

**From Testimony to Memory: Gender and  
Racial Identity in Portuguese Women's Post-  
Colonial Literature and Cinema**

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own, and that this thesis is the one on which I expect to be examined.

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## ***ABSTRACT***

*From Testimony to Memory: Gender and Racial Identity in Portuguese Women's Post-Colonial Literature and Cinema* investigates post-colonial cultural encounters in a series of literary, cinematographic and artistic productions belonging to two generations of Portuguese female writers and directors, pointing out the tensions between these generations in their construction of identity through the prism of social class, gender and race.

The first three chapters explore Lídia Jorge's *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (1988) and Teolinda Gersão's *A Árvore das Palavras* (1997), two novels representative of the Portuguese experience of Africa that shaped the construction of female identity during the Estado Novo. Each chapter is centred on the analysis of social, gender and racial identity, exposing the tensions between the recording of history and the role of memory.

The second part shifts from literature to cinema and theatrical performance, concentrating on the works of three contemporary directors, Filipa César, Margarida Cardoso and Joana Craveiro. The analysis includes Filipa César's feature-film *Spell Reel* (2017) and short-films *Conakry* (2013), *Mined Soil* (2014) and *Compost Archive* (2016), Margarida Cardoso's documentaries *Natal 71* (1999) and *Kuxa Kanema* (2003) and feature-film *Yvone Kane* (2014), and Joana Craveiro's 2017 practice-as-research doctoral thesis and the accompanying theatrical performance, *A Live/Living Museum of Small, Forgotten and Unwanted Memories – Performing Narratives, Testimonies and Archives of the Portuguese Dictatorship and Revolution*. Concentrating on questions of memory transmission and the legitimacy of official history, the last three chapters explore the use of archive, the critique of power and the shift in social, gender and racial perspective in these works.

As the focus switches from testimony to memory between the two generations, my research addresses the tensions between these generations of women and the way in which their optics change, exploring the similarities and the differences between the two generations in their portrayal of identity.

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## *Preface*

Throughout this thesis, some of the racial terminology used was in line with the English translations of the original texts when quoting excerpts from the two novels analysed. This terminology includes phrases such as 'blacks' and 'the blacks' in order to faithfully reproduce the excerpts from the novels, but are by no means intended to be pejorative.

Additionally, when referring to the armed conflicts of 1961-1975 between the Portuguese state and African pro-independence movements, the terms 'Colonial Wars' and 'Independence Wars' have been both used, depending on context when discussing the Portuguese versus the African perspective. The use of the two phrases is not intended to be in any way interchangeable, and it is crucial to highlight that these are ideologically loaded and contested terms, whose use and meaning intensely varies from one country to another.

## *Introduction*

The period commencing in the early 1960s witnessed the outbreak of a 13-yearlong colonial war between Portugal and three of its colonies, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, through which Salazar's authoritarian regime intended to maintain the Portuguese empire in Africa. The war's deadlock caused not only a destabilising economic depression, but also triggered the 1974 Carnation Revolution, which would put an end to Portugal's "colonialist obsession."<sup>1</sup> The African wars marked the beginning of a new era in which the country was forced to reconsider and reconstruct its identity as former empire and future European nation, while facing the trauma and guilt of centuries of colonial violence. The traumatic memory of these events shortly became the powerful motor of literary, cinematographic and artistic views denouncing the long years of silence following the war, while literary studies and social sciences are still reflecting on the impact of the war with ongoing projects such as *Os Filhos da Guerra Colonial* (The Children of the Colonial War) or *Poesia da Guerra Colonial* (The Poetry of the Colonial War).

Within the context of canonical post-colonial literature evoking the trauma and memory of the war, one can clearly distinguish two perspectives that reflect different experiences of the event: a male approach evoking the anxiety and despair of the combats, and a female view situated at the border of these fights, facing frustration, remorsefulness and helplessness. In this sense, António Lobo Antunes's *Os Cus de Judas*<sup>2</sup> (South of Nowhere), published in 1979, is a crucial work that illustrates the male perspective of a military doctor during the fights in Angola criticising the agony and absurdity of war. Literary studies on this topic have focused on the individual male experience as a soldier, in works such as Rui de Azevedo Teixeira's 1998 *A Guerra Colonial e o Romance Português: Agonia e Catarse*,<sup>3</sup> which illustrates the cathartic nature of post-colonial literature. Other works, including Margarida Calafate Ribeiro's *Uma História de Regressos: Império, Guerra Colonial e Pós-colonialismo*,<sup>4</sup> employ the concept of Portugal's position as centre of the empire and periphery of European space, and analyse male literary perspectives as a requiem to the fall of imperial fantasy.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Harsgor, 'Aftereffects of an "Exemplary Decolonization"', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Imperial Hangovers, 15.1 (1980), 143–67 (p. 144).

<sup>2</sup> See António Lobo Antunes, *Os cus de Judas: romance*, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> See Rui de Azevedo Teixeira, *A guerra colonial e o romance português: agonia e catarse* (Lisboa: Editorial Notícias, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> See Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, *Uma história de regressos: império, Guerra Colonial e pós-colonialismo* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2004).

Whereas some male dominated literature and related critical studies approach the representations of war memory and trauma through the nostalgic vision of Portugal's colonial identity, my research will look at the way in which literature, cinema and performing arts address social, gender and racial identity in their continuous reshaping through constant positioning at the limit. While previous studies address questions of gender, race and identity through a definite assignment of a feminist or male perspective, my intention is to challenge this aspect by looking instead at the fluidity of identity when positioned on the threshold between "the inside" and "the outside". With Victor Turner's concept of liminality in mind,<sup>5</sup> class, gender and race appear as betwixt and between, at the midpoint of separation and integration, as they are intricately entwined with the official identity that they help to construct. My thesis aims to demonstrate that these notions are constantly negotiated as opposed to being clearly delimited by canonical criteria, reframing them in relation to the limits of a recognised ideology that confined women and Africans to silence by restricting them to rigid domestic roles and, respectively, the statute of invisible, colonised, subordinated.

From the beginning, the intention of this thesis was to address cultural encounters in the context of post-colonialism through intertextuality and interdisciplinarity by looking at different case studies of literary, cinematographic and artistic productions belonging to two separate generations of female artists, and pointing out the tensions between these generations in their construction of identity. The thesis is thus constituted by two parts that address the topics of social, gender and racial identity, first in two novels written by Lídia Jorge and Teolinda Gersão, and second in some of the recent artistic works of directors Filipa César, Joana Craveiro and Margarida Cardoso. Each of the two parts comprises three chapters dedicated to these main topics, as well as additional aspects that become apparent in the contemporary works, such as the use of archive, the critique of power and the shift in perspective.

Lídia Jorge and Teolinda Gersão are two Portuguese canonical writers, whose works illustrate how the personal experience of Africa shaped the construction of female identity. Their two works analysed in this thesis, *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (The Murmuring Coast) and *A Árvore das Palavras* (The Word Tree), written and published in the late 1980s and, respectively, 1990s, reflect the voices of a generation that witnessed the wars and took part in a process of colonisation through intimacy, offering the feminist perspective of the white

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<sup>5</sup> See Victor W Turner, 'Betwixt and Between: Liminal Period', in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967).

Portuguese woman living inside Africa, yet outside the combat. My comparison of the two literary productions aims to trace the way in which the construction of feminine identity was shaped by the women's contact with Africa, by positioning themselves at the edges of an empire where their own presence was closed within the limits of silence and invisibility. Critical works such as Margarida Calafate Ribeiro's *Fantasma e Fantasias Imperiais no Imaginário Português Contemporâneo*<sup>6</sup> have focused on women's post-colonial literature by analysing it as a means to criticise the misogyny of the empire, using the domestic space as a microcosm of society. Also, Isabel Moutinho's *The Colonial Wars in Contemporary Portuguese Fiction*<sup>7</sup> looked at Jorge's novel in terms of repression and political compliance through its use of involuntary and deliberate forgetting of facts. Furthermore, in *Antigone's Daughters: Gender, Genealogy and the Politics of Authorship in 20th-Century Portuguese Women's Writing*,<sup>8</sup> Hilary Owen and Cláudia Pazos Alonso analysed the construction of women as authors in relation to the male dominated canon.

