mission. The German Senator noted appreciatively that this was one of the few invitations from minority groups that did not entail requests for funding and support. Speeches were followed by elaborately staged presentations of traditional regional costumes by the participating folkdance troupes.

Much of the rest of the festival revolved around folkloric performances and demonstrations of traditional Portuguese crafts. Among the featured events were the folkdance performances of the four local *ranchos*, each vying for the distinction of the "best" – or in locally sanctioned terms, most "authentic" – presentation of Portuguese culture. A musical group, invited from Minho for the event, also performed traditional songs from the region. As they explained to an enthusiastic audience, they had carefully collected their songs from older villagers in order to revive the "music of our grandparents for the sake of our children."<sup>7</sup> By way of introducing the group, the Museum Director emphasized that he and the performers shared a commitment to the goal of "preserving authentic culture." The group performed the first evening in the spacious Museum foyer with elaborate sound equipment and on subsequent evenings in the much smaller space of the African gallery. The shift in performance site, which was instigated by the Museum Director, forced the musicians to abandon their customary sound equipment and put on an unmediated acoustic performance. The Museum Director had considered electronic sound enhancement inappropriate for a "traditional" performance.<sup>8</sup> A striking side-effect of the shift in locale was that the backdrop to the performing musicians became life-size images of Kalahari Bushmen roasting their kill over an open fire. The only event attended by a sizeable number of Germans was a fado performance by a local Portuguese woman and a wine-tasting of vintages from Minho, both of which were scheduled in quieter and less well-attended morning slots.

The regional culture of Minho was also displayed through the screening of documentary films and discussed in lectures by Portuguese ethnologists who were billed in the brochure as "experts in Portuguese popular culture." Demonstrations of more generic traditional peasant crafts such as spinning and weaving, sausage-making, and bread baking in a replica of a wood-burning village oven were featured throughout the day. While the performances, lectures, and films took place in the Museum's exhibit halls, much of the *Arraial's* unrehearsed activity was in the Museum courtyard. There,

<sup>7</sup> Author's fieldnotes, June 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Vasconcelos noted a similar criteria for "authenticity" in Minho, Portugal, where folkloric troupes increasingly tended to perform without any sound enhancing equipment (Vasconcelos 1997).

numerous food stalls featured Portuguese specialties and the eating, drinking, and talking, the press of the crowd, the shouts to the vendors, and the smoke from the grills all evoked the feeling of a Portuguese village festival rather than an organized exhibition or display. It was there that everyone relaxed and socialized while the more scripted performances continued inside. The festival culminated in an evening dance, which featured a Portuguese band of local teenagers, the only “modern” music heard during the *Arraial*. The dance was much like dances at exclusively Portuguese celebrations – there was no designated distinction between performers and audience on the packed dance floor and only a very few non-Portuguese were still to be seen. The festivities ended at midnight with everyone milling out onto the Museum entrance stairs to watch the traditional Portuguese-style fireworks put on by technicians especially invited from Portugal for the event.

### German spaces, German audiences

Ethnographic museums are particularly intriguing places in which to explore the complex politics surrounding folk culture. Since their inception in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ethnographic or natural history museums, including the one in Hamburg, have been in the business of bringing “exotic” cultures home for domestic consumption. As prominent and often state-supported institutions, they have played key roles in the processes of nation-making and of naturalizing dichotomies between self and other, national insiders and outsiders, civilized and uncivilized. Historically, the relationship between those in museums responsible for the collection and display of cultural difference and those whose difference was being represented to a select public was based on entrenched inequalities, often along lines of colonizer and colonized or hegemonic majority and dominated minority. Interactions were dramatically asymmetrical and certainly not aimed at resolving the vast divergence of interests between those who created and consumed the displays and those who were regularly featured in museum exhibits.

The agendas of ethnographic museums and the relationships entailed in creating representations of cultural difference have obviously moved away from asserting inherent hierarchies through the display of distant exotica. Museums are increasingly called upon to weigh in on issues of cultural equity and to actively engage as collaborators and constituencies those people whose cultures have been the traditional focus of ethnographic displays.<sup>9</sup> Ethnographic museums in Germany, including the one in Hamburg, have

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<sup>9</sup> See especially Karp and Lavine (1991).

actively reoriented their goals, seeking to become “cultural centers” in a newly multicultural Germany – institutions geared to facilitating encounters between Germans and non-Germans; promoting engagement with contemporary political and social issues; and, as one German museum director indicated, making ethnological collections relevant to contemporary “processes of identity formation and communication in a globalized world” (Kess 2003).

