DRAMATIZING PORTUGUESE IMPERIAL DOMINANCE
IN NOVO ENTREMEZ OS MALAQUECOS, OU OS COSTUMES BRAZILEIROS

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Making the Domestic Entremez Imperial

This paper examines an anonymous Portuguese chapbook interlude, or entremez, entitled Novo entremez Os Malaquecos, Ou Os costumes brazileiros,¹ which was published in Lisbon sometime after April 5, 1768, and before June 21, 1787.² Set in

¹ I would like to thank the following attendees of various collaborative writing events (what we call Think Tanks) for their invaluable input on versions of this essay: Nicolle Jordan, Bill Worden, Tom V. O’Brien, Lúcia Costigan, Pedro Pereira, Rasma Lazda, Yarí Pérez Marín, Lisa Voigt, Elizabeth Russ, Mike Schnepf, Gunars Cazers, Ryan Giles, and Patrick Hajovsky. I am also grateful for the suggestions from the participants of the Western Mediterranean Culture Workshop, in October, 2007, at the University of Chicago. I am happy to acknowledge as well the helpful feedback from Nina Berman, Dorothy Noyes, and Rebecca Haidt. I take full responsibility, of course, for any shortcomings that remain. I am also grateful to the Newberry Library for providing a copy of the play analyzed herein and facilitating its physical examination on site, to the Lilly Library for a Mendel Fellowship in 2006, which supported part of the research for this essay, and to the Fundação Luso-Americana para o Desenvolvimento, which supported additional research for the project at the Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa in 2007.

² The copy of the play used for this article is part of the Greenlee Collection at the Newberry Library (catalogue no. PQ9261.A1 M35 1788). The Newberry copy of Os Malaquecos has a modern binding with a few blank pages at the beginning, and many at the back. It is bound with no other text. Above the title, there is written Nº 10, in old fountain-pen script. Also to the left along the text, rising from bottom to top, on the first page, there is a hand-written indication of its former owner—it is signed “De Francisco Joze de Carvalho.” On the back of the first filler page of the modern binding of Os Malaquecos there is pasted a bookseller’s description of the text: NOVO ENTREMEZ//OS MAQUECOS//OU//OS COSTUMES BRAZILEIROS.//….//Na última página LISBOA, NA Officina de Domingos Gonçalves. Com licença da Real Meza de Censoria [sic].//In-8.º de 16 pág.1 Vol.Br. ¶ MUITO RARO. Folheto tipo Cordel do Século XVIII. Possivelmente. (1778). ¶ Desconhecido na Bibliographia Brasiliense, do Dr. Borba de Moraes.…….. 2.500. (N. pag., italics added, underlining in original). A number of other copies are extant, for
example, at the Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa (Res. 671/4 P.), the Universidade de Coimbra, Faculdade de Letras, Instituto de Estudos Teatrais Jorge de Faria (call no: 2-6-99); the Coleção de Forjaz de Sampaio, referenced as item 283 in an issue on literatura de cordel in the Boletim Internacional de Bibliografia Luso-Brasileira 11.3 (June-Sept. 1970), published by the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian. In Sampaio’s Subsídios para a história do teatro português: Teatro de cordel, he includes the play as #302 among this catalogue of entremezes (61). No date is listed. Then he says: “a) Outra ed. Lx.ª [i.e., Lisboa] 16 pg. [Domingos Gonçalves]. Esta última, igual em tudo, difere em ser composta em tipo maior. (Veja o n.º 491)” (61). For entry #491, he writes: “(N.º 4). O Casamento industrioso (F. em 1 acto). Os Malaquecos (F. em 1 acto). 1878. [...]” (82). The bibliographical reference to item 283 in the catalogue is found on page 401, and facsimile of the first page of this copy of Os Malaquecos can be found on page 456. The Sampaio copy is held in the Biblioteca de Arte, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian (TC 380); it is available in digitized form online through this site: http://www.biblartepac.gulbenkian.pt/ipac20/ipac.jsp?session=12J7643931X8W.1467762&profile=ba&menu=tab13&submenu=subtab63&ts=1237644086530. The Houghton Library at Harvard University also holds a copy (call no. PC7 A200 B775t v. 10 [item 22]), which is referenced in the Catalogue de la Bibliothèque de M. Fernando Palha, Deuxième partie: Belles-lettres-camoneana (Lisbonne: Imprimerie Libanio da Silva 1896), item 1244 (pp. 113-16, at 115). The play is mentioned in José Ramos Tinhóário’s book, Os negros em Portugal: uma presença silenciosa, among a list of plays having to do with Brazilian mineiros (from Minas Gerais) (285).

2 Regarding the dating of the imprint: The online digitization of the edition held by the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian indicates no date for the play. A physical examination of the edition of this play held by the Newberry Library in Chicago likewise shows no date of publication listed on the actual text; on the back side of the first blank filler page of a modern binding for this single document, a typewritten note by a bookseller speculates the year of publication to be 1778, which may be the case. In contrast, the bibliographic information for the play that appears on WorldCat lists 1788 as the year of publication, which is certainly an error, and probably derives from miscopying the 1778 from the typewritten speculation. Most important for the dating of this document is the censoring agency listed as having approved the publication of the play. The final line of the text of Os Malaquecos, on page 16, reads Com licença da Real Meza Cen∫ória. It is certainly possible that this play, like others at the time, was printed without the official permission that it claims to have —indeed, my research at the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo in Lisbon yielded no documentation related to the approval of this play. However, we can trust that the censoring agency named was in power at the time of publication; whether or not the text was printed clandestinely, its public distribution would have been facilitated with the (at least ostensibly) proper licenses claimed. This agency was founded April 5, 1768, and replaced on June 21, 1787, by another entity —the Mesa da Comissão Geral sobre o Exame, e Censura dos Livros. Therefore the play had to have been published before June 21, 1787, after April 5, 1768, and probably
eighteenth-century Lisbon, the play depicts an older Portuguese man’s scheme to land a rich Brazilian husband for his popular young grand-niece. With a plot involving both Portugal and Brazil, the play establishes the former’s imperial interests by imagining a Portuguese character who targets a colonial subject for exploitation. My study seeks to understand, through this representative play, some of the ways in which this genre of short, popular theater attempted to guide social attitudes, as well as what Os Malaquecos, in particular, reveals about attitudes in Lisbon at the time regarding Portugal and Brazil.

Novo entremez Os Malaquecos, Ou Os costumes brasileiros is, in many respects, exemplary of the genre. Plays of this kind were typically anonymous, 16-page, one-act, humorous yet moralizing pieces, and were produced, in conjunction with other performances, in Lisbon theaters, or sold on the streets as chapbooks to be read individually or aloud to groups of people—the latter dynamic being the scenario of reception contemplated in this reading. In addition to having these features, the plot of this play also conforms to the type in its focus on an urban love story. However, its few pages efficiently accumulate an unusually convoluted mesh of story elements that breaks the relatively standard domestic during the period in which there was a surge in entremezes on the market in Lisbon, which began around the mid 1770s.