Published in 1988 and inspired by the novelist's personal experience of Africa, having spent three years in Mozambique prior to the Carnation Revolution, *A Costa dos Murmúrios* represents Lídia Jorge's most prominent work, addressing the collapse of the Portuguese national identity, directly influenced by the disintegration of its maritime empire. The novel opens with a 30-page story, *Os Gafanhotos* (The Locusts), written in the third person by an omniscient narrator, whose main subject is the wedding ceremony of Luís Alex, formerly a mathematics student in Lisbon and now a lieutenant in the Portuguese army during the Mozambican war in the mid 1960s to early 70s, and Evita, who moves to Beira, the second largest city in the colony, to accompany her new husband. Taking place on the terrace of Stella Maris, the hotel housing the families of the Portuguese militaries during the combats, the story is populated by a cast of white army officials and their wives in a seemingly harmonious environment glorifying the grandeur of the Portuguese empire. Complementing the main couple in the story are the major Jaime Forza Leal, the groom's superior, whose chest is adorned with a deep combat scar, and his beautiful red-haired wife Helena, two stereotypes of rigid manliness and, respectively, seemingly ingenu feminine beauty. The relaxed atmosphere of the lavish reception is disturbed by the gruesome news of the unexpected death of numerous

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<sup>6</sup> See *Fantasma e fantasias imperiais no imaginário português contemporâneo*, ed. by Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, Campo da literatura Ensaio, 97, 1. ed (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> See Isabel Moutinho, *The Colonial Wars in Contemporary Portuguese Fiction*, Colección Tamesis, 252 (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK ; Rochester, NY: Tamesis, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> See Hilary Owen and Cláudia Pazos Alonso, *Antigone's Daughters: Gender, Genealogy, and the Politics of Authorship in 20th-Century Portuguese Women's Writing* (Lewisburg, Pa. : Lanham, Md: Bucknell University Press ; Rowman & Littlefield, 2011).

Africans, whose bodies are washed ashore throughout the night. The mysterious deaths are later on explained by the captain, who informs the guests that the Africans had accidentally confused twenty methyl alcohol cans with wine and drank them. The arrival of a journalist at the hotel terrace, who was in charge of investigating the African deaths, triggers an altercation with the groom, who borrows his captain's gun to chase away the intruder and unexpectedly ends up being murdered in a game of Russian roulette.

The novel continues with the bride's account of the events, who looks back at the incidents that had occurred twenty years in the past, offering her own version of the reality and challenging the truth depicted in the short story. Eva Lopo reveals the struggles faced by those Portuguese women that followed their military husbands to the colonies during the war and were rendered voiceless through marriage, while embarking on a journey of discovery of an African reality unknown to the Europeans. Trying to find the truth behind the seemingly accidental deaths of the Mozambicans, the woman moves further away from the isolated life at the Stella Maris and gets closer to the mysterious Helena and the journalist, who will become her lover before he escapes Mozambique for fear of her jealous husband. Thus, the novel unmasks the true reality of war in a highly unstable society, tackling issues such as domestic and social violence, racial and gender inequality, the repression of women, working classes and the African population, highlighting the role of the minor in the formation of History. Using Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's term 'minor literature' as a point of reference, the thesis will employ the concept of 'minor' as politically charged to deconstruct the machinery of power through deterritorialization (i.e. the destabilisation of the traditional concepts of territory), speaking from a strategic position that represents a minority group.<sup>9</sup>

Eva Lopo's first-person commentary reveals the vulnerabilities of a decaying empire led by a regressive fascist dictatorship, whose refusal to move on with the times results in a long and painful war against the colonies, causing the death of millions of Portuguese and African fighters, as well as innocent civilians, and traumatising past and future generations for decades to come. The analysis of this text will point out the way in which the boundaries are challenged by those who are confined to remain on the outside and witness the violence, without being attributed the power to intervene.

Similarly located in Mozambique during the Portuguese occupation, *A Árvore das Palavras* was published in 1997 and is influenced by Teolinda Gersão's experience of life in

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<sup>9</sup> See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, 'Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature: The Components of Expression', trans. by Marie Maclean, *New Literary History*, On Writing Histories of Literature, 16.3 (1985), 591–608.

Africa, depicting the transformation of the Mozambican society from colony to an independent nation. The novel follows the life of a Portuguese family living in Lourenço Marques, now known as Maputo, in a three-part narrative that tells the story of Amélia and Laureano, two young, working class Europeans who abandon a poverty-stricken country governed by an authoritarian regime to start a new life in the colony with the promise of a better future. Written in the third person, the work juxtaposes the views of Gita, the daughter born in Africa at the border between the Portuguese and Mozambican identities, and Amélia, the white, uneducated Portuguese woman from a modest background, while also bringing into focus the role of the Africans through the image of Lóia, the family's maid and Gita's wet nurse.

The first part of the novel is centred around Gita's blissful childhood spent strolling around the city with her father and exploring the beauty and simplicity of African life from a European point of view, growing fond of the Mozambican nanny and highly critical of Amélia, perceived as a distant and exigent mother. Focusing on the individual stories of the two parents, and their struggles as they experience the cultural change from Europe to Mozambique, the second part reveals the drama of an orphan girl from a modest rural background who moves to Africa in response to a matrimonial advert in a newspaper, dreaming of the middle-class life she never had access to, yet disappointed to discover that the limitations of her social condition are not confined within the borders of her native country alone. Amélia works as a seamstress for the rich Portuguese families in the Mozambican capital and dreams of becoming part of the elites, resenting her husband's lack of ambition to progress in the society. The third part comes back to Gita, now a teenager who starts to understand that the idyllic African way of living has its brutal flaws, highlighting the poverty, social injustice and gender inequality, ending with the outburst of the independence war that gives Mozambique the hope of a better, fairer society. The analysis of Gersão's novel will demonstrate the fluidity of boundaries in the construction of social, gender and racial identities by looking not only at women's positioning against the limits of the system, but also at the place that Africans occupied inside, or rather outside this frame.

Chapter One of this thesis addresses the overlapping class relations within the colonial Mozambican society as depicted in the two novels, looking at the way in which a variety of socio-cultural aspects reveal class tensions through the lens of the two main female characters, Amélia and Eva Lopo. The analysis starts with the more obvious topics of class origin, access to education, intellectual autonomy, the expression of speech and language, and continues with a detailed discussion of the manifestations of superstitious and scientific thinking, the social perception of geography in the African colonial city and the role of consumerism in building

female identity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For this chapter, Arthur Marwick's work on the Sixties cultural revolution,<sup>10</sup> Betty Friedan's critique of consumerism<sup>11</sup> and Luisa Passerini's study of female subjectivity<sup>12</sup> become instrumental in discussing the cosmopolitan society of colonial Mozambique. This highlights the deeply contrastive and complex class perspectives that become apparent in the two novels, while also illustrating how social identity frames Jorge's and Gersão's two works.

Chapter Two dissects the construction of gender in the two novels, reflecting the ambiguous and troubled female condition during the Estado Novo, in which women are conflicted between their confinement to the private sphere and the need for freedom and emancipation. Starting with the female voices in the two works, my research will explore the depiction of the female body, sexuality and motherhood, the roles played by women in the society and the dynamic of gender relationships, while also taking a closer look at the image of masculinity and its conflicted status between the fascist ideals of manliness and heroism and the crisis of war. Works such as Michel Foucault's,<sup>13</sup> Judith Butler's<sup>14</sup> and Elizabeth Grosz's<sup>15</sup> critiques of the representation of the female body contribute to the understanding of the role of corporeality in the portrayal of gender, while John Berger's thoughts on the objectification of women<sup>16</sup> and Laura Mulvey's analysis of the cinematic gaze<sup>17</sup> are instrumental for discussing the central female figures.

