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9th International
Multidisciplinary
Congress

Creation,
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Metamorphose



05th - 07th
October 2023

SEVILLE
SPAIN

Metamorphosis and Identity in Lídia Jorge's *The Murmuring Coast*¹

Ana Cristina Correia GIL

CHAM / School of Social Sciences and Humanities – University of the Azores

E-mail: ana.cc.gil@uac.pt

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5656-9798>

Abstract

Metamorphosis and identity are two naturally related concepts. Metamorphosis is defined as a change in a subject's identity in terms of form, structure, or character. Identity is often characterized by metamorphosis. Permanent factors that define a being's identity are combined with transformations that alter their essence, without rendering them as a completely different entity.

In Lídia Jorge's novel *The Murmuring Coast*, the central theme revolves around the metamorphosis of Luís Alex, an ensign engaged to Evita. Set in the colonial Portugal of the 1960s, more specifically in Mozambique, the plot delves into the lives of the combatants and their families, shedding light on their experiences in this African territory.

The theme of metamorphosis permeates the entire work, serving as its underlying *leitmotif*. It encompasses the setting, which is centered on the Stella Maris Hotel (perceived in colonial times and envisioned in the future as ruins), and the representation of the nation (20th-century overseas Portugal, particularly how the Colonial War transformed the country's mindset, politics, economy, demography, etc.). Additionally, the very foundation of the narrative discourse is built upon this theme, as each chapter is a rewriting of the initial narrative "The Locusts," which the narrator-protagonist Eva continuously transforms.

Thus, the question at the heart is the metamorphosis of the identity – of the characters, setting, nation and narrative discourse – brought about by the evolution of a concrete historical moment: the Portuguese Colonial War.

Keywords: Colonial War, identity, Lídia Jorge, metamorphosis, Portugal

¹ This paper had the support of CHAM (NOVA FCSH / UAC), through the strategic project sponsored by FCT (UIDB/04666/2020).