3 Brito argues that such works were anonymous due to the lack of prestige of the genre (291); I view the publishers—in this case, the prolific Domingos Gonsalves, who was sometimes disciplined by the censoring agencies—as sharing some authorial responsibility. With regard to the reading of Os Malaquecos, because several copies of the play still exist (see endnote 1), it is likely that it had at least some readers. In contrast, I have to date found no unequivocal evidence of Os Malaquecos having been produced, though that may very well have been the case, as it was common at the time for plays to be both printed and performed, which is clear from the titles of some printed entremezes, which refer to the year and the theater in which the play was performed (e.g., Entremez da Peregrina que se representou no Theatro do Bairro Alto. 1779), though there was not necessarily a strict correlation between production and printing. Still, the following quotation by English traveler William Dalrymple, who attended ‘a little farce’ (quoted in Alden 482) in Lisbon in 1774, may refer to our play, or to another, similar play of the time. Dalrymple says: “[T]he manners of the inhabitants of Brazil were ridiculed with some humour; they represented them as a very formal and pedantic people, and brought them in with a suite of [N]egroes, monkeys, parrots &c. [T]here was a kind of low wit introduced in it, which seemed to give greater satisfaction to the audience, than any other part: an old woman frequently breaking wind in her master’s face, produced infinite applause, even from the boxes” (quoted in Alden 482).
confines of the *entremez* and acquires, as a result, broad social and political relevance. The play swiftly tells and ties off the story of an upper-class young Portuguese woman who is faced with the plan of her guardian, Relamborio, to marry her through correspondence to a prosperous resident of Brazil, Portugal’s most lucrative colony at the time. The young woman, Rufina, conspires with her similarly upper-class Portuguese lover, Meliante (a name that means “malandro”), to undermine the arranged marriage. Their plan centers on having Meliante impersonate the Brazilian. When the Brazilian, Malaqueco—who is mentioned from the beginning of the play but left nameless and absent throughout most of the action—finally arrives at the end, his matrimonial pretensions find no purchase, for Rufina and Meliante have already managed to finagle their marriage. From one angle, the character of Malaqueco may be seen as an effective catalyst for the *entremez*’s conventional complication and denouement as well as its relatively standard display of amorous intrigue in late eighteenth-century Lisbon society. Despite his physical absence, he does motivate the characters’ actions, and frames the exposition of the story, which consists of social disorder caused by Rufina’s rebellion, followed by order restored through her guardian, Relamborio, approving the marriage. From another perspective, however, the figure of the Brazilian substantially complicates the play’s presentation of the familiar. In fact, the way that *Os Malaquecos* deals with the colonial character modifies the implications of the play and recontextualizes a rather standard structure of order disrupted, order restored. The Brazilian expands the thematics of this *entremez* beyond Lisbon, layering the play with allusions to the exotic tropics, colonialism, and Portugal’s empire. Disruption and resolution thus take on an imperial dimension. In sum, the upstart Brazilian must be subdued.

This article examines how these provocative thematic associations function within the generic setting of popular chapbook theater in late eighteenth-century Portugal. More specifically, I focus on the ways in which the play attempts to guide readers to assume an affirmative stance toward Portuguese imperial dominance. My analysis apprehends the nature of *Os Malaquecos’*s intervention in its social and political context. I explore the means through which the *Novo entremez Os Malaquecos, Ou Os costumes brasileiros* makes an imperial intervention for late eighteenth-century readers, and what that teaches us about the inner workings of popular theater at the time in Lisbon.

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4 There are parallel love interests among the lower classes. Further study on the play’s social commentary and its reception among readers that looks explicitly at the nuances of social class within and outside the world of the play, and the intersection of these fictional and real spheres, promises to be fruitful.
Historical and Political Context

*Os Malaquecos* invokes a Portuguese empire dependent on a vastly rich and potentially rebellious Brazilian colony. Eighteenth-century Portugal experienced an economic apogee due in large part to the discovery of diamonds in 1728 in Brazil’s interior region near Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais. This discovery significantly augmented the existing influx of wealth from Brazilian gold, also from Minas Gerais, since the early eighteenth century. Not only did the exploitation of these resources overpower the European diamond market, but it also provoked a significant shift in the Atlantic slave trade by escalating the demand for slaves to work the burgeoning mines, compounding the continuing call for slave labor in the agricultural Northeast and North of Brazil. In the decades preceding the publication of *Os Malaquecos*, the metropole continued to benefit from the steady flow of wealth from Brazil, though the net benefit was less than might have been expected. The Portuguese government had actually become economically debilitated despite Brazil’s raw materials. As Thomas Skidmore writes, the nation faced “the financial drain of massive military

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5 C.R. Boxer explains, however, that the “spectacular development of Brazil during the reign of Dom João V [1706-1750] was not accompanied by any lasting improvement in the condition of Portugal’s Asian and African colonies, but rather the reverse” (*Four Centuries* 79).

6 In *Notícia a respeito das minas de diamantes da capitania de Minas Gerais, no Brasil, desde a sua descoberta, em 1728, até 1773, comprovada com muitos documentos copiados do Registo da Intendência do Serro do Frio e acompanhada de uma aquarela dos terrenos diamantinos*, the anonymous author writes of the impact that the flood of Brazilian diamonds had on the global market: “…efoi tanta a quantid. de Diam. as de Mundo, que quazi lhe fez perder aestimação em toda a Europa.” See also Furtado for a discussion of the diamond industry in eighteenth-century Brazil. With regard to the diamond industry’s impact on the international slave trade, C.R. Boxer writes: “The discovery of gold and diamonds on such a scale had several major repercussions in the Portuguese colonial world. [...] [T]he increased demand for west African slaves for service in the mines and plantations of Brazil led to a corresponding increase in the slave-trade with west Africa” (*Four Centuries* 76-7).

7 Thomas Skidmore parses this economic influx into telling parts: “Things did not turn out as well planned, however, in large part because of the Portuguese crown’s penchant for ostentatious spending on the maintenance of its court and the inordinately expensive construction of new palaces and churches, which left the economy in continuous deficit. Instead of raising living standards in Portugal, Brazilian gold and diamonds were needed simply to keep the home economy stable” (30).
expenditures for the wars with Spain in the 1760s and 1770s over the borderlands of southern Brazil, and the gradual exhaustion of Brazilian mines (gold and diamond revenues from Minas Gerais dropped by 50 percent in the two decades after 1750)" (30).

That era, under the reign of José I (1750-1777), was dominated by the figure of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, who was eventually elevated to the position of Prime Minister (1756) and named the Marquis of Pombal (1769). Pombal rose to what some have called dictatorial power in the period following the 1755 Lisbon earthquake and retained his position until the death of José I in 1777. The politician wielded national and international influence in both economics and culture. Specifically with regard to the affluent colony of Brazil, he attempted from several angles to consolidate metropolitan dominance. Pombal's policies sought to keep the territory safely within the parameters of its secondary economic role. For example, he suppressed the impact of the Jesuits on primary and secondary education in the colonial sphere, thus ensuring Brazil's dependence on Portugal for higher education (Maxwell “Eighteenth-Century” 110-113). Additionally, his mercantilist policies positioned Brazil as merely an aid to productivity centered in Portugal, and in this way prevented Brazil, as Skidmore has observed, from participating in the Industrial Revolution (31). In other words, the productive capacity in various spheres of the colony’s fertile domain was thus seriously thwarted by Pombal’s policies, at least within Brazil itself. And indeed, the politician managed dramatically to reduce the

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8 C.R. Boxer writes that among the substantive and lasting effects of Pombal's power were: "(i) strengthening still further the extensive power of the Crown over all ramifications of colonial life; (ii) his efforts to foster colonial trade by founding privileged and monopolistic chartered trading companies" (Four Centuries 81). See also Maxwell (103-4) for a summary of Pombal's varied and profound impact on mid- to late-eighteenth-century Portugal, and for a brief discussion of Pombal's moves against the Jesuits (110-13). He expelled the Jesuits from Portuguese territories in 1759. The educational hegemony of the Society of Jesus's educational institutions was viewed by Pombal as exerting a dangerous sway over the formation of colonial subjects. Portugal's action ultimately provoked similar moves among other European monarchs, resulting in the subsequent suppression of the order by the Pope.