As Clifford and others have noted, however, museums are still complex meeting grounds, “contact zones” in which groups of people engage each other in “a power-charged set of exchanges” (Clifford 1997: 192). Negotiations about who gets featured in museum displays, how they are represented to wider publics, and who gets to view whom continue to be politically loaded arguments that invoke historically particular “locations of power.” The conversations are never neutral and still involve significant differences in agendas, authority, and resources (Clifford 1997: 200). As ethnographic museums turn, at least in part, to agendas of minority empowerment, the challenge becomes how to resolve these continuing power differences. Given that the very existence of ethnographic museums depends on the language of cultural difference, the dilemma is how to create displays and facilitate interactions in ways that avoid essentializing cultural otherness and naturalizing established hierarchies of difference.

One of the original missions of ethnographic museums and folklorists was to make visible a tangible essence that was persuasively and inherently German (Stoklund 1999). Turn-of-the-century peasant dress, rituals, dances and customs have, since the emergence of nationalist ideology in 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany, constituted the symbolic repertoire that cements nation to culture and the peasant as nation writ large is a familiar theme in the birthplace of romantic nationalism. Along with collecting and displaying cultural artifacts of distant exotic cultures, German folklorists collected, documented, and preserved local rural traditions in Germany (Hobsbawm 1990) and worked to attach the notion of “German” culture to images of 19<sup>th</sup> century peasants. This legacy is still evident in present-day museum exhibitions that tend to feature traditions and crafts from the past century. In fact, one of the exhibitions running concurrently with the *Arraial* in Hamburg’s Ethnographic Museum was a show on wood processing techniques of 19<sup>th</sup> century rural Germany.

The representation of Portuguese as picturesque and tradition-bound peasants from a distant temporal space that characterized the performances at the *Arraial* thus resonates with entrenched images of national culture in Germany. The Portuguese-as-Peasant made perfect sense in the German context, and except for the “easy-listening” Portuguese band that culminated the festivities, contemporary ways of life or “modern” versions of being “Portuguese” were explicitly absent from the performances and demonstrations. From the colorful peasant costumes, to the selection of folkloric music and

dance forms, to the focus on the skills of bygone days, Portugueseness at the *Arraial* was depicted in terms of 19<sup>th</sup> century rural culture.

Despite the established symbolic connections between nation and peasant, this portrait of Portugueseness must be read against contemporary dialogues. That is, the matrix of meanings and implications surrounding the images presented at the Museum were specific to late 1990's Germany and the question is what this version of Otherness meant on the present-day German scene. In contrast to exhibits that featured peoples from distant lands or bygone times, the *Arraial* depicted the culture of people who lived and worked in the same city as the consumers of those images. Unlike visits to the African mask gallery or tours through Indonesian domiciles, German spectators at the *Arraial* could potentially reconcile their understandings of what they saw on stage with the Portuguese migrants whom they often encountered – as co-workers, employees, neighbors, maids – in the course of their daily lives.

Germans are deeply divided on who can rightfully “belong” to the polity and how to imagine the relationship between “German” and “non-German” residents of the nation. In the context of this debate, the Director and staff of the Ethnographic Museum certainly promoted agendas of “tolerance” and “integration.” Although the institution was closely connected to German centers of power, largely funded by the state, and run exclusively by Germans, those Germans who participated in the *Arraial* as organizers or visitors were already very sympathetic to ideologies of multiculturalism and the incorporation of “foreigners” into German society in ways that respected cultural difference. This encounter was thus clearly organized by Germans on the progressive end of the political spectrum and although aimed at engaging a wider public, it represents the perspectives and solutions of a very particular sector of German society.

On the one hand, the *Arraial* made a public argument against established German hierarchies of difference and the frequently violent efforts to equate nation with cultural homogeneity. For the Portuguese to be proudly and visibly different, especially in such a prestigious German space, countered the entrenched expectations on the part of many Germans that foreigners should either completely assimilate or leave. Within the politics of local space, routing their procession through the up-scale sections of downtown Hamburg and performing in the high-status space of the Museum was to assert a kind of equality within German society. It laid claim to a place within Hamburg's cultural landscape that was not marginal or inferior to that of Germans and legitimized that the Portuguese did indeed have a culture worth noting. The Portuguese I knew were extremely proud of the *Arraial's* success and frequently noted its prominence on the German scene. Performing Portugueseness in the museum certainly had a different caché than per-

performances at in-group social clubs located on Hamburg's social and geographic periphery.

