

## The Rhetoric of Eugenics and the Portuguese in New England: a Case Study

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### Introduction

American literature rarely contains positive or uplifting portrayals of Portuguese Americans. On the contrary, fictional representations mostly associate Portuguese with violent behavior, bloodthirstiness, mysteriousness, and unpredictability. American texts tend to associate this ethnic minority with dirt, drunkenness, alcoholism, drug trafficking and ignorance and Portuguese women with sexual license and perversion.<sup>1</sup>

The Portuguese, however, were unaware of these fictional representations and seldom rebelled or were offended by them. As Leo Pap has shown, the Portuguese in the United States tended to be a peaceful, ill-educated, and unquestioning people eager to secure the economic conditions for survival in this new environment. (Pap: 118-19) One of the few documented outbursts of violence involving this ethnic minority took place in 1922, in the textile mills of Rhode Island, where Portuguese and Italian workers went on strike because of economic exploitation. Although these Portuguese textile workers went on strike, their plight was stifled and left few traces. (Zinn: 376; Almeida: 505-33)

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1. Cf. Silva, 2008.

What did stir the Portuguese community strongly, in contrast, was the study *Two Portuguese Communities in New England* by the criminologist and sociologist of the University of Illinois, Donald R. Taft. The strong reaction by the Portuguese to this study is intriguing for a number of reasons. First, it suggests that the Portuguese in New England were mindful of what the dominant culture was saying or writing about them. And, second, because they had the courage to get together as a group to demonstrate and use the press to express their grievances.

This essay will argue that Taft's study supports the exclusionary rhetoric of Progressive politics of the 1920s, which culminated in the immigration acts of 1917-1924 that all but closed America's doors to Southern Europeans. Moreover, it voices America's paranoia about the boundaries of whiteness. More specifically, this article will show that Taft taps from the rhetoric of eugenics, which was deeply ingrained in Anglo-American thought. As Edward J. Larson has shown, even if "eugenics was born and bred in Britain" it clearly grew up and became popularized in the United States. (46) In addition, Taft's application of eugenics discourses to the Portuguese supported Progressive politics by formulating an intellectual, scientific basis for this rhetoric of exclusion.

## 1. The Eugenicist Perspective on Portuguese Immigration

Taft's study rehearses practically all of the arguments endorsed by American eugenicists during the first three decades of the twentieth-century while tailoring them to the ethnic group under analysis. For those white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans, the custodians of the nation, the wave of immigrants hailing from Southern European nations that arrived at Ellis Island would represent – if legally admitted – a plague that would contaminate the native stock. In this particular study, too, the Portuguese were perceived as parasitic carriers of tainted germplasm threatening the purity of native Americans. Moreover, Portuguese working class women in the New England

textile industry were seen as 'shirkers', women who ignored maternal health and who, inevitably, gave birth to sick children. In the end, they would die prematurely and, therefore, increase the child mortality rates in American society. These women were unfit, undesired mothers, and admitting additional ones seemed counterproductive to the nation's politics of hygiene, health, and racial purity.

With Catholicism and superstitions as additional 'handicaps', these people were also seen as feeble-minded and simple-minded – clearly not the rational, independent and industrious people America coveted. The country, eugenicists believed, already had plenty of 'feeble-minded white trash' draining the nation's financial resources. Classified as not-so-white people, their alleged hybridity was seen as a further genetic weakness. Moreover, their poverty was diagnosed as a form of inherited disease. With the garment industry being one of the few employment options, the strikes and labor tensions witnessed at the time were another reason for exclusion, especially since many earlier European immigrants had also brought with them a Marxist, anti-capitalist ideology. The most effective and legitimate way of keeping these 'barbarians' away from the United States, immigration officials believed, was to administer intelligence and literacy testing, a subtle means to justify their exclusion. With the Ku Klux Klan also in favor of immigration restrictions, the nation plunged into a widespread state of hysteria over the benefits of eugenics. This discourse, therefore, seriously affected the rate of admission of new immigrants. The Immigration Act of 1924 severely reduced Portuguese emigration to the United States. The influx of Portuguese only resumed in the late 1950s with the eruption of the Capelinhos volcano on the island of Faial, after which the government permitted Portuguese-Americans to assist and rescue family members.