9 As Thomas Skidmore explains with regard to Pombal's economic policy: "As a good mercantilist, he believed that Portugal (the home country) should industrialize, but that the economic function of colonies like Brazil was to continue to produce primary goods for export mainly to the home country" (30). See also Boxer (Seaborne Empire 196-197).
trade deficit of Portugal between 1751 and 1775, but at the expense of Brazil (from which 61% of Portugal’s exports came), and this trend continued subsequently (Skidmore 31).

With the death of Dom José I, Dona Maria I (1777-1816) came to power, expelled Pombal, and released the aristocrats that the Prime Minister had jailed. Nonetheless, Pombal’s policies of colonial control did not dissipate. Portugal remained embroiled in the former Prime Minister’s efforts to retain a firm grip on its colonial possessions. The metropole was intensely dependent on the raw materials of a much wealthier Brazil, and Brazil was aware of this need. In the first decade of her reign, 1777-1787, Portugal made efforts to maintain the empire’s economic status quo. Maria I continued policies of subjugation in order to facilitate exploitation, which affected particularly Minas Gerais, the native region of the title character of the play. In 1785, for example, Maria I issued a decree prohibiting almost

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10 Boxer attributes some of the economic ascension of Portugal in the first years of Maria I’s reign to Portugal’s neutrality in the 1776-1783 war “in which Great Britain, the North American colonies, France, Spain and eventually the Netherlands were all involved” (*Seaborne Empire* 196). 

11 For a detailed, if traditional, walk through the life and times of this monarch, see Beirão.

12 Despite substantial changes in the government, there was also marked continuity: “Many of the fallen dictator’s most trusted collaborators and henchmen were dismissed, but some of the most important were retained, including the Overseas Minister, Martinho de Mello e Castro” (*Seaborne Empire* 195).

13 Some changes were effected at the initiation of Maria I’s reign. As H. V. Livermore writes: “The state also abandoned many of Pombal’s trading ventures. The Grão-Pará Company paid no dividend after 1766 and was wound up in 1778; that of Pernambuco, considerably in debt, was terminated in 1780; the Port-wine Company lost some of its privileges” (242).

14 As Skidmore writes, “Portugal’s major colony had not only far surpassed it in economic importance but […] Portugal had become dramatically dependent on Brazil. This reality did not go unnoticed by the Brazilian elite” (31).

15 As Charles Boxer writes: “[t]here was general resentment at the oppressive weight of colonial taxation, particularly the royal fifth, the tithes, and the exactions of the contractors of Crown monopolies. These were all especially burdensome in Minas Gerais, where the Crown did not make adequate adjustments for the steep fall in gold production” (*Seaborne Empire* 198).
all textile production in Brazil. These policies were among the elements that contributed to the ultimately unsuccessful elitist insurrectionist movement in Minas Gerais called the Inconfidência Mineira, carried out in 1789. Rebellion at the time was brewing in Europe as well as the Americas, where the English colonies began their move toward independence little more than a decade earlier. Maria I was well aware of and reacted to the threat to European monarchical dominance at home and abroad; the French Revolution, as well as the Haitian Revolution, were imminent (see, e.g., Livermore 243-244).

When Os Malaquecos was published, between the last segment of Pombal’s rule and the first decade of Maria I’s, the ruling class of Portugal likely saw not only France and the Enlightenment, but also Brazil — especially the rich region of Minas Gerais — as a potential menace in both economic and political terms. On the one hand, the crown continued to depend on the cooperation of the colony to play its subordinate role in Portugal’s mercantilist economy. On the other hand, there was emerging the very real possibility of revolution in the American colony. Both of these historical perspectives underlie my reading of Os Malaquecos, though the former is somewhat more relevant in the case at hand. The play generally supports the Portuguese government’s intent to keep Brazil in its place, and does so through the allegory of a trans-Atlantic love triangle.

Love and Empire

Os Malaquecos aims to shape society’s ideas through an imperial frame of reference. It treats love in Lisbon, as was common in the entremêzo, but situates the story and the city in a global milieu, and comments on both the metropolitan and peripheral spheres of the empire. However, what exactly the play says about these contexts sometimes is difficult to discern. The genre’s convoluted and wily communicative dynamics make precise interpretation at times elusive. Yet despite this complexity, or perhaps at time due to it, this play offers unique insight into late eighteenth-century Portuguese attitudes about Portugal and Brazil.

Os Malaquecos asserts that chaos must be averted both at home and in the colonies. True to the special needs of short theater, and the formulaic

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16 See Libby (88-89), who points out that this maneuver has been seen as part and parcel of draconian mercantilism, but is now seen as overkill.

17 Skidmore writes: “By the 1780s, material issues were combining with Enlightenment ideas to further exacerbate anti-Portuguese feeling, […] primarily in Minas Gerais” (32).
In particular, the play quickly and efficiently introduces the basic issues, relationships, and conflicts. The job is essentially done in the play’s opening lines. An exchange between the young female protagonist (and rebellious social antagonist) Rufina, and her servant, Laberca, exposes the social disorder that fuels the plot. Rufina explains to the other woman her guardian’s plan for her to marry a well-off Brazilian: “Meu Pai sim, quer-me cazar/Com um homem que naõ conhece,/Só por lhe constar que tem/No Brazil, donde descende,/Cocos […] etc.” (1). The promise of wealth that clearly motivates Rufina’s guardian is unpersuasive to her. She firmly proclaims in the initial verses that she will not marry someone on faith (“Naõ tens que teimar comigo,/Lбарса, porque naõ heide/Cazar com outrem por fé” [1]). Though the presumably deserved authority of Rufina’s guardian, Relamborio, is affirmed in the end, Rufina’s rebelliousness enables an initial enjoyment of how the characters deceive or ridicule him. Relamborio’s ironic name, which connotes “preguiçoso” or “inútil,” complements this playful, iconoclastic aspect of the piece. Readers are soon exposed to the potential consequences of Rufina’s challenge to social order when her servant Laberca warns her about the wrath of the family patriarch, Relamborio (“Entaõ quer que seu avô/De raivoso se arrepele?” [1]). Laberca establishes that Rufina’s disobedience will in fact cause conflict; thus, in the space of 6 lines, readers know the central conflict of the story.

Upon the entrance of the elder relative we learn that he is not ignorant of Rufina’s defiance, though he is unaware of her particular scheme to thwart his plans. In fact, he threatens her and argues that the marriage would be beneficial to her. Laberca defends Rufina’s insubordination from her inferior position, and the guardian insults her into silence. Laberca continues her solidarity with her mistress in a statement that Relamborio just barely overhears. Through her aside, Laberca implicates and involves readers, proposing that they consider themselves her interlocutors. She brings readers into her confidence, and urges them to embrace her evaluation of the situation: “Tem entranhias de serpente. á parte” (2). After Rufina tearfully parts company with her guardian, he tries to co-opt the aid of Laberca. Additionally, he reasserts his authority, underscoring the social disturbance that Rufina has provoked (and understands). Laberca is characteristically reluctant to help the older man convince Rufina, and when she encounters her charge again she simply tells her that her older relative has gone in search of that “Esposo” (4). Rufina confirms, “O Brazileiro?” (4), and in so doing reminds the readers of his place of origin. In the same exchange Rufina also expresses the crux of the play’s conflict: her desire to
merry a Portuguese man, Meliante, who has just appeared at their house, but has not yet come on-stage.¹⁸

When Meliante appears, after a bit of banter based on Laberca’s rejoinders to his provocative and joking arrogance, he and Rufina express their passion for each other. This liaison experiences only minor and jocular if frequent complications during the play. What I would like to emphasize are the tactics that Meliante and Rufina use to achieve their goal. Soon after the start of the play, Meliante offers a solution, one centered on his impersonating the Brazilian. Meliante promptly appears, in the guise of the Brazilian, Malaqueco; he is loaded with exotic gifts and successfully carries out his farce. Although Relamborio had openly manifested anger at Rufina’s initial resistance to his plans, he is now delighted when she declares, upon Meliante’s appearance as Malaqueco, that the patriarch need not worry, as she has fallen in love with the Brazilian at first sight. In several asides, however, the pair suppresses their giggles as they fret that the old man will discover their ploy. The parodic tension provoked by their deceptive resistance to authority continues.¹⁹

Indeed, the comic absurdity of the couple’s scheme amplifies in response to circumstances. When Rufina returns to the stage, she tells Meliante that her guardian has changed his mind. Now, she says, he hopes to marry his charge to a Portuguese captain who is returning from Holland in a Dutch ship (12). Meliante assures her that he will use the same trick, this time disguising himself as a relative of Malaqueco, who is offended by the abrupt change in plans. Meliante exits, while Relamborio returns to confirm his new plan. He intends, he says, to wed her to the traveling captain, and Rufina ostensibly agrees, confident in the efficacy of Meliante’s recycled impersonation routine.