The *Arraial*, according to the Museum Director, was also intended to facilitate an *Annaeherrung*, or "increased closeness" between Germans and their cultural Others and the Museum was selected as an ideal "encounter site." Not only did the location bestow status on the Portuguese, it was a place where Germans would feel unthreatened and comfortable. The Museum was, after all, a place to which many Germans habitually came to encounter contained forms of cultural difference. The comfort of this cultural engagement for Germans was also due to the nature of the display. The *Arraial* was very innovative within the traditional parameters of museum display, but it was still a recognizably scripted event. The bilingual brochure "explained" the events to visitors and contained familiar elements such as scheduled performances, lectures, films, and demonstrations. Performers were readily identifiable through their colorful and relatively exotic dress and clearly distinct from spectators. And most events did not presume insider or prior knowledge and were accompanied by bilingual narrations. The performances themselves were also designed to be pleasant and entertaining and Portuguese culture was presented as different enough to be interesting and intriguingly exotic, but not so different as to be unpalatable or inaccessible.

The *Arraial* helped promote an appreciation of Portuguese culture and made migrants more visible on the city's cultural landscape. It did so, however, in a way that simultaneously kept them in a subordinate place within German hierarchies of difference. As turn-of-the-century peasants, Portuguese migrants were not, and could never become, as fully modern as their German counterparts.<sup>10</sup> In ways similar to representations of resident "foreigners" found in other European countries, encapsulated and folklorized versions of migrant cultures clearly left Germans on top within the hegemonic schema of cultural diversity.<sup>11</sup> The gulf between modern life and perpetually pre-modern Portuguese culture was conveyed, for example, by never presenting Portuguese out of role. For German viewers, Portuguese *were* peasants or fado singers – there was no hint as to the Portuguese who in real life were fellow residents and workers in the same cosmopolitan space. As Kirschenblatt-Gimblett has argued, "live exhibits tend to make people into artifacts... [and] create the illusion that the activities one watches are being done rather than represented" (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1991: 415). The distance was further accentuated by the selection of performance space by the Museum Director

<sup>10</sup> This casting of the migrant as perpetually pre-modern was of course quite ironic considering the immense cultural and social distance they had successfully traversed – many had actually traveled much further than their German counterparts. Elka Tschernokoshewa makes this point in Tschernokoshewa (1997).

<sup>11</sup> See Blommaert and Verschueren (1996) where the authors explore contradictions in Dutch liberal discourses about migrants.

that juxtaposed the Portuguese folk musicians with Kalahari Bushmen. The physical proximity of the Portuguese performers symbolically linked them to “uncivilized” and racially marked Others and likened the live performance to the glass case preservation of a vanishing culture. That most of the audience seemed to find the combination of Portuguese folk musicians and African Bushmen rather unremarkable was quite telling. The same juxtaposition with an accepted symbol of high culture, say a chamber orchestra or opera singer, I venture to guess, would have at least raised some quizzical eyebrows amongst the audience.

References to “race” and biological inferiority are certainly unacceptable in progressive German circles. Instead, “culture” has become the accepted way of talking about “kinds” of people (Stolcke 1995). In this model, culture is considered to be an immutable attribute that people carry from cradle to grave and cultural difference is seen as a permanent condition, one that is not subject to change or renegotiation. Cultural distinctions are valued – culture, after all, is a good thing – but they are also arranged along a generally unacknowledged and often only vaguely defined hierarchy that puts some cultures closer to pinnacles of human achievement than others. In these terms, Germans are secure in their modernity and proximity to sophisticated civilization and the Portuguese-as-peasants can never quite catch up. Even though the *Arraial* was part of the widening acceptance of and argument for a multicultural vision of Germany that gained momentum after the extensive anti-foreigner violence of the early 1990s, the displays of Portugueseness did not formulate difference in ways that seriously challenged the continued dominance of German culture. Within the accepted models of cultural difference, peasant folk could never really meet modern urbanity on a level playing field (Huysen 1995). In contrast to cultural expressions popular in European urban centers among minority youth that stressed innovation and deliberately flouted convention, overtly invoked political statements on the plight of immigrant and minority populations, and played with fusion and stylistic syncretism of various cultural forms, the performances at the museum were safely contained within the parameters of “authentic tradition” and did not touch on any present-day concerns (Joan Gross, David McMurray and Ted Swedenburg 1996, Hammarlund 1994). I would argue that the form of “difference” featured in cultural displays and festivals such as the *Arraial* was, as Kirschenblatt-Gimblett has noticed for other contexts, “reduced to style and decoration, to spice of life” and did not rise to challenge the *status quo* (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1991: 421).