## 2. Taft's argument

To better understand Taft's Argument, it is worth providing a synopsis of his book and, in the process, examine the relevant postcolonial and ethnic discourses in order to understand why the Portuguese of New England were horrified and disgusted with his statements about the presence of 'negroid' (his word) blood in the veins of most immigrants from Fall River, Massachusetts. As the Portuguese consul, Eduardo de Carvalho, documented in his *Os Portugueses na Nova Inglaterra*, which was published in 1931, the publication of Taft's book ignited a bombshell in quite a few Portuguese communities in New England.

Taft submitted *Two Portuguese Communities in New England* as his doctoral dissertation to the political science department at Columbia University in 1923. His first chapter proposes to analyze the high infant mortality rate of the Portuguese children in the urban community of Fall River, Massachusetts, and in the rural community of Portsmouth, Rhode Island – places where thousands of Portuguese immigrants settled in the nineteenth-century. While the former ethnic enclave included immigrants mostly from the island of São Miguel, the latter was composed of immigrants from Faial, who were mostly of Flemish extraction. While offering explanations for the high infant mortality rates in both communities in chapters three and five, Taft evinces a particular bias towards the Fall River community. In his view, the high infant mortality rate there was due to the inability of the Portuguese mothers to communicate in English; their illiteracy and ignorance (chapters three and five); and their darker complexion and alleged African blood (chapters two and seven). In a country such as the United States where the one-drop rule disqualified immediate access to white privileges, allegations of these immigrants as blacks are worth considering in the light of racial discourse in America.

Possibly one of the most powerful rhetorical strategies employed by eugenicists in the early twentieth-century was to portray prospective immigrants hailing from Southern European countries as

parasitic carriers of tainted germ plasm that threatened the purity of native Americans. It was believed that this contamination would weaken the fitness of Americans of Anglo stock. As Marouf A. Hasian, Jr., argued, compared to earlier immigrants such as the Irish or Germans, the "new wave of immigrants were not so fortunate. Many of them were said to be permanent parasites on the American body politic, forever tainted by their blood and incapable of having their condition ameliorated". (Hasian: 93; 49-50) As Matthew Frye Jacobson has also noted in *Barbarian Virtues: the United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* an "impressive consensus was forming on the mass of so-called new immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe – the Greeks, Poles, Italians, Slovenes, Ruthenians, Armenians, Russian and Polish Jews, Sicilians, Hungarians, and Bohemians" (193) and these peoples were being denounced as "unfit citizens for this self-governing polity". (193) Resorting to the "earthy agricultural" Mendelian discourse, these new arrivals were subject to the "vocabulary of superior and inferior 'stocks'". (193) These immigrants were even said to have brought unknown diseases to America such as the hookworm, which was first diagnosed in a European bricklayer, and the disease was immediately "linked with both immigrants and southerners". (Wray: 127)

Understood within this rhetorical framework, it is no surprise why scholars such as Taft refer to the Portuguese as "this curse." (158) He considered Portuguese mothers to be carriers of weak, 'negroid' blood, which, he argued, led to skyrocketing infant mortality rates in the United States. For eugenicists and academics such as Taft, the doors of America should be closed to such poisonous, intoxicating agents.

For Taft, the problem was not only race, but class. In his writing, working class women were regularly depicted as 'shirkers' who ignored the importance of maternal health. Both in Britain and in America, notes Hasian, motherhood was "redefined in such a way that the mothers of the English 'race' had to be carefully guided and steered away from social schemes that were dysgenic in nature". (76) And this meant segregation from working class women who were

seen as racially degenerate and unclean. In the minds of British and Anglo-Americans, "women's rights were important only to the extent that they furthered the preservation of the British empire or the fittest of social classes". (Hasian: 76) In her study of the discourse about white feeble-minded women, Elizabeth Yukins has demonstrated how "race and class biases converged in scientific and popular literature to designate the sexual agency and reproductive powers of poor white women as significant threats to Anglo-American racial purity and national sovereignty". (165-66)