With Relamborio alone on the stage, Meliante reappears, this time dressed as a Hungarian — on the next page he explains this odd twist by

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¹⁸ Laberca, who desires to marry Meliante’s servant, Girigoto, adds to the plot the conventional parallel love interests of the lower class, which continue throughout the play and augment its attempts both to entertain and to teach. This love interest between the socially low characters, vastly less complicated and more easily realized, nevertheless serves the purpose of drawing the audience or readers further into the drama.

¹⁹ An additional subplot arises at this point resolutely to confirm society’s disapproval of the disorder caused by Rufina’s actions. Amandio, the suitor of her sister, Clarisse, shows up for a visit, with hopes of achieving wealth through a marriage. “Amand. Se fosses como Rufina,/Eu te faria liberta./Clar. Não, que a meu amor prefere,/O perceito da obediencia” (12). Obedience, we are reminded, is fundamental.
claiming that he has arrived from Hungary and by chance found his Brazilian relative, who told him everything. He threatens Relamborio with vengeance for the insult. Relamborio, flummoxed by this new turn of events, exits as Rufina enters with a mask, apparently passing as an anonymous woman. Alone with Rufina, Meliante playfully reacts to her disguise, claiming to be taken by the new woman’s beauty. After a joking exchange upon Rufina’s unmasking, Meliante confirms his desire to marry her.

Shortly afterwards, through this and other marriage plans, Os Malaguecos begins its return to the social status quo. On the penultimate page of the play, three preferred Portuguese suitors appear—not only Meliante, but also Amandio and Girigoto, whose parallel pretensions of matrimony emerge through subplots. The three men (Meliante now dressed, the play implies, as the Brazilian Malaqueco) pledge their subservience to Rufina’s guardian: “Os tres. Servo, Senhor, Relamborio” (15). Meliante exchanges affectionate words with Rufina and says openly (as Malaqueco): “Venho a ter da dita o logro” (15). Relamborio asks the three men what their intentions are: “Rel. E os Senhores a que vem?” to which Meliante responds that they have come to “Aplaudir os despozorios” (15). Relamborio gives his consent to these several marriages, realizing the standard theatrical dénouement that also achieves the restoration of social order.

One complication remains, however. At the moment of this apparently happy ending, the machinations of Relamborio on one side, and those of Meliante and Rufina on the other, collide. A stage direction declares: “Sahe o Olandez, e o Brazileiro.” In other words, in this very moment the Portuguese captain, who has come from Holland, and (the real) Malaqueco, who has come from Brazil, arrive, both expecting to marry Rufina. The two foreigners are conflated through a coincidental introduction and declaration of deference: “Os dois. Servo, Senhor, Relamborio” (16). In apparent asides Rufina and Meliante begin to panic, certain that now their chicanery will be revealed, thus exposing the couple as dolts. The Olandez and Malaqueco intensify the absurd complication by once again speaking in unison: “Os dois. [...] Não sabe que para Espozo,/De sua neta aqui venho?” (16).

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20 She had indicated that she would dress up as Meliante, but it is not clear in the play that she has dressed as him specifically.

21 Amandio has been courting Rufina’s sister throughout the play thinking that Relamborio is rich, despite the fact that the reader knows that Relamborio is actually seeking funds by marrying Rufina. And Girigoto is Meliante’s servant, who has been constantly courting Rufina’s servant by way of salacious banter.
Meliante chimes in: “Emtão, Senhor, como he isto,/Eu tambem vim para Espozo,/E compri a minha palavra” (16). The competing claims to Rufina converge —between the Olandez, the false Malaqueco (Meliante), and the real Malaqueco— which ends up offending everyone.

Rufina decides to set things straight and come clean before the situation gets more out of hand. Relamborio reacts with rage as he learns that he has been duped, his authority undermined. Meliante tries to calm him, saying that it was only a prank. The Olandez likewise seeks to appease Relamborio.22 The conflict is resolved with a declaration by the Brazilian. However, I should point out that in an apparent erratum, the play signals the speaker as Meliante. In fact, it is clear that the real Malaqueco, the Brazilian one, is speaking at this point for the first and only time: “Mel [or, rather, the Brasileiro/Malaqueco?]. A gente do Reino, vou/Vendo que he de boa casta,/E se você se agasta,/Ainda em cima ao que parece,/He porque me não conhece, Sou Malaqueco, isto basta. Vai-se./Ruf. Ai que desmaio se/O que me naõ conhece, Sou Malaqueco, isto basta. Vai-se./Mel. Vamos a dar-lhe remedio,/He fortissimo desgosto! FIM” (16). After the character indicated as Meliante speaks, he exits, after which Rufina falls in the arms of Meliante, which supports the hypothesis that the character who leave the stage is indeed Malaqueco.

The Brazilian suitor, Malaqueco, pays homage to the Kingdom and its people in his single declaration and peaceably departs, but not without a last declaration of pride. With his willing retreat he —echoing the other suitors— acknowledges the authority of Relamborio, and thus performs a colonial collaboration in maintaining imperial order. The real Malaqueco — the second one for readers, hence the title of the play, Os Malaquecos— is finally and concretely marginalized. From the beginning, he is named but absent, and even in this final scene, for the most part he stands silent and generally ignored until his short speech. Portugal, through Meliante and his appropriation of the Brazilian’s identity and all that it implies, wins out over Brazil. And just as important, local order and authority, embodied by Relamborio, win out over rebellion and disorder.

Although the play does attempt to reconfirm Relamborio’s authority in the end, it is not a foregone conclusion that these tactics entirely and

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22 “Caximba, caximba hum pouco” (16), says the Olandez. Relamborio’s response brings out the potential for ambiguity of the verb “caximbar” (or “cachimbar” in modern Portuguese)—smoke; pay no mind or ponder; and also deceive or double-cross: “Rel. Ui, Senhor, naõ me caximbe,/De caximbado estou loucome./Caximbado estou louco” (16). The Olandez accepts his fate and, with a parting jab, pulls out a pipe and exits the stage.
effectively would reverse the impact that the young couple’s rebellion may have had among readers. As we have seen, the patriarch reestablishes a degree of his sovereignty by giving the official blessing for the marriage unions. Throughout the course of the play, the meddling of the Lusitanian lovers, Rufina and Meliante, frustrates Relamborio’s ploy to tap the Brazilian mother lode through a marriage union. Their mischievous insubordination challenges the established power of the patriarch and his strategies to maintain it. Young love, which tends to be valued in entremezes, prevails. Yet in this case it is won by way of deceiving a representative of the Portuguese power structure who—and readers may have appreciated the allegorical implications—is trying to exert influence over the metropole and the colony. Perhaps in this play orthodoxy and irreverence are brought into balance by the fact that Meliante and Rufina’s triumph effectively undermines not only Relamborio but also the Brazilian. The play seems in this way to transform disobedience into support—if not for the guardian’s plan to acquire colonial riches, then at least for his desire to exploit and dominate the Brazilian.