When I asked a politically progressive German friend of mine who was very involved with the Portuguese community in Hamburg why folk culture and tradition were the sole forms of self-representation, her response was “but folklore is all they have.” A Portuguese observer echoed that view

by pointing out that migrants, given that they had left their homeland decades ago, have ready access to the Portuguese past, but not to the rapidly changing culture of the Portuguese present. Traditional culture provided, in other words, a comfortable idiom, whereas modern versions of Portuguese-ness felt alien to most long-term migrants. New cultural forms that combined Portuguese and German forms or reflected the contemporary realities and difficulties of the migrant experience had not emerged within the wider Hamburg Portuguese community, nor would they have resonated with the Museum's articulated mission of displaying "authentic" culture. Whatever complex combination of reasons led to the featuring of peasant images at the museum, the result was that Germans attending the *Arraial* could safely engage the foreigners in their city as a quaint, picturesque, and "enriching" presence, rather than as fellow residents with contemporary concerns. There was no hint that the people on stage might also be the neighbors next door. The performances at the Ethnographic Museum were aimed at promoting the acceptance of cultural difference and did facilitate a cultural encounter, but they simultaneously helped further establish a hierarchy through which to perceive those differences.

Folkloricized versions of migrant culture were quite common elements within multicultural discourses in Germany and the *Arraial* was but one of numerous politically progressive contexts I came across where "folkloric" foreigners were placed side-by-side with decidedly "modern" Germans. A celebration of labor union solidarity between German and foreign workers, for example, featured folkloric performances of various foreign migrant groups. Group after group of brightly dressed twirling dancers came on stage to represent Turkish, Spanish, Portuguese workers. "Germanness" was, however, represented through the performance of modern and overtly political ballads by a young bearded man in jeans, even though the cultural equivalent to the other performances would have been a *Glockenspieler* in *Lederhosen*.<sup>12</sup> Although there were several groups that had a few German members who demonstrated their solidarity with non-Germans by learning their time-honored traditions, no non-Germans crossed over into modern or politically explicit performances. I observed similar dynamics at a Green Party meeting on voting rights for foreign residents, where the political panel discussion between primarily German representatives was interspersed with the flamenco performance by adolescent Spanish migrant girls dressed in very low-cut gowns. The credo of multiculturalism thus juxtaposed very asymmetrical performances of national selves that portrayed Germans as unambiguously modern, male, and politically serious and migrants as exotic, sexy,

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<sup>12</sup> *Lederhosen* are literally "leather pants," and a traditional "folkloric" outfit for men in southern Germany and Austria. *Glocken* are bells often used in folkloric music.

young, and female. Presentations of the Portuguese-as-Peasant within the Ethnographic Museum fit comfortably within this schema that celebrated cultural difference on the one hand and kept it at arm's length from German modernity on the other.

### Arguments about authenticity

It has only been in the last several years that any of Hamburg's four folkdance troupes have been at all concerned with the historical authenticity of their costumes and repertoire. In the mid-1980s, when I first began my research, the *ranchos* dealt with the question of representing "Portugueseness" in very different ways. Two groups followed what had under Salazar been vigorously promoted as representing Portuguese national culture – that is, the generic regionally non-specific Portuguese peasant. The repertoire of both of these groups stemmed largely from Minho with a few other songs from other regions rather haphazardly mixed in. The costumes – flaring black skirt trimmed in the Portuguese red and green, lacy white blouse, colorful kerchief – were the same as the inventions that had been so common across Portugal during the fascist era (Holton 1999). There was no attention to historic period or regional specificity, and certainly no interest in questions about the authenticity of cultural traditions. Another *rancho* solved the question of how to look "Portuguese" rather differently and emphasized regional difference rather than homogeneous national culture. Each couple dressed in a different regionally specific costume and the ensemble's repertoire included representative dances from each of Portugal's regions. But even this solution was not particularly concerned with authenticity. The women tended to sew all the costumes and often made up their own rather fanciful versions of regional outfits.