In discussing working-class European immigrant women and respectable middle-class women in *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America*, Karen Brodtkin has noted that middle-class women in America refused to associate with immigrant women so as to claim class and economic superiority. Working-class immigrant women were portrayed as "loose women, poor housekeepers, and bad mothers". (94-5) In the light of her argument, it is not difficult to ascertain the place Taft assigns to the Portuguese textile workers – especially the women residing in Fall River – and where they did fit in American society. The belief that "women of color and off-white working-class women were bad women", was well ingrained in American society, notes Brodtkin, and since immigrant working-class women "were not supported at home by their husbands, they could hardly be respectable women or good mothers" and "they were not supposed to be the mothers of the nation's citizens". (94-5; 100). Taft suggests that whatever limited care these unfit mothers provided to their children resulted in "about 50 per cent of deaths from diarrhea and enteritis, 53 per cent of deaths from diseases of the lungs but only 27 per cent of deaths from diseases of early infancy". (163) Targeting "Southern Europeans", Taft reiterates that these immigrants "have a high death rate from respiratory diseases among their infants". (189) According to Taft, Portuguese mothers reared underfed, vulnerable children with respiratory diseases who, in the end, died very young. They were, hence, bad mothers who thwarted the nation's aspirations of leadership – of becoming a healthy society and a role model for the entire world.

Unfortunately, Taft never attempts to understand why some of these immigrants were compelled to live in ghettos and shanty homes with little or no amenities. While some of the "homes are as well kept as could be expected considering the lack of conveniences", too many, however, "are overcrowded and unsanitary with toilets in the cellar or in the corner of the pantry, – often without even a partition to screen them. The flies are numerous and no attempt is made to keep them out or to cover the food on the pantry shelves". (182) While implying that these immigrants have no sense of decency and morality and are generally repulsive in their manners, Taft attributes this to the Portuguese women who are careless with their children and unmindful of whether their homes are tidy or not. Compared to other school children in Portsmouth, the

Portuguese children showed more than their proportion with marked mental deficiency (5 out of 7); bad posture (18 out of 24); curvature of the spine (all of the six); malnutrition (20 out of 26); rickets (all of the three); suspected tuberculosis (4 out of 5); enlarged glands (all of the 3); pediculosis (all of the 9); ring worm (all of the 3); and cardioadenitis (24 out of 35) (...). In addition 8 Portuguese children were reported as being subjected to cruelty in their homes; while 37 or one in four of the Portuguese children said they drank no milk at home, while only 6 non-Portuguese children were so listed. (298)

According to Hasian, these unfit, unhealthy women were believed to pollute "America's genetic pool" and that they were "biologically 'feeble-minded' or otherwise inferior". (81) They were often lumped together with the "feeble-minded" and the "imbeciles, epileptics, syphilitics, and tuberculines", who were undesirable, and that the "state has a right to limit their number as far as possible". (81-2)

Hard line eugenicists believed that compulsory sterilization was the inevitable response. Matt Wray points out that the sterilization of shiftless, ignorant, and worthless lower-class white women in Virginia had been quite popular a practice there between 1917 and

1941. Wray further notes that controlling “the sexuality and the reproductive power of lower-class women through the imposition of coercive policies of reproductive control was a major focus and a lasting consequence of eugenic reform” and that this practice was gradually “shifted from people of color – primarily blacks and Indians – to poor white Americans, ‘foreigners,’ and immigrants”. (94)

On this issue, Elizabeth Yukins makes a compelling argument when she addresses the Jukes and Kallikaks families, with the former being a poor family in rural New York and the latter a family in New Jersey. To eugenicists, either feebleminded or families with a criminal record like these should not be allowed to procreate. According to her, eugenicists wished to maintain “white racial superiority” by way of protecting “white blood from itself” and it was through the “influential stories about the Jukes and the Kallikaks” where eugenicists made a case for “lower-class women’s reproductive bodies” as being “identified as dangerously white”. (166)

In *Two Portuguese Communities in New England*, Taft is clearly presenting Azorean women within this ideological framework. As evidence to support his beliefs, Taft accused Portuguese mothers of having a “certain apparent indifference to the welfare of their children”, (181) and described their tendency to feed their children with “artificial feeding” instead of breast-feeding them, a “fact” he said could be attributed to either “employment of mothers away from home, lack of adequate provision on the part of the community for the instruction and aid of mothers, ignorance of mothers or too frequent pregnancies”. (164-5) If, for numerous reasons, blacks, with their high infant mortality rates, had been perceived as the problem in America for the nation’s health, Taft notes that these beliefs were untrue or needed some updating since the mortality rates in the Portuguese communities he studied were “higher than the usual rates for negroes”. (143)

The question Taft begged was simply this: “why bring more problems upon America if it already has plenty of them within its borders?” To drive this point home, Taft emphasized the “large number of Portuguese mothers who are ignorant of English” and that this



"is thus probably a fairly important characteristic which makes for high infant mortality". (160) So as to make his case even clearer, Taft argues that Portuguese mothers' inability to "speak English" is "associated, as a rule, with high infant mortality". (189) Taft was so anti-Portuguese that any argument – even such an unusual one as this language requirement – would seemingly be acceptable to him if the goal was to keep America's doors closed to these new 'barbarians'.