Through Rufina’s comment at the beginning of the play, it becomes clear that the patriarch is attempting to access and appropriate the riches (or promises of riches) from the colony through some means, in this case marriage. Though Brazil is wealthy, the play seems to imply that Portugal is not necessarily benefiting enough from that wealth. Or at least the relatively privileged classes are not reaping the same rewards as the government may be enjoying. It is important to recall that the play makes clear on the very first page that the character, whom readers come to know as Malaqueco, is from Brazil (Rufina says to Laberca that her suitor possesses riches in Brazil, “donde descende”), and is not a Portuguese émigré returning from the colony after making his fortune, a stock character in Portuguese culture of that time and later who is also referred to as a “brasileiro” (e.g., Luis de Magalhães’s O Brasileiro Soares). Curiously, Malaqueco here is not tricked into relinquishing his assets in any event, as might be expected in such a comedy. Relamborio initially covets Malaqueco’s riches, but the play would seem to suggest that ultimately Portugal is fine without colonial capital, so long as there is love among the youth and good order in society. Or perhaps the fact that the Brazilian’s wealth remains unexploited may indicate that the patriarch’s get-rich-quick scheme is much less important than keeping the colonial subject subordinate so that he will continue to

23 On this topic, see, for example, Alves (“O «brasileiro» oitocentista” and “Variações”).
nourish the mercantilist economy of Portugal. It would appear to be
enough for the *entremez*'s purposes to marginalize the foreign suitor.

**Neutralizing the Brazilian**

Although the Brazilian character is affluent, *Os Malaguecos* consistently
marginalizes and ridicules him. As we have seen, Portuguese collaboration
ultimately foils this colonial's attempt to court a metropolitan young woman
and realize a socially equal and biologically productive union. The young
lisboeta characters turn to their advantage the promise of the Brazilian’s
riches, which are the carrot he uses to entice the elder relative of his desired
Continental bride. The young woman and her preferred Portuguese suitor
eventually realize their marital alliance through a strategy that depends on
appropriating the Brazilian’s promise of exotic bounty. Paradoxically, *Os
Malaguecos* symbolically sterilizes the fertile colony. Through the colonial
color character Brazil is made to appear diminished in power, and hence less of a
threat. Those responsible for the *entremez*—the anonymous author and the
publisher, Domingos Gonsalves—embed in the play’s design the Brazilian
color character’s neutralization.

The very surname assigned to Rufina’s Brazilian suitor is generally
unfavorable, and most probably contributed to portraying the colonial
resident as effete and exotic in his opulence. Indeed, the use of the word
“Malaqueco,” which carries a negative and even feminizing connotation,
begins the work of what we might consider the symbolic neutering of the
color character. Though the provocative connotation of the title “Os
Malaguecos” would serve its purpose as a hook, it is not until later in the
play that readers would understand that the plural, “Os Malaguecos,” refers
to Meliante’s dressing up as the Brazilian, Malaqueco, a ploy which
reinforces the effect of the choice of names. “OS MALAQUECOS” stands
out on the title page as the largest text. The interest of passersby might have
been piqued by this curious and pejorative-sounding, but likely unclear,
reference to what is in the text a surname.24 We might surmise that potential
buyers of the chapbook reacted in a way similar to Rufina’s lover (Meliante)
and his servant (Girigoto), when the young woman reveals the name of her
Brazilian fiancé: “Mel. Mas dize-me, has de saber,/O noivo como se
tataranha. à parte” (5). Meliante finds the name of the Brazilian strange, and
Girigoto’s aside adds to that reaction’s negativity: *tataranha* can refer to a

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24 The word *malaqueco* does not appear in the dictionaries that I have consulted, but
a possible variation of the word, *malacueco*, survives in contemporary Portugal, and
is used as an insult of ambiguous meaning.
person who is introverted, timid, confused, or not ambitious.\textsuperscript{25} Their unfavorable assessment of the word “malaqueco” would stand to reason, if only for the pejorative connotation of the suffix –\textit{eco} in Portuguese.\textsuperscript{26} What is more, the root of the word “Malaqueco,” “malac-,” might have evoked for readers (or listeners) a feeling complementary to the suffix’s negativity. The \textit{Dicionário Houaiss da língua portuguesa} suggests that the prefix “malac-” derives from Greek and indicates softness, sweetness, suppleness, or tenderness, qualities that readers would likely see as suitable for a female companion, but indicating lack of virility in a male provider.\textsuperscript{27} Another possible allusion of \textit{Malaqueco} is the word \textit{malaquês}, or someone from Malacca (now part of the country of Malaysia), which would also suggest something or someone foreign, exotic, or oriental.\textsuperscript{28}

The Brazilian’s anonymity in the cast list (it lists only \textit{Hum Brazileiro}) and the ungenerous implications of the name Malaqueco in the title enable the play to exert control over the colonial figure and effectively refuse a

\textsuperscript{25} “tatarana \textit{adj.2g.s.2g} (1881 cf. CA) \textit{infrm.pej. que ou quem é falso de iniciativa ou introvertido, acanhado, atrapalhado; tataranho • ETIM ver em tataranho • SIN/VAR como adj.: ver sinonímia de tímido • ANT como adj: ver antonímia de introvertido e medroso • HOM tataranha(fl.tataranhar)” (\textit{Houaiss}).

\textsuperscript{26} The \textit{Houaiss} defines –\textit{eco} in this way: “–\textit{eco suf. dim., por vezes pej., masc., em palavras como amoreco, andareco, babeco, baixeiro, baixeco, boteco, botareco, brilhareco, fandeco, fulustreco, jornaleco, livreco, mandareco, padreco, pontareco, potreco, rotasko, repeteco, romanceco, toraco.”

\textsuperscript{27} “malac(o) el.comp. antepositivo, do gr. malakós,é,ón ‘mole, macio, doce suave, brando’, de uma raiz indo-europeia *\textit{mol}, ver MOL-; ocorre já em voc. origin. gregos, como malacia (malakia), maláctico, malácotrico (malakótrikos), malacossarco (malakósarkos), malacóstico (malakóstiko), já em vários cultismos da terminologia científica, do sXIX em diante: malacanta, […] malacófono […]” (\textit{Houaiss}). Another word, \textit{Malaca}, can be understood as a sickness, or a sore (especially a malady of the skin that produced lesions). “\textit{malacô} s.f. (1899 cf. CFF) B doença, mazela, esp. moléstia de pele que apresenta lesões ou feridas • ETIM orig.contrv.; tem sido ligado a mal, em der. arbitrária, ao gr. malakós, é, ón ‘mole, macio, doce, suave, brando’, pelo lat. \textit{malacus,a,um} ‘macio, brando, mole’, às vezes tb. como red. de malacia, do gr. malakía, as ‘moleza, fraqueza’; ver mal- e malac(o)” (\textit{Houaiss}).