By the early 1990s, however, an exacting attention had developed to "doing it right" and correct reproduction of cultural traditions had become the shared goal and criteria for excellence. By the time of the 1998 *Arraial*, enactments of Portugueseness all emphasized the faithful replication of 19<sup>th</sup> century peasant culture and authenticity had become the accepted grid on which to evaluate Portuguese cultural performances. The group, for example, widely considered "the best" at the *Arraial* was also the strictest in their adherence to "tradition." Shiny and elaborately embroidered costumes had been traded in for the decidedly modest and homespun look of working peasants. No longer fashioned at home, the outfits were ordered, at considerable expense, through catalogues from Portugal that guaranteed the "accuracy" of these recreations of late 19<sup>th</sup> century peasant dress. Along with the certified authenticity of the outfits, the leader of the "best" *rancho* insisted that all

evidence of contemporary culture be removed. All the girls, for example, had to remove their make-up, earrings, and fingernail polish before every performance since, as the *rancho* leader emphasized, “turn-of-the-century peasant women didn’t use such things;” and the men had to be certain to remove their wristwatches – precautions that nobody would have even imaged a decade earlier. The *rancho*’s dances were carefully rehearsed upon the advice of folklore experts from Portugal who sent them videos of “authentic” performances by contemporary folkloric troupes and several of the lead performers had traveled to Portugal to learn more about regional traditions and work with folkdance troupes committed to documenting and accurately replicating 19<sup>th</sup> century peasant culture.

While there was a general agreement within the migrant community regarding the value of authentic reproduction, there was bitter contention over whether to represent Portugal as a synthesized whole made up of regional components or through the “accurate” representation of a regionally specific tradition. The *rancho* most committed to authenticity, for example, focused exclusively on the regional traditions of the Ribatejo region. Interestingly enough, this selection was not due to the origins of any of the performers – in fact, all of them came from other regions of Portugal – but to the *rancho* leader’s assessment that the lively and challenging dances would best show off their skill in “correctly” carrying off the fast and very complex footwork. The members of this troupe argued that it was “inaccurate” to mix the cultural traditions of different regions within a single performance and accused those troupes with a regionally mixed repertoire of lacking a genuine commitment to reproducing “the real thing.” This *rancho* could also perform dances from Minho – but they always kept the regional traditions strictly separated and never danced numbers from one region while dressed in the costume of the other. For the other three *ranchos* in Hamburg, the importance of representing all of Portugal was more pressing than any demands for “accuracy.” These groups made sure to perform numbers from each of Portugal’s regions at every event and each of the couples was dressed in the regional costume of a different region. Members of the Hamburg migrant community come from all over continental Portugal rather than a single sending region, and the aim of the *ranchos* with a regionally diversified repertoire, as one of the leaders told me, was to have everyone in the audience recognize “their own piece of Portugal.”<sup>13</sup>

The argument over whether to give priority to accuracy or to inclusivity deeply divided Hamburg’s Portuguese community and the question of

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<sup>13</sup> The migration to Germany and the rest of Western Europe was as contract not chain migration. Portuguese migrants had to go wherever they had employment contracts with the result that the Portuguese population of Hamburg came from all regions in Portugal.

how authenticity and tradition should articulate with representations of Portugueseness was a matter of intense debate. The issue contributed to the splitting apart of the city's largest folkdance troupe and gave visible expression to already existing fault lines among the Hamburg Portuguese. Membership in the city's four different *ranchos* tended to correspond to political divisions within the community, people from one group generally did not attend the performances of the others, and during my initial years in Hamburg, rivalry had often crystallized at city-wide folk dance competitions.<sup>14</sup> I clearly remember one such competition from my first years in Hamburg when the communists and socialists from one association ended up protesting loudly and furiously when the Portuguese priest awarded the *ranchinho* of the Catholic and politically more conservative Caritas association the annual best-of-city award.