Chapter Three concludes the first part of the thesis by looking at the topic of race in the two novels through the critique of empire and colonialism, pointing out the tensions between the recording of history, memory and truth in the two narratives, which rewrite history through a plurality of individual memories that contradict the possibility of a master narrative or a universally accepted historical truth. Retracing the different racial experiences in colonial Mozambique, the chapter analyses the representation of blackness before and during the armed

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<sup>10</sup> See Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958-c. 1974* (Oxford [England] ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> See Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Penguin Books, 1986).

<sup>12</sup> See Luisa Passerini, *Autobiography of a Generation: Italy, 1968* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> See Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. by Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

<sup>14</sup> See Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theatre Journal*, 40.4 (1988), 519–31.

<sup>15</sup> See Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies : Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

<sup>16</sup> See John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, Penguin on Design, Reissued as part of the Penguin Design Series (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> See Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), pp. 833–44.

conflicts as seen by the Portuguese settlers, as well as the complexities exposed by the inscription of white experience of race in Africa. Apart from works on Portuguese post-colonial national identity like those of Fernando Arenas,<sup>18</sup> Norrie MacQueen<sup>19</sup> and Malyn Newitt,<sup>20</sup> this chapter additionally gathers analyses of history in the two novels in the works of, among others, Paulo de Medeiros, Isabel Moutinho<sup>21</sup> and Ronald Sousa.<sup>22</sup>

Whereas the first generation used literature as a cultural object to represent and interpret their recollections, the focus switches from testimony to memory for the postmemory generation in its attempt to retrieve the experiences of their parents. In this context, the cultural object shifts from novel to cinema, documentary and theatrical performance. The role of the image is no longer that of a silent observer, but of a driving force that generates a different reality by creating encounters and turning actors into agents. With this in mind, the second part of the thesis looks at the works of three contemporary film and theatre directors, Filipa César, Margarida Cardoso and Joana Craveiro, whose productions explore the transmission of memory politics in postcolonial Portugal and its former African colonies.

Powered by her personal connection to the Colonial Wars as the daughter of a soldier in the Portuguese army in Africa, César questions the borders of official history and its production, re-examining notions of Portuguese and African identity by constructing a subjective interpretation of the past. Since 2011, her work uses film excerpts, footage and soundtrack from the archive of the National Film Institute of Guinea-Bissau, indexed as part of the collective project *Luta Ca Caba Inda* (The struggle is not over yet) and digitised in collaboration with the Arsenal Institute in Berlin. The name of the project comes from the title of a documentary on post-independence Guinea-Bissau, which, even though left unfinished during the editing process, offers an insight into the role of cinema as part of the long struggle for independence and nation building. My analysis will focus mainly on *Spell Reel*, the artist's debut feature film that premiered at the 2017 Berlinale, which excavates the decaying archive of the militant cinema of Guinea-Bissau embodying Amílcar Cabral's decolonising politics. The collective film utilises the works of the first generation of Guinean filmmakers, Sana Na N'Hada, Flora Gomes, José Bolama Cobumba and Josefina Crato, who were sent to Cuba in

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<sup>18</sup> See Fernando Arenas, *Utopias of Otherness: Nationhood and Subjectivity in Portugal and Brazil* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> See Norrie MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa: Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire* (London: Longman, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> See M. D. D. Newitt, *Portugal in Africa: The Last Hundred Years* (London: C. Hurst, 1981).

<sup>21</sup> See Moutinho.

<sup>22</sup> See Ronald W. Sousa, 'The Critique of History in Lidia Jorge's *A Costa Dos Murmúrios*, or Helen of Beira Meets Luis of Troy', *Cincinnati Romance Review*, 16 (1997), 135–43.

1967 by Cabral to be trained in the art of cinema and play a defining role in creating and disseminating the first images of the independence war and the decolonisation period under socialist rule. The film juxtaposes black-and-white 16mm footage from the Guinean archive with contemporary colour images in a modern, lyrical interpretation of the relation between past and present, while also documenting the 2014 mobile cinema tour that exhibited the archive for the first time across Guinean towns and villages and in European capitals. The silent reels are brought to life through commentary from N’Hada and Gomes, among others, giving a voice to the newly digitised footage and sparking debates in the artistic and academic forums where they were exhibited.

Additionally, the analysis will include some of César’s short films and productions prior to *Spell Reel*, mainly *Conakry*, *Mined Soil* and *Compost Archive*. For the 2013 short-film *Conakry*, César brought together the artists and activists Grada Kilomba and Diana McCarty to give a voice to the silent archival footage shot by the Guinean filmmakers during “The Week of Information,” an event organised by Cabral in 1972 to bring international attention to the Guinean liberation struggle. The 2014 film-essay *Mined Soil* explores Cabral’s agronomic and political legacy by revisiting the region of Alentejo in South Portugal that the Guinean liberation leader once studied. The film contrasts Cabral’s analysis of soil erosion and the role it played in his political vision, with the ongoing gold mining project started by a Canadian company in this region in 2012, illustrating the contemporaneity of Cabral’s theories and exposing the dangers of neo-colonialism. Finally, the short-film *Compost Archive* from July 2016 is a collaboration with artist Louis Henderson as a result of the conference 4<sup>th</sup> Encounters Beyond History: Luta ca caba inda - An Archive in Relation, held at the Centro José de Guimarães in Portugal in 2015. The video juxtaposes raw footage from the Guinean archive, a series of 16mm films and film prints donated by countries supporting the independence struggle, with audio excerpts from the papers presented by the participants to the conference.

Margarida Cardoso’s work is centred on Mozambique, the country where the director grew up until the age of 12 as the daughter of a pilot in the Portuguese air force during the colonial wars. My analysis will focus mainly on the director’s works *Natal 71*, *Kuxa Kanema* and *Yvone Kane*, but will also look very briefly at her cinematic adaptation of *A Costa dos Murmúrios*. Using her father’s perspective to retrace her childhood memories, one of her first independent works, the 1999 documentary *Natal 71*, recreates the memory of the colonial war in Mozambique through the eponymous record given to Portuguese soldiers by the Movimento Nacional Feminino. The film juxtaposes this with the soldiers’ anti-nationalist response in the form of Cancioneiro do Niassa, an illicit repertoire that rewrote the lyrics of popular songs

from an anti-Salazarist perspective. The 2003 documentary, *Kuxa Kanema - O Nascimento do Cinema* (The Birth of Cinema), uses Mozambican archival footage documenting the emergence of cinema and of the new independent nation under the powerful influence of the president Samora Machel, who commissioned the creation of a weekly newsreel program that would disseminate the imagery of the new country across its whole territory. Exploring the political role of image and propaganda, the two documentaries expose the relations of power behind the image in writing history and interpreting the past. Additionally, I will briefly look at Cardoso's 2004 filmic adaptation of Lídia Jorge's *A Costa dos Murmúrios* analysed in the first part of this thesis, exploring the interpretation of the novel mainly from the perspective of the photography medium.

One of Cardoso's main works analysed in this thesis, the 2014 feature-film *Yvone Kane*, is set in an unnamed African country reminiscent of Mozambique and follows the story of a troubled mother-daughter duo reunited after years of estrangement. After her own daughter's accidental death, Rita Moreira, an investigative journalist living in Portugal, returns to the African country of her childhood to uncover the truth behind the death of activist and guerrilla fighter Yvone Kane, decades after the suspicious circumstances that involved the local African socialist party and international political powers. During the interviews with Yvone's former friends and lovers, Rita embarks on a journey of reconnection with the mother that she had not seen in years, and a country that she had lost touch with. Rita's mother, Sara, is a former political activist who had fought alongside Yvone, and works as a doctor for a local catholic mission that looks after orphaned young girls. In the first scenes, Sara is confronted with a terminal cancer diagnostic while Rita continues to relive the nightmare of her daughter's drowning, in a story that brings to life the ghosts of a troubled personal past and of a failed socialist revolution. Issues such as gender violence and the position of African women surface in the narrative through the character of Jaime, Sara's adoptive African son, who is accused of raping two orphaned girls in the care of the catholic mission. The film depicts a series of incomplete journeys and unresolved mysteries, including that of the truth behind Yvone's death, yet it captures the African country's transition from colonialism to independence in which the traumatising past haunts the troubled present, in the same way as the characters deal with their repressed memories casting a shadow on an uncertain future.