\textsuperscript{28} The \textit{Houaiss} defines the word in this way: “\textit{malaquês} s.m. (1553 cf. JbarD) NUMS 1 moeda de prata que Afonso de Albuquerque mandou cunhar em Malaca • \textit{adj.s.m. 2 relativo a Malaca (Ásia) ou o seu natural ou habitante; malaqueiro, malaquista • ETIM top. Malaca + -ista.”
place in the metropole for this fictional Brazilian stand-in for real colonial subjects. His disempowerment has begun on the opening lines of the play. The lack of a palpable representational foothold for the Brazilian in Lisbon suggests an exclusive political and cultural attitude of the imperial center toward what it would like to emphasize as periphery. What is more, the appearance together on the final page of the Dutchman and the Brazilian links a then relatively disempowered empire (and also a historical rival) with a potentially disruptive colonial upstart. The play thus makes a spectacle of weakened and ineffectual figures from afar over whom Portugal can assert its dominance.

Consonant with the play’s neutralization of Malaqueco through his surname, the play denies the Brazilian character his own potential for a productive relationship. It uses him instead to facilitate the union of an upper-class Portuguese couple. Thus the Brazilian plays an essential if passive role in the play’s representation not only of continuing social stability within the metropole, but also of a retained hierarchical disparity within the empire.

**The Playful Presentation of Colonial Brazil and Imperial Portugal**

*Os Malaquecos* exemplifies how *entremeces* prefer to season didacticism with the spice of humor and impudence. Humor and scandal inevitably affect how the play shows and shapes values, and what those values are. The present section seeks to deepen my investigation of the play’s cultural and political commentary by analyzing how *Os Malaquecos* anchors in playfulness its occasional upending of social mores, and how such strategies intersect with this genre’s expected, formulaic conservatism or even reflections of official policies. Although essentially traditional, the genre’s ludic nature, as well as its somewhat improvisational hot-off-the-press popularity (and the slight errors and inconsistencies that this sometimes provokes), tend to defy complete control and may produce undesired consequences. The attempted balancing of Rufina’s irreverence and the confirmation of Relamborio’s authority, which I discussed above, is one example of this slipperiness of signification. Does this play, or others like it, end up promoting unintended attitudes as a result of such negotiations? With regard to the stated example, the play may be hoping to convey an essentially orthodox message, and expecting its readers to perceive a

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29 See Brilhante (especially, 297) for an argument for taking seriously the subtle, humorously veiled social commentary of *entremeces*. With regard to playfulness, Richard Schechner argues that “[p]laying is double-edged, ambiguous, moving in several directions simultaneously” (89).
relatively positive portrayal of authority flouted as harmless humor. Somewhat less likely, but still possible, is that the play is seeking to plant a seed of irreverence by undermining an authority figure, and that it clothes its subversive suggestion in the obligatory conservative garb. Either of these imagined strategies may not work as desired. These dynamics, and other playful elements, impact not only the domestic, but also the imperial implications of Os Malaquecos.

One aspect of this entremez’s ludic nature has to do with how it playfully straddles make-believe and make-belief. Richard Schechner defines make-believe as a performance that maintains a “clearly marked boundary between the world of the performance and everyday reality,” and make-belief as one that “intentionally blur[s] or sabotage[s] that boundary” (43). Although these concepts pertain to live performances, I find them relevant not only for produced and attended entremezes, but also for printed and read ones. Late eighteenth-century Portuguese chapbooks should certainly be understood as instances of make-believe. However, we should consider that the degree of identification that readers might have felt with the characters, and the fact that such plays tended to reflect everyday life and current events, may interfere somewhat with a definitive categorization, as these elements would favor reception of the plays in terms of make-believe. Furthermore, these plays also do what “make-belief” does; in Schechner’s words, they attempt to “create the very social realities they enact” (42).

What is especially intriguing in the case of Os Malaquecos is the juggling of make-believe and make-belief within the world of the play. This dynamic is realized through Meliante’s (and, to a lesser degree, Rufina’s) convoluted impersonations, which I will further address below. The lovers’ various shifts in identity are always seen by the co-conspirators for what they are, make-believe. But for other characters, their masquerades are seen as real. From their perspective, Meliante’s and Rufina’s acts of dressing up are effectively make-belief, performances that pass for reality. Therein lie some of the humor and social potency of this entremez. Make-believe and make-belief thus coexist within the world of the play and for readers. For the most part, the complications of this intermingling create amusing instances of mayhem. However, the play’s layered interaction between make-believe and make-belief may also generate permutations of meaning and effects, and ones that are potentially un governable. Both of these possibilities are germane to the play’s analysis, and not, in my view, mutually exclusive.

These seemingly simple, but sometimes unmanageable, elements of play emerge on the first page of Os Malaquecos, in its opening declaration by the youthful and wily protagonist. Following the first stage direction, “Sahe Rufina, e Laberca,” Rufina declares: “Nãò tens que teimar comigo,/Laberca, porque nãò heide/Cazar com outrem por fé,/Olha, ainda que me queimem” (1). At the outset, the play establishes an interaction between social classes: readers of the entremez would see right above the line the
description of Laberca in the cast list as “lacaia,” a servant. What is more, Rufina’s ultimatum—that she would rather be burned than be married off to some man, sight unseen—establishes the theme and conflict of the play, which stems from her unseemly subversion of society’s expectations of her. This disruption of social order—which the reader would expect to be soon resolved—is couched in Rufina’s humorous irreverence. The dialogue that follows underscores the comical, and in this case rather racy, bent of the play: “Lab. Então quer que seu avô/De raivoso se arrepençê/? Ruf. Quero. Lab. Já agora choráro/Na cama, que he parte quente./Ruf. Olha tu, minha Laberca,/O meu gosto he diferente [...]” (1). The initial, quickly paced exchange not only underscores Rufina’s impudence—seen in the declaration that she does not mind driving her great-uncle to pulling his hair out—but also combines the conflict with sexual allusion. From Laberca’s point of view, we might interpret, the burning that Rufina declared she would withstand in defiance of her elders would not, in the end, be so bad if it were to come from the heat of the bed.

Let us consider for a moment an additional likely implication of this initial scene were a reader at the time to envision a theatrical production of Os Malaquecos—that is, if the play was released during the second half of the possible window of publication: between 1779 and 1787, rather than 1768 and 1779. On the Lisbon stage of the 1780s, Os Malaquecos’s depiction of social disarray—the almost mock tension that the play sustains beginning with the initial exchange between Rufina and Laberca, which foregrounds rebellion coupled with sexual innuendo—would be augmented by the fact that both women, despite their projected social distinction through dress, would be male actors, due to a royal decree.

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30 “lacaio” s.m. (sXV cf. FichIVPM) 1 criado, ger. de libré, que acompanha o amo 2 fig. plej. homem sem dignidade, que se humilha para obter vantagens; sabujo 3 GAR BA quartzo enfumaçado ‘ETIM esp. lacayo (sXV) ’id., de orig.contrv.; para Corominas, os doc. conhecidos fazem supor voc. provç., com signf. de ‘servidor’, não se justificando relaçao com alcaide e etim. árabe; f.hist. sXV alacayos, sXVI lacai o •SIN/VAR ver sinonímia de empregado e pulha” (Houaiss).

31 Of course, this sort of prohibition was not unprecedented in the history of theater (e.g., English theater during the reign of Charles II, in the mid-sixteenth century). In Portugal from about 1779 to 1800 Queen Maria I proscribed the participation of women on the stage (see, e.g., Carreira 23, Rebello 61). As Laureano Carreira comments, “Os papéis de mulheres passarão a ser representados por homens barbudos e de perna viril, o que não deixará de provocar comentários surpreendentes nalguns viajantes estrangeiros” (23). With regard to this play, the official restriction surely would not have harmed the plot’s productive antics in a theatrical space.
might say that the obligatory cross-dressing of the Lisbon theater from 1779 until the end of the century would complement the *entremez*'s interweaving of serious social commentary and the ludic devices that it employs. At least such an element would not undermine the *entremez*'s burlesque, if brief, iconoclasm. On the one hand, social order is preserved, in part, when gender roles are reestablished at the end of a production, when the actors dissolve the transparent illusion and re-don the attire expected of their gender. On the other hand, cross-dressing may enhance the *entremez*'s entertaining and effective, but also possibly uncooperative, devices of humor, irreverence, and formulaic artificiality. The already contrived genre of the *entremez* would be made doubly so with the statutory convention of drag. Because readers of such plays during the period would also likely be familiar with produced plays, they would no doubt have been aware of such conventions, and it is likely that they would imagine how a production of a read text might be realized live. Writers of *entremezes* might have considered such potential imaginary evocations based on their plots and stage directions as part of the repertoire of tactics with which they tried to guide readings.