Interestingly enough, all four *ranchos* participated in the *Arraial* and ended up collaborating on this very public display of unity. The neutrality of the Museum space, the brokering role of the Museum Director, and the way the event was organized made it possible to keep arguments down to a manageable level. Most performances at the *Arraial* could be constituted as parallel performances that did not require agreement on what constituted "correct" versions of Portuguese culture and there were no organized competitions or prizes. All the folkdance troupes, for example, could perform their own versions of Portugueseness separately, one after the other and members of the audience could easily circulate to see the performances of their choice and choose to either vigorously applaud or politely and quietly watch. The disagreements over historical accuracy extended into other aspects of the *Arraial*. Several of the Portuguese women's groups, for example, each of which were associated with one or the other of the *ranchos*, could not agree on the "real" recipe for *caldo verde*, a traditional Portuguese soup. Did it, or did it not have *chouriço*; did it have more or less potatoes; how thinly was the kale supposed to be sliced, etc. etc. Happily enough, a consensus was not required as each women's group was able to separately sell their distinct versions and members of different factions generally patronized the concession stands of "their" group. Critiques, arguments, and complaints were kept *soto voce*, even though they often exploded into vigorous arguments during the planning meetings and the Museum Director had his hands full in guiding everyone towards mutually palatable decisions. The uninitiated spectators, on the other hand, had no idea of any of the underlying tensions and were presented with a harmonious vision of Portuguese culture. Although that unity did not last

<sup>14</sup> Vasconcelos (1997) observed the same process in rural Minho, where arguments about correct representation perpetuated rivalries between preexistent communities rather than producing a regionally cohesive identity or community.

much beyond the *Arraial* itself, the very factionalized community did in fact manage to come together year after year and successfully create a major public event.

The displays of Portugueseness in the Ethnographic Museum were very much shaped by the engagement of the migrants in this diasporic outpost with the debates around authenticity, tradition, and Portuguese national identity that were taking place in Portugal. The surge of interest in Hamburg in the “authentic” and regionally rooted folk was in part a response – albeit with a decade of lag time – to organized efforts within Portugal to promote folklore as the quintessential essence of Portugueseness. In fact, the initial push towards authenticity and continued tutelage in cultural correctness came directly from experts of the *Federação de Folclore Português*, a private organization in Portugal that had become the established authority on Portuguese folklore. In ways similar to the romanticization and objectification of aspects of rural life in the making of other European nations, the peasant has long been a central icon in the fashioning of the Portuguese nation (Hobsbawm 1990). Under Salazar’s almost 50-year dictatorship, colorful and entertaining folk traditions were the picturesque means through which the regime worked to maintain a traditional morality, contain political activity, and sustain the *status quo* (Sanchis 1983, Pinto 1992, Vasconcelos 1997) and the distinctiveness of regional cultures was intentionally blurred in amalgamated and invented representations of a unified national culture.<sup>15</sup> After the 1974 socialist revolution, traditional rural culture was reclaimed from the fascist past via a conspicuous validation of authenticity. As Holton documents so well, careful reproductions of regional turn-of-the-century culture took the place of showy nationalist spectacle and private organizations such as the *Federação de Folclore Português* in conjunction with branches of the national government connected with tourism and emigration actively supported and supervised the efforts of folklore troupes, within and outside of Portugal, in their search for “authenticity” (Holton 1999: 224).

The complex relationship between the Hamburg Portuguese and their homeland can be read off the arguments around “authenticity” that have developed in this migrant outpost. These connections and the role of established experts in Portugal have successfully tied migrants in Germany, who have been away from “home” for over 30 years, back to Portugal and to a sanctioned form of Portuguese culture. The emphasis on a land-based way of life served to (re)root the deterritorialized population within the original geography of the nation, and the emphasis on authenticity forced dispersed

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<sup>15</sup> See Holton (1999: 266) and Vasconcelos (1997: 222). Vasconcelos notes that in the village he studied in Minho, “the folkdance troupe was created at precisely the moment that spontaneous festive gatherings by peasant youth were being systematically suppressed by the police.”

migrants to “come home” for the knowledge on how to “be Portuguese.”<sup>16</sup> Along with efforts such as state-sponsored language schools, the folkdance troupe has become a way for Portugal to keep its migrants “Portuguese” and securely connect its far-flung diaspora to the increasingly deterritorialized definitions of the nation (Feldman-Bianco 1994). Establishing these criteria for “authenticity” meant that innovations and new cultural forms originating amongst migrants were, by definition, not recognized as being “really” Portuguese or given much encouragement or support. Despite the legal and ideological expansion of the boundaries around “Portugueseness,” this version of authenticity kept members of this migrant community dependent upon the diasporic center as the hegemonic authority on what constituted “Portugueseness.”