Moving away from the medium of film and documentary to theatrical performance, Joana Craveiro's work is centred on the transmission of memory, researching the Portuguese Revolution, Estado Novo violence and political resistance at the intersection between personal and collective memory. My analysis will focus on Craveiro's 2017 practice-as-research

doctoral thesis and the accompanying theatrical performance, *A Live/Living Museum of Small, Forgotten and Unwanted Memories – Performing Narratives, Testimonies and Archives of the Portuguese Dictatorship and Revolution*, at the Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies Department of Roehampton University. The play comprises of seven performance-lectures staged across Portugal between November 2014 and July 2015, which reconstitute over 80 years of recent Portuguese history spanning across the Estado Novo (1926-1974), Revolution (25<sup>th</sup> of April 1974), Ongoing Revolutionary Process (1974-1975) and the present day, touching upon controversially recorded and remembered events such as state repression, the Colonial Wars, the return of the Portuguese from the former colonies, and the failed socialist revolution of 1974-75. Based on personal and family experience and private archives, Craveiro’s five-hour single-actor performance includes an open dialogue with the audience that enriched the director’s thesis and play with new personal memories, while contributing to reconciling individuals with a shared traumatic past.

With Marianne Hirsch’s concept of “postmemory generations”<sup>23</sup> in mind, the second part of my thesis will focus on questions of memory transmission and the legitimacy of official history in the aforementioned works of the three Portuguese film and theatre directors. Chapter Four looks at the relation between memory and archive, analysing the way in which colonial archival images, footage, recordings and documents challenge the truth claims traditionally associated with the archive and create alternative narratives to official history by questioning not only what the archive reveals, but also what it fails to inscribe. Looking at notions of archive theory by Michel Foucault,<sup>24</sup> Jacques Derrida<sup>25</sup> and Ann Laura Stoler,<sup>26</sup> but also Kodwo Eshun’s and Ros Gray’s idea of “ciné-geography”<sup>27</sup> of the militant image, Chapter Four is centred on the contribution of individual memory and experience in the writing of collective history, and includes the directors’ scrutiny of propaganda, repression and the forces of power operating within the image and the archive, demonstrating how their critique of dominant narratives turns the past into a question of the future.

Chapter Five focuses on the relation between memory and power, revisiting the concepts of history, memory and truth discussed in the first part of the thesis in relation to the

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<sup>23</sup> See Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*, Gender and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

<sup>24</sup> See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Routledge Classics (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>25</sup> See Jacques Derrida, ‘Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression’, trans. by Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics*, 25.2 (1995), 9–63.

<sup>26</sup> See Ann Laura Stoler, ‘Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance’, *Archival Science*, 2 (2002), 87–109.

<sup>27</sup> See Kodwo Eshun and Ros Gray, ‘The Militant Image: A Ciné-Geography Editors’ Introduction’, *Third Text*, 25.1 (2011), 1–12.

two novels, and analysing the way in which the tensions between them highlight the nonlinearity of historical narrative contrary to what was traditionally portrayed during the Estado Novo. The chapter will explore the way in which the three directors deconstruct existing dominant stories by challenging the perception of historical facts as truth, and revealing the multiple facets of political resistance. Concepts such as Elizabeth Jelin's "memory struggles,"<sup>28</sup> collective memory and Pierre Nora's "*lieux de mémoire*"<sup>29</sup> are instrumental in framing the relation between memory and history, while Manuel Loff's commentary on contemporary memory politics in Portugal<sup>30</sup> contributes to a better understanding of the current context. By exploring those non-inscribed marginal experiences, the works of the three artists/performers expose the risks of memory loss and challenge the right to inscription of the silenced memories of violence.

Chapter Six, the final in this thesis, explores the multiplicity of perspectives in the contemporary works, looking at how the aspects of social class, race and gender influence the directors' artistic approaches. The chapter starts with the analysis of Craveiro's middle-class, left-wing ideology, continuing with the post-colonial racial experiences from the European perspective in César's and Cardoso's cinematic productions, and finishing with the subtleties of the gender point of view in the contemporary works. Furthermore, one of the goals of this final chapter is to address the potential blind spots and limitations in the shifting perspectives of the postmemory generation, such as the white saviour trope, the bias in the representation of the black woman and the mediation of the male experience through female voices. The analysis relies on notions such as Robin DiAngelo's "white fragility"<sup>31</sup> and Kim Wale's "critical cultural openness,"<sup>32</sup> and some of the writings of Heidi Mirza,<sup>33</sup> Hazel Carby,<sup>34</sup> Anne

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<sup>28</sup> See Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, Contradictions, 18 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> See Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, 26.Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (1989), 7–24.

<sup>30</sup> See Manuel Loff, 'Dictatorship and Revolution: Socio-Political Reconstructions of Collective Memory in Post-Authoritarian Portugal', *Culture & History Digital Journal*, 3.2 (2014), 1–13.

<sup>31</sup> See Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's so Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (London: Allen Lane, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2019).

<sup>32</sup> See Kim Wale, 'Towards Critical Cultural Openness: (In)Vulnerability in White Student Narratives of Transformation in South Africa', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 43.7 (2020), 1189–1207.

<sup>33</sup> See Heidi Safia Mirza, 'Introduction: Mapping a Genealogy of Black British Feminism', in *Black British Feminism: A Reader* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1–30.

<sup>34</sup> See Hazel V. Carby, 'White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood', in *Black British Feminism: A Reader*, ed. by Heidi Safia Mirza (London ; New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 45–53.

McClintock<sup>35</sup> and Chandra Talpade Mohanty<sup>36</sup> on the tensions between feminism and race in the representation of black women.

Additionally to memory, the key operative concepts of testimony and witness are essential in bringing the two parts of this paper together. The first generation of female writers harnesses the power of testimony to give a voice to those previously silenced under the repressive forces of an authoritarian regime. Described by Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman as the “era of the witness”<sup>37</sup> and by Shoshana Felman as “a century of traumas and (concurrently) a century of theories of trauma,”<sup>38</sup> the twentieth century turns to the testimony of survivors to frame the individual and collective experiences of violence. The two novels analysed testify against the trauma of war, domestic violence, gender and racial oppression under the Estado Novo, bringing into focus marginal experiences that were once excluded from the public forum. As Felman suggests, literature represents “a specific mode of testimony” which compels writers to “testify through literary or artistic channels precisely when they know, or feel intuitively, that in the court of history (...) *evidence will fail or will fall short*; when they know that other sorts of testimonies will, for different reasons, not come through or that events have taken place that will, for different reasons, not be evidenced.”<sup>39</sup> In Chapter Three, I use Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub’s seminal work on testimony to discuss the act of bearing witness in the context of trauma and the fallibilities of memory that this process implies.

In the second part of my research, the discussion on witnessing moves from human to more-than-human testimony, employing Susan Schuppli’s term of ‘material witness’<sup>40</sup> in relation to Filipa César’s work with both decayed film archive and damaged environments subjected to the trauma of colonialist and neo-colonialist practices. The discourse on non-human witnessing developing in the environmental humanities introduces the possibility of material objects and nature to provide testimony against historical trauma, challenging the

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<sup>35</sup> See Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> See Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ‘Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses.’, *Boundary 2*, 12/13. On Humanism and the University I: The Discourse of Humanism (1984), 333–58.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman, *Mengele’s Skull: The Advent of a Forensic Aesthetics* (Frankfurt: Sternberg Press, 2012), p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Felman, p. 96. [emphasis in original]

<sup>40</sup> See Susan Schuppli, *Material Witness: Media, Forensics, Evidence*, Leonardo (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2020), p. 3.

perception of testimony as fundamentally human and advocating for nature to benefit from legal rights previously only attributed to humans.