Shortly after the opening scene of *Os Malaguecos* implied cross-dressing is complemented by cross-cultural dressing, enacted when Rufina’s lover, Meliante, impersonates the Brazilian. The exchange between Rufina and Laberca that follows the opening comment confirms the play’s cheeky challenge to Portuguese social norms. Moreover, the subsequent lines, still on the title page of the play, couple the standard amorous strife with allusions to the Portuguese empire. This *entremez* sees the time and place in which it was written not only as Lisbon of the late eighteenth century, but as Lisbon in a global, colonial network. Rufina’s explanation of her great-uncle’s plan establishes the play’s perspective on its colony:

Meu Pai sim, quer-me cazar
Com hum homem que naõ conhece,
Só por lhe constar que tem
No Brazil, donde descendee,

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32 The following 1787 comment by William Beckford about a performance at the Salitre Theater indicate that cross-dressing may have contributed to Portuguese audiences finding performance entertaining, if not humorous: “A shambli-blear-eyed boy […] squeaked and bellowed alternately the part of a widowed princess. Another […] tottering on high-heeled shoes, represented her Egyptian Majesty, and warbled two airs with all the nauseous sweetness of a fluted falsetto. Though I could have boxed his ears for surfeiting mine so filthy, the audience were of a very different opinion, and were quite enthusiastic in their applause” (106).
Rufina refuses her grand-uncle’s plan and explains that his interest in the Brazilian suitor derives from what this man possesses—including tropical fruits, Tupi herbs and a Tupi manioc-root mush—which Malaqueco sends him from Brazil. Without even passing to the second page, the play explains the romantic complication at the core of the plot, and links it to Brazil. The colony, for its part, is associated with strangeness and abundance, if not, as Relamborio infers, opulence (she does not mention gold or diamonds), a distinction that may mirror popular spectator assumptions about Brazil as exotic, or prime them to see Malaqueco/Brazil as showy but ultimately neutralized and controllable. The bounty that Rufina describes is a quality that the cross-cultural-dressing Meliante—perhaps modeling a strategy for Portugal—will soon appropriate and domesticate. As a result, the reader would know that the final resolution of Rufina’s temporary disruption of the social order will have implications with regard to Portugal’s imperial context and the stance of dominant consumption that the metropole should adopt vis-à-vis its rather potent periphery.

The opening exchange between Rufina and Laberca introduces both the varied message of the play and the means through which it communicates that message. The entrance of Rufina’s lover, Meliante, on page 5, and his impersonation of the Brazilian soon thereafter complement the play’s multi-layered comment on Portugal and its place within an imperial context. Indeed, Meliante similarly contributes to revealing Os Malaquecos’s dual interface with readers. The character’s playfulness is the counterpart to the entremeze’s serious engagement of social values.

33 The word mandinga refers to a Tupi herb (Rhynchospora hirsuta), which, given the list here, is probably the meaning intended. However, it also has been cited in the *Houaiss* as “1 ato ou efeito de mandingar; feitiço, feitiçaria.” And definitions of the word extend beyond the indigenous Brazilian context to include Africa: “4 indivíduo do grupo étnico dos mandingas; mandê, mandeu […] 5 ramo de línguas do grupo nigero-congolês, muito diseminado na África ocidental, desde a Mauritânia até a Nigéria.”
Importantly, Meliante’s adoption of the Brazilian’s identity is a metaperformance: a Portuguese actor playing the part of a Portuguese man playing the part of a Brazilian. Meliante’s dressing reinforces Os Malaquecos’s attempts to reflect and affect society. His antics collaborate with the potential for conservative social change embedded in the popular, formulaic nature of the entremez in late eighteenth-century Lisbon, as his humorous impersonations ensure a metropolitan marriage union and the marginalization of the colonial character.

After discovering Relamborio’s plan to marry Rufina to the rich Brazilian, Meliante conspires with her to realize a scheme whereby he will marry her beforehand, thus ensuring that, upon arrival from afar, the real (Brazilian) Malaqueco will not be able to claim his Lusitanian betrothed. Meliante arrives shortly thereafter dressed as a Brazilian, with sailors in tow and bearing barrels of tropical goods, including molasses, sugar, and coconuts. The following excerpt opens with his entrance and shows the realization of Meliante and Rufina’s plan:

_Sabe Meliante de Brazilheiro, e Girigoto com varios moços de Navios, e estes trazem varios generos como de barril, que figura ser de melaço, humas taras de assucar, Abanos, Cocos, e Cuias._

_Meliante_. Senhor, Relamborio, busco
A honra de seu cativo.
_Re[amborio]._ Tenha, Senhor; Malaqueco,
A quem quero, e muito estimo,
Aqui já não ha remedio!
_Mel._ Agora o opio lhe impinjo,
Senhor Relamborio, saiba
Que assim que de nosso amigo
Por carta tive a certeza
De ser Esposo, comprindo
Com a minha obrigaçaõ,
Afretei logo hum navio
Que me conduzisse á posse
Deste bem apetecido.
_Ruf[ina]._ Eu do Senhor Malaqueco,
Assim que o rostro devizo,
Logo senti no meu peito;
Mil amantes rebuliços.
_Re[lia]._ Ora pois, vão conversando,
_Dizendo coloquios finos;
O velho está com delirios._
_Gir[igoto]._ O velho está com delirios._
_Re[lia]._ Em quanto vou recolhendo
_Estes generozos mimos._
_Mel._ A quanto por teu respeito
Amante me sacrifico.
Tem-me custado a soffrer
Por muitas vezes o rizo.
Ruf. Bem sei, mas não sejas tu
Também fingido comigo. (7-8)

The reader would see that the ultimately successful ploy of preempting the Brazilian’s claim to Rufina works on Relamborio. The old man is manifestly convinced by Meliante’s impersonation of the Brazilian character, Malaqueco, with whom Relamborio has previously only corresponded by post. However, as Girigoto’s aside and Meliante’s confession that he can hardly contain his laughter establish, the disguise is absurdly transparent, and only the old man is deceived. The play puts a spotlight on the thin veil of the farce—and concomitantly ensures that readers would get the joke—as soon as Relamborio steps out for a minute to put his hands on the gifts with which Meliante (as Malaqueco) has arrived. Meliante and Rufina—who has pretended to fall spontaneously in love with this counterfeit Brazilian—then verbally flaunt their real identities, their voices mingled in a single verse: “Ruf. Meu Meliante. Mel. Rufina./Os dois Eu sem ti, amor, não vivo” (9).

The implications and impact of Os Malaquecos’s metatheatrical device extend, of course, beyond the jocular. For instance, the potential unruliness of the play is also implied by Rufina’s multiple admonitions that Meliante’s deception not extend to her. Of course, this is a danger that the play itself, through its ludic and irreverent approach to achieving a serious impact on society, must face as well. What is more, the subject matter of the play broadens the implications of Meliante’s mischievous impersonations. We might consider as well that Meliante actually masquerades as two characters—the Brazilian (Malaqueco) and the Hungarian (in a second farce referred to above, supposedly a relative of Malaqueco who has traveled from Hungary)—and promises Rufina that he will impersonate a Dutchman, as well, whose arrival they are soon expecting (elsewhere in the play, Rufina explains to Laberca that her older relative has also promised her to a Portuguese man who has gone to Holland; this seems to be the Olandez of the play). The playful instances of dressing up as others facilitate the re-imagination or re-signification of the societies that Meliante personifies.