The validation of authenticity as the central criteria of “Portugueseness” and the emphasis on accurate replication of cultural forms also played into power relations between Germans and Portuguese. Ironically enough, the *Arraial* successfully established a German as the local authority on what Portuguese culture was supposed to look like. The location of this event in the Ethnographic Museum meant that the Museum Director had quite a bit of influence on choices of what constituted Portuguese culture and how it would be represented in this event. He by no means was the only, or even the most influential person involved in these choices and, as explained above, certainly did not invent the turn-of-the-century peasant incarnation of Portugueseness. But siting the festival at the museum gave the Director the authority to sanction and promote this “authentic” form of Portugueseness and help establish the notion that “culture” meant tradition untainted by change and contemporary influences. His role in shaping representations of “Portugueseness” has also come to extend beyond the Museum. When, for example, shortly after the *Arraial*, a local German hotel wanted a “real” Portuguese troupe to perform at a multicultural festival, they called the Museum Director for his advice on which was the “best” and “most authentic” group. Curatorial standards of excellence defined within German ethnographic museums thus entered into the local relations of power that defined some forms as more and others as less representative of “real” Portugueseness.

“Authentic traditional culture,” by definition, is not supposed to change or mix into new composite forms or engage contemporary culture or concerns. The rustic traditions from a distant Portuguese past that were featured and given political prominence at the Museum did not in any way threaten the integrity of German culture. Unlike some cultural expressions

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<sup>16</sup> Sarkissian (2000) has noted an interesting contrast in definitions of “authenticity” among the Portuguese ethnic community in Malacca, Indonesia, where “Portugueseness” was authenticated through locally established lines of authority and incorporated and valued local innovations.

becoming popular among minority youth in Europe that involved fusion, newness, and overt politics, this version of Portugueseness was kept very separate from things German.<sup>17</sup> The displays at the *Arraial* made clear that while difference was to be enjoyed, celebrated, and consumed, it did not in any way lead down the path of cultural syncretism or political challenge. The clear subtext was thus that Germanness, even when located in long-term proximity to cultural Others, would remain distinct, unaltered, and dominant.

Folklore does not, in and of itself, have a particular political valence – it obviously does not. Nor is it the only way to represent cultural distinctiveness and national, regional, or ethnic identity. In Portugal and on the migrant scene, there were various narratives and symbolic repertoires being deployed to represent “Portugueseness.”<sup>18</sup> But folklore does make a good show and within German settings in Hamburg it was the most commonly articulated version of cultural difference. The inherent problematic of folkloric festivals and live displays of “traditional culture” is that “spectacle by its very nature [...] tends to suppress profound issues of conflict and marginalization” (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1991: 428). In the case of the *Arraial*, the display was incredibly successful in terms of visual and sensual appeal and certainly heightened the visibility of the Portuguese on the city scene. But it also aestheticized the marginality of the community and rendered politically inconsequential the very difference it was celebrating.

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<sup>17</sup> Gross, McMurray, and Swedenburg (1996), for example, discuss the appropriation of rap in constructions of Franco-Maghrebi identities and Hammarlund (1994) presents a very interesting example of Turkish musicians in Sweden who play with cultural syncretism in their musical compositions.

<sup>18</sup> See also Sieber (2003).

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### Andrea Klimt

#### REPRESENTAÇÕES DA PORTUGALIDADE NA ALEMANHA

*O artigo explora as representações da "portugalidade" na comunidade diaspórica de Hamburgo, na Alemanha, e descobre as implicações políticas de um grande festival dedicado à cultura popular portuguesa que ocorre anualmente no Museu Etnográfico da cidade. No centro da análise está a questão de como alguns debates sobre esta forma de auto-representação nacional se reflectiram no seio da comunidade migrante, no campo mais vasto da sociedade alemã e na articulação transnacional, ainda mais vasta, de Portugal com a diáspora portuguesa. Embora as representações folclóricas da cultura portuguesa tenham conferido maior visibilidade e orgulho a esta comunidade migrante, contribuíram, simultaneamente, para silenciar o conflito, a agencialidade contemporânea e formas de desigualdade que persistem. No caso estudado, as práticas folclóricas desenvolvidas num prestigiado espaço alemão e dotadas de grande visibilidade não corresponderam a qualquer aumento do acesso ao poder político.*