My research will point out the tensions between the two generations of women and the way in which their optics change, not only in terms of shifting cultural objects from literature to cinema and theatre, but also from the point of view of their actual approach and perspective. By keeping the focus on social class, gender and race in both parts of the thesis, as well as highlighting the tensions between history and memory, the aim is to draw a full circle that equally explores the similarities and the differences between the two generations. While both generations aim to retrieve the voices of the silenced, I argue that their focus changes from feminism, overtly proclaimed and represented in the early years, to a predominant discussion of class and race in contemporary representations, while gender gains new complexities in its representation through the lens of memory politics. This shift in the perspective of gender, as it becomes more critical in its challenging of social and political order by bringing in new voices and exposing the limitations of the European female viewpoint, reflects the current reality in its transition from memory to postmemory. Additionally, this reinforces the need to bring truth and history back into focus, and continue the exploration of a past that is at risk of being forgotten.

# *Chapter One: Social Class in A Costa dos Murrúrios and A Árvore das Palavras*

## **Introduction**

The long 1960s represent a complex period of transition marked by intense changes and developments within the global society, from the emergence of new subcultures and socio-political movements, major advances in technology like television or jet travel, the rise of individualism and consumer culture improving material life, the transformation of gender, racial and social identities, to the powerful manifestation of youth culture involved in driving political change. As Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried note in their analysis of mass culture during this period, “political transformations and changes within the culture of everyday life were evolving simultaneously and were merging with each other.”<sup>1</sup> Benefitting from an increased purchasing power thanks to the prospering economics of the period stemming from the late 1950s until the 1970s, as well as sexual liberation and a rise in educational standards, the political, social and cultural realms face an intense process of reconstruction at a global level.

In what concerns the political and social context in Portugal, the period commencing in the late 1950s and early 1960s marked the beginning of the colonial wars in Africa. Faced with the difficulties of social repression, poverty and the immense pressure of war, 1960s Portugal was deliberately confined within the boundaries of traditional economic and social order, due to Salazar’s vehement rejection of industrialisation “as a harbinger of class and social problems,” a promotion of agricultural heritage and the glorification of the family, maintaining the country in an “archaic, isolated and puritanical” state to fight against the inevitable advancements of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Lacking natural resources and the potential for economic increase through industry, Portugal was highly dependent on its African colonial territories and the benefits of cheap raw materials, export earnings and protected markets, which made it “the last European power in Africa to cling tenaciously to the panoply of formal

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Introduction: Youth, Consumption, and Politics in the Age of Radical Change’, in *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960-1980*, ed. by Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy*, Reprinted (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), p. 17.

domination.”<sup>3</sup> With over a million Portuguese enlisted in military service overseas and one in every four adult males part of the armed forces,<sup>4</sup> the end of the wars marked the beginning of a new era in which the country was forced to reconsider and reconstruct its identity as former empire and future European nation.

In this chapter, I propose to analyse the condition of Portuguese women in Africa before and during the colonial wars through the perspective of social class in Lídia Jorge’s *A Costa dos Murmúrios* and Teolinda Gersão’s *A Árvore das Palavras*, in which the leading female characters exemplify a divergent position within the colonial society, from two different class perspectives in terms of background, education and intellectual autonomy. Jorge’s 1988 novel is a key text that expresses the author’s attempt to denounce the inequalities of an authoritarian regime that suppressed the voices of gender and racial minorities. The main character, Evita/Eva Lopo, is a white Portuguese woman with a privileged social background and university degree, who explores the reality of Africa. On the one hand, the narrative depicts the horrors of war and opposes the false idyllic image of the colonies to a reality in which the Europeans are the true outsiders. On the other hand, the novelist brings a new dimension by delineating the women’s standpoint that condemns the fragmented and illusory reality propagated by the regime, in an effort to reconstruct the truth. Gersão’s 1997 work is an interpretation of the African experience from the point of view of women who are both insiders and outsiders of the colonial space. The narrative combines the perspectives of Amélia, the immigrant white woman who moves to Africa to form a family, yet never manages to grow roots in an unknown country, and that of Lóia, the African woman, deeply rooted in the traditions of her land.

The two novels are set in the 1960s decade and the years prior to this date. Contrasting the two main characters in the novels, both white, young Portuguese women who settle in Africa, this chapter focuses on the specific aspects of social class that contribute to the formation of female identity. Even though gender and race are the most prominent elements that the two novels explore, starting this thesis with the analysis of social class will help explain the social background of the two literary works and, in this way, explore the context in which they were written. Therefore, despite their similarities in terms of gender and race, the differences between the two main characters are most pronounced from a social class perspective, including their origins and background, level of education and political views.

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<sup>3</sup> Maxwell, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Maxwell, p. 20.

Their divergent experiences provoke reflections on the social spaces of the city, with a focus on the quotidian life of women in the urban areas of Mozambique prior to and during the wars, as well as their past in Salazar's repressive Portugal. As each novel concentrates on the spectres of life in Africa during the Estado Novo, this chapter will analyse the backgrounds of Eva and Amélia, looking at their urban and, respectively, rural origins, aiming to expose the characters' intellectual autonomy, their experience of colonialism and poverty, their level of education and its influence on their scientific and, conversely, superstitious thinking, their views on consumerism and the way it shapes female identity, the instances of speech, language and voice in the novels, as well as the characters' understanding of the African social space and geography.

### **The characters' intellectual autonomy**

Based on the author's memories of Mozambique in the early 1960s, *A Árvore das Palavras* was written more than twenty years after the end of the colonial wars, from a feminine perspective. As Hilary Owen notes, "compared to the multiple and various forms that the memory of the colonial wars took in the contemporary Portuguese literature, the experience of white Portuguese colonisation in Africa has been given relatively limited attention."<sup>5</sup> Teolinda Gersão uses her personal experience of colonial Mozambique to develop a narrative that analyses the condition of the coloniser and that of the colonised, brought together by the perspective of the child born in a Portuguese family, yet raised in Africa.

The main character, Amélia, embodies the image of the typical conservative white Portuguese woman coming from a modest rural background, who leaves her native country, aged nineteen, full of hope and aspirations, to begin a better life in the colonies. Born in a dysfunctional family, Amélia is an orphan since the age of six and the daughter of a single mother, rumoured by the village as an "unfortunate creature who had all those fatherless children."<sup>6</sup> According to the village gossip, the girl was "born on the wrong side of the blanket,"<sup>7</sup> as the illegitimate daughter of her godfather Honorato, raised by the latter's distant and oppressive wife and treated not as a member of the family, but rather as a servant. The watch that the old man gave Amélia on his deathbed becomes the symbol of a life that the girl

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<sup>5</sup> Hilary Owen, "La vie en rose": Post-scriptum a um império assombrado (Sobre "A Árvore das Palavras", de Teolinda Gersão), in *Fantasmagorias e fantasias imperiais no imaginário português contemporâneo*, ed. by Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, Campo da literatura Ensaio, 97, 1. ed (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2003), pp. 165–78 (p. 166).

<sup>6</sup> Teolinda Gersão, *The Word Tree*, trans. by Margaret Jull Costa, Dedalus Africa (Sawtry, UK: Dedalus, 2010), p. 104.