As with the Irish arriving in America during or after the Hungry Forties, the Portuguese, too, were ostracized by Anglo nativists and the Ku Klux Klan due to their Catholicism. During the heyday of eugenics discourse, Portuguese religious beliefs, in addition to the factors mentioned above, served to disqualify them as fit citizens both in the United States and Britain. Towards the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century, notes Hasian:

British hard-line eugenicists often identified Catholics with the unfit who lacked either foresight or self-control. From the very beginning of the British eugenics movement, Catholics found themselves characterized in the scientific journals and in the popular press as members of the uneducated classes or as dogmatists who could be grouped together with Jews, paupers, and other members of the "residuum" who had not learned the immutable laws of Victorian society. (90)

Anglos often stereotyped Catholics as lacking self-control and equated them with overpopulation. In addition, they were also seen as irrational, superstitious individuals who believed in magic and supernaturalism. To make his point, Taft notes that the Portuguese believed in legends and charms and incantations as well as witchcraft, the evil eye, and notes the difficulty doctors often experienced when attempting to win these people to the use of modern medicine. (73-8) Illiterate, seemingly irrational, and superstitious people were unfit immigrants who did not qualify for admission into a country that fostered education, intellectual autonomy, and objectivity. Immigration officials on Ellis Island could not help but view

these new immigrants as barbaric, simple-minded people who were ineligible for admission. As custodians of the land, these officials felt that it was their obligation to protect the American republic from being invaded by hordes of simplistic, feeble-minded people since there were already way too many within its borders seeking relief and economic assistance. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Hasian writes, immigration "seemed to provide further evidence that feeble-mindedness was becoming a national responsibility" and admitting more simplistic, feeble-minded people into the United States was like shooting one's foot. (106) When stating that if he "were compelled to list the most important causes of infant mortality among the Portuguese", Taft "would say that ignorance on the part of mothers" and the "improper spacing of pregnancies which accompanies ignorance" translates into irresponsibility and that the United States did not need such mothers, that they were, in essence, a plague, and a threat to the nation. (193) It is possible that in depicting Portuguese mothers as careless breeders, Taft may have had the Jukes and Kallikaks families in the back of his mind so as to support eugenics discourse and its defense of sterilization for women deemed feeble-minded.

For eugenicists, another major weakness the Portuguese allegedly possessed was their complexions, namely that they were not-so-white and often described as an 'in between' people who, therefore seemed to possess a genetic weakness. In *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, Matthew Frye Jacobson sums up this entrenched belief in America over who actually qualified for whiteness: "are Jews/Italians/Greeks/ Slavs/Portuguese/Letts 'white'?" (272) Even if, "yes (they are white) and (...) no (their whiteness is merely contingent", (272) Jacobson notes that historically, in the United States, they have been labeled as "in between peoples". (273) As Yukins has also noted, Americans of Anglo stock were compelled to assure "white racial superiority", a myth, she notes, that was "constructed during America's socioeconomic development as a slaveholding nation". (167) "Dominant whiteness", Yukins further adds, was being threatened and "in order to account

for this difference and still maintain the ideology of white superiority, eugenicists developed a hereditarian explanation based on individual genetic weakness rather than racial inferiority: 'degenerate' whites threatened the purity of superior white 'germ plasm,' but they signified genetic flaws rather than a racial type". (167)

This debate over who qualified for full membership in this 'white club' also applies to other ethnic minorities. In *How the Irish Became White*, Noel Ignatiev has shown how the Irish in America wanted to be accepted by mainstream nativists. In order for this to materialize, the Irish used labor unions, violence against blacks, endorsed white supremacist values, refused jobs often deemed as appropriate only for blacks, and used slavery and anti-Abolitionist rhetoric so as to be accepted by the dominant WASP culture. In other words, they endeavored to pave the way for their entry into the "white race". (148-9) David R. Roediger has also shown in *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* how the stereotypes appended to the Irish paralleled those attributed to blacks in the United States. (133-34) According to Karen Brodtkin, Jews were also affected by these theories. She enumerates the reasons for the classification of Southern and Eastern Europeans as "not-quite-white" in America and attributes it to the Census. (60)