34 She emphasizes this two times. First, when Rufina and Meliante first fool Relamborio with their ruse, she says: “[...] não sejas tu/Também fingido comigo” (8). And then, near the end of the play, in response to a overdone declaration of love by Meliante: “Assim costumaõ dizer/Todos os que uzaõ de enganos,/E por isso vos não creio” (14).
through costume. It is through the zany convolutions of his character shifts that Meliante embodies the play's suggestive representation of both metropolitan and international contexts. Meliante effectively allegorizes a Portugal that would deceptively appropriate the value and appeal of Brazil in order to maintain the imperial status quo. His caricature of the Brazilian—a symbolic domination—provides a model for continuing or enhanced Portuguese political and economic domination of the colony. However, as we know, such potential for domination was short-lived.

Indeed, by having the Portuguese character assume the identity of the Brazilian Malaqueco, Meliante models imperial dominance through a kind of reverse mimicry. He not only takes control of the colony, but also takes advantage of its symbolic cachet. Meliante capitalizes on the generally positive associations of affluence and abundance, and exploits the enticing, but potentially negative appeal of the exotic. Rather than merely displacing or diminishing the influence of a colonial upstart, the play, through Meliante, may be acknowledging that more can be gained from assuming the colony's semblance and absorbing its value. At the end of the play, Malaqueco reclaims his identity, but its essence and power have already been absorbed by Meliante. The end of the play makes a point of reifying the weakening and marginalization of Brazil, and of centering imperial Portugal. The Brazilian does leave without the young woman, but with his wealth. However, even if he is symbolically diminished, the colonial subject can return and regroup, the play implies, and thus can still pose a threat to Portugal.

This concentration of diverse subjectivities within one person, Meliante, facilitates the play's representational control over the non-Portuguese. I would note that the play goes beyond merely having a Portuguese actor play a Brazilian. It further distances the real subjects implicated (Brazilians) by having a Portuguese character within the play pretend to be Brazilian. Additionally, Meliante would appear not only to enact an emblematic isolation of the colony, but also to proscribe the imagination of social hybridity, an intermingling of colonial and metropolitan subjects. This tactic exposes the representational conventions of this kind of popular theater. In contrast to a piece that might encourage authentic suspension of disbelief, Os Malaquecos flaunts its make-believe status. This technique eliminates even the semblance of colonial agency through the additional layer of artifice, exposing the absence of actual Brazilians in its depiction of Brazilians. Meliante's representational sovereignty over Brazil helps to render Portugal's potentially menacing colonial territory innocuous in the imagination of the Lisbon public of the time. As we have seen, Brazil exists in the play almost entirely by way of Meliante's portrayal; except in the final lines, it is denied even a fictional presence. Meliante thus attempts to widen the chasm between Brazil and the place that it holds within the minds of the Portuguese public. Os
Malaquecos encourages readers to conceive of the colony as something remote and exotic, a place restricted, as it were, to the realm of make-believe.

**Conclusions**

In this *entremêz*, the tactics of play—intentional or not—act as vital, if tricky tools for reinforcing conservative social and political values. Yet the very nature of this written genre also promotes the imagination of transgression—a presumably brief, but potentially lingering indulgence for its numerous and popular interlocutors. *Os Malaquecos* may have intended to guide readers to embrace empire, but it may have unintentionally (or perhaps even purposely) served a liberatory function, providing the script for challenging social traditions and power relations within the nation-state. Readers see humorous rebellion and deception rewarded, despite restoration of order. Though *Os Malaquecos* shores up the status quo, perhaps this and other *entremêzes* of the time also eroded, even minimally, the foundations of Portuguese social mores. Rufina and Meliante’s insubordinate maneuvers do flout authority, even if in the end the play coats the outcome of their actions with a veneer of official authorization when Relamborio sanctions their union. We might also recall that the name of our authority figure, Relamborio, means lazy or useless in Portuguese. Beyond these potentially appealing irreverent elements, it is also possible that the stance taken by the play with regard to the Portuguese empire might contain some potential to backfire. More specifically, it could be that the play’s attempt to show Brazil being put in its place may end up promulgating anxiety by drawing attention to increasing imperial instability.

Of course it is impossible to know for sure. However, it is plausible if not compelling—even after taking into account these and other disruptive qualities—that the net result of *Os Malaquecos* is the solidification of order in Lisbon society and, more obliquely but no less significantly, the Portuguese empire at the time. Within the *entremêz*’s playful, and perhaps somewhat unruly lines we can glimpse its recognition of Brazil’s worth and potential for power and an allegorical proposal for how to keep the colony under control. The play thus reflects official fears and policy. During the mid-eighteenth century, figures like the Marquis of Pombal and Maria I fought to constrain the burgeoning society of Brazil and ensure its continued exploitation as a source of natural resources to bolster a growing Portuguese industrial complex.

Nonetheless, perhaps *Os Malaquecos* represents, within a continuing policy of promoting imperial dominance and colonial suppression, a seed of what is to come. Meliante’s metropolitan awareness and assumption of Brazilian value may anticipate Portugal’s part in the rise of Brazil: only a few decades after the publication of *Os Malaquecos*, Portugal itself will don a tropical garb through the royal court’s relocation to the distant land. The
character of Meliante may thus be understood—retrospectively, at least—as a harbinger for a political tactic that rebounds in the end. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Portugal would attempt to maintain control over and assume the value of the jewel of its empire, but in so doing it would help to provoke the development of the American territory and its unique path, within a hemispheric context, to independence. At least for a fleeting time, however, Novo entremez Os Malaquecos, Ou Os costumes brasilieiros performs and helps to preserve Portugal’s place as empire in the late eighteenth century through what it presents as a symbolic debilitation of Brazil and Portuguese imperial dominance.

WORKS CITED


Anonymous. Novo entremez Os Malaquecos, Ou Os costumes brasilieiros. LISBOA, NA Officina de Domingos Gonçalves. Com licença da Real Meza Cenfôria. [1788?]


Gordon, "Dramatizing Portuguese Imperial Dominance"


NOVO ENTREMEZ
OS MALAQUECOS,
OU
OS COSTUMES BRAZILEIROS.

ACTORES.

Retumborão velho,
Rufina e Clarijê, junt. Sobrinhas,
Melosante, amante de Rufina,
Laberca, Lorde,
Amandio, amante de Clarijê.

Psalmodí, seu Criado,
Girigilo, Criado de Milante,
Hum Olendo,
Hum Brazinte,
Varias Brasileiras, e Pretas.

Sahe Rufina, e Laberca.

Ruf. NÃO tens que teimar comigo,
Laberca, porque não heide
Cazar com outrem por fé,
Olha, ainda que me queime.
Lab. Então quer que seu avô
De raivoza se arrepele?
Ruf. Quero. Lab. Já agora chorale
Na cama, que he parte quente.
Ruf. Olha tu, minha Laberca,
O meu gozo he diferente:
Meu Pai sim, quer-me cazar
Com hum homem que não conhece,
Só por lhe contar que tem
No Brazil, donde descende,
Cocos, abanmos, e cuias,
E mais cousas desta especie
Como fôj, Jaçaminha;
Ananás, Banana agreste
Mingau, Mandinga, Mangáre,
Caju, e outros miritos desfe,
Segundo tenho observado
Nós muitos que lhe remete;

A