<sup>7</sup> Gersão, p. 104.

could have had as a daughter and not as a maid, enjoying the same benefits as the rest of the family, turning the object into a “sign of an injustice, a sign that she had the right to other things, that life had defrauded her.”<sup>8</sup>

Stumbling upon a newspaper page wrapped around her uncle’s shoes, Amélia decides to reply to a stranger’s matrimonial advert in a frivolous love game to provoke the jealousy of her suitor, Joaquim Albano. Disillusioned and rejected by her first love, Amélia enjoys receiving Laureano’s love letters, which raise the interest of the people in the village, fuelling her secret anger and “desire to avenge herself on the world.”<sup>9</sup> Her friends and family also encourage her hopes of becoming rich and starting a better life away from the village: “‘He seems like a nice lad and none of us here is likely to strike it rich.’ ‘Don’t throw away a piece of good luck when it comes your way.’”<sup>10</sup> Seduced by the idyllic image of beautiful, affluent Africa depicted in Laureano’s letters, the young woman decides to sail across the world and follow a new path that she envisages as fundamentally opposed to her bitter, uneducated and inexperienced youth. Like a lot of the white settler population in the Portuguese colonies, Amélia belonged to the high numbers of poor peasants with minimal education and skills that populated the African cities and dominated the areas of semiskilled labour.<sup>11</sup> The last image that she has of Portugal before embarking for Africa is that of the Jerónimos Monastery and the Belém Tower, two iconic landmarks that have become cultural references symbolising the starting point to the voyages of discovery in the 16th century. To Amélia, they appear as insignificant caricatures of a history that she is impartial to: “nothing like the photos she had seen, they seemed so small and unreal, especially the Torre de Belém, which looked as if it were made out of sugar, just like the little model she had once seen on top of a cake.”<sup>12</sup> As Hilary Owen observes, the monuments represent an ironic deconstruction of the colonial myth, failing to represent the Portuguese maritime discoveries, but reminding the character of a wedding cake that better reflects the motivation behind her journey to Africa.<sup>13</sup>

The fifteen years that she spends in Africa fail to bring Amélia the financial satisfaction that she aims for at the beginning of her marriage. When her husband, Laureano, is in the running for a work promotion, she becomes excited about the prospect of a better social position, turning it into a major topic of discussion for the entire family, whose constant

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<sup>8</sup> Gersão, p. 105.

<sup>9</sup> Gersão, p. 103.

<sup>10</sup> Gersão, p. 105.

<sup>11</sup> Maxwell, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> Gersão, p. 97.

<sup>13</sup> Owen, p. 172.

reiteration becomes one of her daughter's prominent childhood memories: "At first, it was as if the word hadn't even been spoken, it passed by us so lightly, barely brushing our ears, instantly forgotten. Then it became more insistent, like rain falling and falling, and in time, it filled the whole house, as if it were the only word that mattered."<sup>14</sup> Offering the promise of a better life for the entire family, the excitement of a future promotion becomes their main focus for the following six months. However, when receiving the disappointing news that Laureano had not been given the new position, despite having more experience in the company than the other candidate, Amélia unleashes her frustrations and bitter disappointment at his lack of ambition, calling him a "stupid African marmot with no claws and no guts. Good enough to be eaten, but not for anything else."<sup>15</sup> She mocks the praise that he had received for being a "loyal and faithful employee,"<sup>16</sup> humiliating him even more when, the night after, she tears into pieces the new white jacket that he had accidentally stained the day before, using her sharp scissors like a weapon to hurt the man who shattered her dreams.

Despite Amélia's exasperation with what she considers a lack of ambition and desire to progress, Laureano is depicted as hard working and open minded, willing to blend into the Mozambican society and fully aware of his socio-economic condition. The second part of the novel that depicts the woman's story also looks back at her husband's journey, from the ten-year old boy, head of the household who supports his single mother and brother by working in a shoe factory and raising sheep, to the young nineteen-year old man who follows his impulse to start over, crossing the ocean without even saying goodbye and beginning a new life in the capital of Mozambique. His job as, most likely, a bureaucrat allows him to buy a house and start a family with Amélia, while he keeps sending money back home to his mother and brother. The advertisement in the Portuguese newspaper, prompted by his hope of finding true love and starting a family of his own, feels like a true game of chance to Laureano, like "putting a message in a bottle and throwing it into the sea."<sup>17</sup> Excited about Amélia's future arrival, he redecorates the house and carries her photo around in his wallet like a talisman of good luck, anxiously waiting for her in the quay with a lump in his throat.

One of Amélia's motivations for leaving Portugal and starting a new life in Africa is to cause the envy of the village back home and thus avenge herself for all the suffering caused by poverty, rejection and shame. Carefully concealing her true condition in Lourenço Marques,

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<sup>14</sup> Gersão, p. 67.

<sup>15</sup> Gersão, p. 82.

<sup>16</sup> Gersão, p. 82.

<sup>17</sup> Gersão, p. 114.

Amélia depicts a different image of her social status, with meticulously worded letters that she sends, years later, to her acquaintances: “(‘we have three servants and a cook’) and enclosed a postcard showing the Hotel Polana reflected in the swimming pool (‘this is where we spent our honeymoon and my husband takes me to dinner-dance here every Saturday’).”<sup>18</sup> Refusing to admit defeat, the woman chooses to fabricate stories about the life she had dreamt of, inspired by that of the aristocratic circles in the city.

While Amélia is embarrassed about her humble rural origins and dreams of becoming part of the elites, Eva Lopo, the protagonist of *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, shows a radically opposed background. The only child of civil servants, Eva embodies the image of the modern, middle class woman of 1960s urban Portugal, whose social circumstances allow her to benefit from a sheltered upbringing in a family able to provide her with an advantaged start in life:

*“My parents have always been public servants, but they have an electric stove, a car, a small beach house, eat out once a month, go to mass once a week. I’ve always known everything in moderation, controlled, happy, healthy, pictures, vacation postcards, holidays, large-screen television. (...) All of the fruits of their labour, their honour, their economy, and their controlled civic duty.”*<sup>19</sup>

The university education provides Eva with the adequate cultural tools to judge her parents’ political passivity and contentment with a mediocre harmonious life, pushing her to raise above their placidity and revolt against the orderly and calculated life that they try to impose on her:

*“Getting back to my parents, who are identical, happy and expected me to be a harmonious product, I’d like to tell you that I have disappointed them: their harmony led me to deny them at time, to reject them, to nullify them. That was the big surprise. There’s no drama other than the one on my mind, but when I think about it I’m against them. My pact is different because I am born of two things together.”*<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Gersão, p. 108.

<sup>19</sup> Lídia Jorge, *The Murmuring Coast*, trans. by Natália Costa and Ronald W. Sousa, Emergent Literatures (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 171.

<sup>20</sup> Jorge, p. 171.

Eva Lopo conforms to the pattern of female subjectivity identified by Luisa Passerini in her study of the 1960s forms of subjectivity, in which female identity during this period is characterised by rupture and built upon contradiction, as women chose to become ‘orphans’ and rejected their parental figures to question their own social role: “The theatrical game, the ability to divide oneself in two and observe oneself, is part of the formation of subjects. But what internal images guided the women in this appearance before the footlights? One strong impulse was negative: to distance themselves from their mothers, to reject their model completely.”<sup>21</sup> Despite their support, both moral and financial, Eva feels the need to break from the cultural patterns imposed by her parents, rejecting their model of life in order to build her own identity.

The different geographies within Portugal that the two characters originate from are embedded in social meaning, proving that the urban and the rural spaces that constitute their background denote the level of progress and, respectively, that of conservatism that characterises the women’s views. Thus, the two characters’ contrasting backgrounds and, more predominantly, levels of education, determine their decisions to begin new lives in Africa as wives, and thus their relation to personal transformation. Amélia’s motivation stems from her desire to leave behind the limitations of poverty and shame, aiming to climb the social ladder for her personal progress. Believing that a relocation to the African continent can simply erase the marks of her humble origins, Amélia dreams of joining the ranks of the Portuguese elites and eventually return to her home village in full glory to gain revenge on all of her oppressors, family, friends and neighbours, “when she swept into the village one day in a shiny car, wearing a fur coat and gold necklaces and bracelets,”<sup>22</sup> as she imagined it would happen. Eva Lopo’s evolution, on the other hand, transcends the comfort of her privileged position in order to fuel the fight against gender and racial inequalities in the patriarchal society. Her desire to raise above the constraints of her condition as a woman in a world dominated by men aims to unmask the untold and unseen truth behind history, thus speaking up against the society that Amélia strives so fiercely, yet hopelessly to be accepted by.

While both characters share the same Portuguese origins, their status in the colony is very different. In the colonial context, the imperial metropolis is not Portugal itself, but the city of Lisbon, which represents the true ruler deciding the fate of the country and of the empire. The 1951 revision of the Colonial Act, aiming to reconfigure the concept of a traditional

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<sup>21</sup> Luisa Passerini, *Autobiography of a Generation: Italy, 1968* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), p. 96.