As Fred L. Gardaphé has noted, the Italians were confronted with these racial theories as well, especially when contrasting northern Italians and their southern or Sicilian counterparts. (48-9; 56) As these scholars suggest, Taft's argument about the "negroid" features of most immigrants from São Miguel clearly fits into this ideological framework, which was deeply rooted in the American consciousness. For Taft, the Portuguese originally had Ligurian and Celt-Iberian elements and then later on received an infusion of Roman, Phoenician, Carthaginian and Greek blood. With the invasion of the Vandals, Suevi, Alans, and Visigoths a few centuries later, they also mixed with the Moors and Jews and during the Age of European Discoveries, they also came into contact with others peoples, namely Africans, Asians, and South Americans. Through time, Taft notes, they became exactly the "type" of hybrid people that American

eugenicists sought to exclude. (23-24) In a country where one drop of African blood disqualified anyone from entering this “white club”, Taft’s statement on the Portuguese as having “some negro blood” (139) called attention to this alleged genetic weakness.

As these custodians of the land observed these immigrants arriving at Ellis Island, most of them with huge families, presumably dressed in their best Sunday clothes, they were also fully aware of their poverty. Trying to live up to the words of Emma Lazarus, this “human refuse yearning to breathe free” in America was no longer welcomed since eugenicists viewed poverty as a form of inherited disease. Drawing from the example of the Jukes earlier alluded to – especially those members from this feeble-minded family who lived either on public charity or had been imprisoned – Elizabeth Yukins alludes to Richard Dugdale’s 1877 report, *“The Jukes,” a Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease, and Heredity* so as to make a compelling argument regarding the diagnosis of “pauperism as a form of inherited disease”. (168) For most hard-line eugenicists, these new immigrant arrivals – most of them illiterate and destitute – were seen as hordes of ragamuffins who might end up on public relief in a time when economic resources were becoming scarce.

Taft’s study draws special attention to the poverty-stricken realities these immigrants were trying to leave behind: Portugal was a rural, poor, and backward country at the beginning of the twentieth-century; Portuguese incomes were very low and wages in the United States for day laborers were 7-10 times higher than in Portugal; their houses were poor, uncomfortable, with an “habitual filth” that “resulted in the prevalence of cutaneous diseases”. (59-69) Although these Portuguese immigrants had settled mostly in urban areas (except the Portsmouth group), they often resembled or were ranked with the rural “white trash” who Matt Wray diagnoses in his aforementioned book. Taft writes that the area adjacent to Columbia Street, in Fall River, where most of these immigrants lived in, housing conditions were “not ideal” since the “general appearance of the houses [was] unattractive”, with the toilet in a “corner of the pantry with only a curtain separating it from the room”. (226-7) Even if

the “old timers” toiled in the sweatshops of New England and lived in uncomfortable houses, their frugal ways allowed them to put some money aside for a rainy day or to buy property. (63-64) Some of them, fed up with so much exploitation, eventually fought for their rights by joining the labor movement or going on strike with co-workers from other ethnic backgrounds.

Such earlier labor tension and activism may have been another reason for closing the door on prospective immigrants from Portugal and southern European countries. These immigrants were seen as a threat – spreading Marxist ideology – and, in the process, contaminating American workplaces with tension and often bloodshed. On this issue, Jacobson recalls the

three-month strike of U. S. garment workers, known as the Uprising of the Twenty Thousand (1909); the textile workers’ strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, said to be inspired by radical ‘agitators’ from the Industrial Workers of the World (1912); and the five-month silk-workers’ strike, also IWW, in Paterson, New Jersey (1913). Each episode conjured images of blood in the streets, an explosive and distinctly *foreign* brand of political chaos”. (88-89) [italics in the original]

Furthermore, these riots seemed “to prove the folly of accepting the rest of the world’s ‘dangerous classes’ as a chief import”. (89) Taft notes how most cotton mill workers earned less than the average sum required for a minimum, decent standard of living; how they were exploited; and how wives and children must toil for long hours so as to make ends meet. (218) Later on, the second generation were seen as a “ ‘bad lot’ in the mills” and that many Portuguese workers had been “especially active in the doffers’ strike in 1919, and that fact may possibly account in part for the relatively low esteem in which they were held by some employers at that time”. (255) Through time, rumors began to spread regarding their propensity to engage in strikes and riots. Aware of this reality, eugenicists gradually convinced Americans that they already had enough problems at home and that they did not need to import any more.