<sup>22</sup> Gersão, p. 134.

Portuguese colonial empire, renamed the colonies as “overseas provinces” by turning them into inherent and indissoluble entities that formed the nation. The immediate consequence of this administrative and ideological alteration was the consolidation of a centralised colonial structure in which Lisbon became the absolute power, widening the gap between the capital and the province and voiding the rest of the country of political authority. As the colonies were promoted to the rank of provinces, so was the continental province deprived of autonomy. Thus, despite their common European descent, skin colour and nationality, Eva and Amélia belong to two different worlds in which the first one is the expression of political and economic power through her metropolitan and cosmopolitan origins, whilst the latter is limited to her former condition outside the circle of power, reflecting the constraints of provincialism. Therefore, this contrast between the centre and the periphery, embodied by the two women, represents an important factor in defining the identity of the characters.

Reflective of her status in the colony and lacking the luxury of a sheltered middle-class life, Amélia remains oblivious to the higher political order as she is entirely concerned with her own family’s subsistence and desire to overcome poverty. For her, Africa is defined by scarcity, underdevelopment and mediocrity, a black hole that absorbs every ideal of advancement: “You could fall into Africa as if into a well, Africa sapped your engines and sucked you in like quicksand. You could never go back, you were never the same person that you were before. If you didn’t fight hard enough, didn’t stick to your guns, that force would drag you down like an illness – a fatal one.”<sup>23</sup> While Amélia selfishly sees Africa as a catastrophic influence on her personal life, failing to empathise with the Mozambicans’ struggles against third world poverty and social injustice, Eva looks beyond her condition to decipher the situation of the colony beyond the propaganda of the Estado Novo. Eva’s position of power exempts her from facing the same financial difficulties that the locals experience, while at the same time giving her the means to explore the depths of the African society that the Portuguese refused to see.

### **Superstition and scientific thinking**

Apart from their intellectual autonomy, origins and position in the colony, Amélia and Eva can also be distinguished based on their relation to superstition and science, reflecting two contrastive ways of thinking as a direct consequence of their education (or lack thereof). For Amélia, Africa is a place with “a debilitating, disorienting effect on certain people, as if

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<sup>23</sup> Gersão, pp. 55–56.

someone had put the evil eye on them.”<sup>24</sup> As Allan Berger notes in his essay on the manifestations and psychodynamics of the ancient superstition of the evil eye, the emotional and cultural meaning of the eye transcends its role as a mere organ of perception; the eye is hence endowed with magical dimensions that can transfer one’s emotions to another person: “The essence of the Evil Eye dynamic is that the superstition is unconsciously based upon the projection of our own envy onto another—the possessor of the Evil Eye.”<sup>25</sup> Following Berger’s idea that the belief in the evil eye reflects the unconscious fears that are ascribed to the external world, Amélia’s superstition stems from her own fear of being vulnerable to the occult powers of Africa, capable of generating a state of confusion and leading people astray from their own ideals, while her personal struggle to overcome poverty reflects the desire to fight against the malefic overpowering influence of Africa by changing her own social and financial condition.

The belief in the evil eye is not the only manifestation of superstition that influences Amélia’s views, as she finds herself in a world of the unknown, where she cannot adapt even after a lifetime. Amélia is a great believer in horoscopes, which she always reads first when opening a newspaper, remembering the one for the day when she started to work in Sommershild for Dora Flávia, who was part of the white Portuguese aristocracy in Mozambique: “An unexpected, but long-hoped-for change this week will mark the beginning of a new stage in your life.”<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the woman occasionally amuses herself by reading the future in cards, shells, bones or cigarette ash, while also believing in chance and considering that her choice to marry a poor man, at the young age of nineteen, could have been just an accident of fate: “It would have taken just one tiny thing for her life to have been entirely different – answering a different advertisement, happening upon a different page in the newspaper.”<sup>27</sup> The woman is convinced that her failure to have the life she had been dreaming of was nothing but a strike of bad luck, that Dora Flávia’s rich engineer husband could have been the man placing the advertisement in the newspaper and awaiting for her at the quay on the day of her arrival: “Her life had missed being entirely different by a mere fluke, a stroke of fate, a nothing – a dice that falls showing one face and not another, a roulette wheel that spins for just a moment longer and stops on the next number.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, blaming fate for throwing her

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<sup>24</sup> Gersão, pp. 55–56.

<sup>25</sup> Allan S. Berger, ‘The Evil Eye—An Ancient Superstition’, *Journal of Religion and Health*, 51.4 (2012), 1098–1103 (p. 1101).

<sup>26</sup> Gersão, p. 99.

<sup>27</sup> Gersão, p. 99.

<sup>28</sup> Gersão, p. 113.

the wrong dice, Amélia believes that her failure to free herself from the condition of poverty that she was born in was a mere unhappy coincidence.

This system of belief based on magic and supernatural can be interpreted through a connection with the character's social origins and their influence on her way of thinking, as the scholarship in this field shows. Current literature in sociology and anthropology has concentrated on revealing the conditions for believing in superstition and magic, covering a wide range of practices using both empirical and theoretical evidence. As defined by Stuart Vyse using Judd Marmor's theories, superstitions consist of "beliefs or practices groundless in themselves and inconsistent with the degree of enlightenment reached by the community to which one belongs."<sup>29</sup> Marjaana Lindeman and Kia Aarnio have found that superstitions are based on the same core of physical, biological and psychological understanding skills that shape the individual's intuitive knowledge, but "in superstitions the properties are not limited to one domain but conflated with each other and applied across categories. As a consequence, amazing entities and processes with extraordinary properties come into existence."<sup>30</sup> Their definition explains the fusion between mental contents with animate features for a thought to touch an object, or creating symbols embedding the material objects that they represent, concluding that "in superstitious thinking biological and physical processes are no longer non-intentional but they are seen as having a purpose, that is, as directed toward certain goals and as being intentionally caused either by a specific or an unspecified intentional agent."<sup>31</sup>

As Benno Torgler notes in his work on the determinants of superstition, the level of education has an influence on an individual's predisposition to believing in magical phenomena, since those more knowledgeable have a tendency towards scientific thinking and are less likely to believe in aspects such as astrology, reincarnation or ghosts, despite being influenced by New Age beliefs and finding interest in different spiritual activities. In what concerns the level of income and economic class group, Torgler mentions the deprivation theory, suggesting that poorer people are more inclined to superstition. The prediction that higher income leads to a lower belief in superstition is also connected to the social class of the individual, affirming that those belonging to the lower classes are more focused on general

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<sup>29</sup> Stuart A. Vyse, *Believing in Magic: The Psychology of Superstition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Marjaana Lindeman and Kia Aarnio, 'Superstitious, Magical, and Paranormal Beliefs: An Integrative Model', *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41, 2007, 731–744 (pp. 733–34).

<sup>31</sup> Lindeman and Aarnio, p. 735.

needs, as they “might be more concerned with their security and stability and thus less able to fulfil their potentials and wishes.”<sup>32</sup>

According to Freud, “the phenomena [of superstition] can be traced back to incompletely suppressed psychological material, which, although pushed away by consciousness, has nevertheless not been robbed of all capacity for expressing itself.”<sup>33</sup> In Amélia’s case, this psychological material is represented by her refusal to adapt to the society of Lourenço Marques, in a constant denial of her Portuguese identity. Superstitions and magical beliefs slowly become her second nature, an image that ends up defining Gita’s memories of her mother: “Amélia never leaves scissors crossed or open: they could cut off your life, snip the thread, she used to say. She was afraid of spells, of bones sewn into the hem of a dress, cashew seeds slipped down your front, bits of coal left outside doors, buried chicken heads, knives stuck in the ground.”<sup>34</sup> Amélia is constantly tormented by the fear of danger, believing that life in Africa is governed by witchcraft and ominous symbols that can be used to harness the power of evil in simple everyday objects, whose role is to cause pain and destruction. To her, the entire city of Lourenço Marques is, in fact, a misleading environment, starting from its geographical origin: “‘You have to be careful,’ Amélia said, ‘alert. Things look all right on the surface, but the city is rotten and rife with contagion. It was built on a swampland, you know.’”<sup>35</sup> Due to the woman’s superstitious beliefs, the city turns into a genuine source of menace and hazard, where illness and uncertainty are hidden at every step:

*“When anyone fell ill, she always assumed it was one of the old fevers that periodically returned and left people weak and hollow-eyed, as if sucked dry by evil spirits. The swamp, or the memory of the swamp, which she had never known because it had ceased to exist almost a century before, seemed to besiege her with nightmare visions, as if the putrid, marshy water was still there, close by.”*<sup>36</sup>

In fact, the superstitions that Amélia shares and frequently discusses with her Portuguese clients are often connected to the local history and geography, such as the legend of the bewitched water of Umbelúzi that can make anyone who drinks it come back to the same

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<sup>32</sup> Benno Torgler, ‘Determinants of Superstition’, *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 36, 2007, 713–33 (p. 720).