To stop this importation of unskilled, illiterate 'barbarians', intelligence testing became one of the most subtle mechanisms utilized to contain this 'plague'. Noting the research of psychologists Robert Yerkes and Carl Brigham, Jacobson notes that Brigham was intent on formulating an "even stronger racist statement on the new immigrants". (169) Through his famous World War I tests of army recruits, Yerkes claimed that his examination results could assist in the total closure of doors to new immigrants. As Jacobson notes, Yerkes could claim that "46 percent of the Poles, over 42 percent of the Italians, and 39 percent of the Russians who took Yerkes' test (...) had scored at or below the Negro average". (169) These results led Yerkes to claim that the immigration of "Mediterranean types" (169) could be halted and that immigrants from this part of the world should be sent back to where they came from.

Taft's study documents the effect Yerkes's recommendation had on the flow of Portuguese immigrants, that is, "the recently declining emigration to North America." Taft was quick to note that this "latter is due, of course, to the illiteracy test established in 1917 and to the three per cent law of 1921". (54) One year after the publication of Taft's study, in 1924, official Portuguese emigration to the United States literally ended with the immigration act of that year.

The 1924 National Origins Act closed the door on prospective Portuguese immigrants, but the Portuguese did not exactly take these arguments lying down as is documented *Os Portugueses na Nova Inglaterra*, published in 1931 by the Portuguese consul, Eduardo de Carvalho. The Portuguese, Carvalho argued, were revolted and disgusted with the passages in Taft's book focusing on immigrants' alleged illiteracy and infant mortality. Furthermore, Taft's allegations of racial prejudice and the feelings and attitudes associated with it, Carvalho argued, were picked up in America, not in Portugal. Local Portuguese newspapers in New Bedford and Fall River published articles decrying Taft's study, while an article in the *Boston Herald* called him a hypocrite, "a bigot" and a "very ignorant man."

Yet, for all of their criticism of Taft, it would be a mistake to create the impression that Portuguese intellectuals had been immune

from eugenics ideas. The anthropologist António Augusto Esteves Mendes Correia (1888-1960), or Mendes Correia, is a case in point. Briefly, his writings suggest that he frowned upon miscegenation and viewed blacks and hybrids as inferior individuals. Writing from the point of view of a man living in a colonialist country with a fascist regime, in works ranging from *Gérmens e Cultura, Da Raça e Do Espírito, Raízes de Portugal* to an essay titled, "Factores Degenerativos na População Portuguesa e seu Combate", Mendes Correia comes across as elitist and racist. He advocated the defense of untainted Portuguese blood and eugenicists' belief in the careful selection of progenitors.

Anglo-American eugenicists and even Mendes Correia's views on this issue attest to the fact that eugenics discourse thrived within academic, educated circles and that these theorizers applied it to the most vulnerable and humble people from other ethnic backgrounds. Ironically, his own people, the Portuguese immigrants whom he viewed as superior compared to Africans and other hybrid peoples, as soon as they arrived in America, were immediately perceived as the weakest link and subjected to the very policies he sought to apply to other people he deemed inferior. Perhaps this is what Jacobson is trying to argue when he notes that the "eye that sees is not a mere physical organ but a means of perception conditioned by the tradition in which its possessor has been reared". (10) "Otherness", in other words, is in the eye of the beholder – a lesson Portuguese immigrants could easily have relayed back home if anyone there would listen. In this sense, Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* might be of help here. It is highly probable that he would agree with my contention that the Portuguese are a *bona fide* example of a people caught at the crossroads of both types of "colonial gazes" – that of the colonizer, given Portugal's overseas colonial empire, and that of the colonized when destitute Portuguese emigrated to wealthier nations like the United States. When it comes to thinking about the health of any nation, it is worth remembering how quickly arguments about racial superiority in one nation become arguments for racial inferiority in another.

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