<sup>33</sup> Sigmund Freud, ‘Determinism, Belief in Chance and Superstition-Some Points of View’, in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (London & Tonbridge: Ernest Benn Limited, 1966), pp. 239–79 (p. 279).

<sup>34</sup> Gersão, p. 35.

<sup>35</sup> Gersão, p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> Gersão, p. 11.

place, a story mentioned by Elejana that makes Amélia snort angrily in repugnance to life in Africa: “It would have to be some pretty bad magic to make you come back here.”<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Dona Ismália gives an account of the *xipocué*s, spirits of the dead that bring disease, death and storms, mystically hidden in small, insignificant objects such as a pile of salt outside someone’s house or a buried foot of a blue-headed lizard believed to cause joint pains and asthma attacks, all seen by the women as charms and fetishes stored in the Xipamanine market, facilitating the locals’ access to black magic. On the one hand, Amélia finds refuge in discussing the dangers of superstitions with like-minded women that share and confirm her fear of black magic and the unknown of Africa in general, but on the other hand these conversations continue to support her self-imposed isolation from the community, living in a permanent state of apprehension.

Amélia’s superstitions and anxiety also extend towards a series of hypochondriac rituals meant to ward off illness. The diseases and infections that she fears range from mild funguses to serious tropical illnesses, for which she uses prophylactic drugs that can even damage her health. She is depicted as the frail prey shivering under the threatening strength of the wild predator that is the African city, weak in the face of danger that seems to lurk at any step. Gita’s childhood memories are marked by the vulnerable, fearful image of her mother, constantly in search of an escape from disease:

*“Preventing contagion was one of her main concerns. To avoid athlete’s foot, she used Nixoderm and she never put her bare feet on the floor, not even when she got out of the bath. As if the city might set a trap for her and bite her foot – an animal bite, diseased and foul-smelling. (The city baring its teeth at her small, white, unwary feet in their fine shoes. Thread lightly, run away, keeping close to the walls in the narrowest streets as you flee, like a cornered rat that might, if it’s clever, still escape.)”*<sup>38</sup>

Catherine Belling analyses hypochondria as a condition determined by the interaction between embodiment, medicine, culture and language, generated by an “ambivalent but inescapable experience of embodiment”<sup>39</sup> in which the subject’s own anatomy becomes a source of unseen danger. Belling states that “the hypochondriacal model of embodiment turns on this sense that disease lurks in bodies, its concealment neither accidental nor imposed, (...)”

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<sup>37</sup> Gersão, p. 35.

<sup>38</sup> Gersão, p. 44.

<sup>39</sup> Catherine Francis Belling, *A Condition of Doubt: The Meanings of Hypochondria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 60.

hiding deliberately, usually with sinister intent, waiting in ambush to reveal itself violently and unexpectedly,” as it turns the hypochondriac’s body in “a place of threat and suspense.”<sup>40</sup> Although Amélia’s health anxiety is comparable to that of any hypochondriac who fears the dangers of their own body, her nervousness does not seem to be caused by diseases originated inside her body, but rather by external ‘infections.’ Therefore, the parasitical infections that Amélia strives to prevent at any cost emerge from the exterior and are spread by environmental factors, turning the city into the aforementioned “place of threat and suspense.” In this case, Amélia’s psychological malaise appears to correspond to Bernadette Höfer’s definition of hypochondria as “a projection onto the body of failed attempts to connect with a particular environment.”<sup>41</sup> Once again, the woman’s inability to adapt to the local environment becomes the latent cause of her physical and mental distress, exerting herself to keep danger and illness at bay.

The African environment and the natural world are the elements that conjure Amélia’s fear, as menacing sources of disease: “she used to spray the cupboards with Cafum because she was afraid of cockroaches and imagined that she could always hear them whirring about her head. (...) She was afraid of frogs and toads, not to mention snakes (...).”<sup>42</sup> As common as the aversion to insects and reptiles is in general, in Amélia’s case this confirms the character’s reluctance to attune to the African city by embracing and learning to accept what it has to offer. On the contrary, Amélia finds herself in a conflictual relation with the outside world, striving to keep all the natural elements at a distance through superstitious practices and the use of medicines and poisons. She is also keen to domesticate the abundant African flora in the family’s garden that was continuously at risk from turning into a disorderly jungle. As Gita remembers, “[i]t wasn’t a garden, it was a wilderness, which you either loved or hated; there were no half measures, because you couldn’t compete with it. It was there and it surrounded us, and you were either part of it or you weren’t. Amélia wasn’t. Or didn’t want to be. That’s why she continued to try and tame it.”<sup>43</sup> The richness of the African environment, growing unrestrained despite Amélia’s best efforts to control it, represents a perpetual source of nuisance for the woman who idealises the perfect bourgeois mansions in the affluent areas of Lourenço Marques, with their manicured gardens.

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<sup>40</sup> Belling, p. 61.

<sup>41</sup> Bernadette Höfer, *Psychosomatic Disorders in Seventeenth-Century French Literature* (Routledge, 2016), p. 127.

<sup>42</sup> Gersão, p. 44.

<sup>43</sup> Gersão, p. 10.

Amélia's refusal to accommodate to the city is not only expressed through her aversion to the wild natural world, but also to the people living in her neighbourhood, declining to create bonds with any of them. Consequently, the woman chooses to isolate herself from the community, perpetuating a formal distance meant to create a barrier against the neighbours and even her own family:

*“Amélia didn't go because she didn't like mixing with the neighbours, and so people rarely visited our house. With time, that became an unspoken agreement. The neighbours always invited her, out of politeness, to picnics and day-trips, but no one ever really expected her to come; out of politeness, too, they pretended to believe her familiar excuses – too much work, feeling unwell, a toothache, a bad back, a migraine.”<sup>44</sup>*

Maintaining a deferential yet reserved attitude, Amélia prefers to remain unapproachable to those belonging to the working class that she was herself part of, aspiring instead towards the friendship of the gentry living in the rich quarters of the city. Despite being only a child, Gita is already aware of the impression that her mother had made on the neighbours: “I knew what the neighbours said about her: snob, bean-pole, fool.”<sup>45</sup> Every interaction with people other than the residents of Sommershild is almost an exasperating experience for Amélia: “Goodness, common people always had such a horrible habit of trying to strike up a conversation, everyone spoke to everyone else, as if talking about your own life were the most natural thing in the world.”<sup>46</sup>

While the belief in superstitions and supernatural forces represents a defining character trait for Amélia, determined by social class and level of education, Eva shows an analytical and inquisitive nature demonstrating her predisposition towards rationality and science. Not only is superstition entirely lacking from Eva's behaviour throughout the novel, but it is also challenged through the character's ceaseless quest for uncovering the truth behind historical events and her belief in science. Moreover, even her love for her husband, Luís Alex, whom she met in university and married in Africa where he was fighting in the war, stems from her admiration of the man's ardent passion for mathematics, restlessly working day and night to solve advanced equations. In their student days, Eva had affectionately named him Évariste Galois, the French genius in algebra, in honour of his mathematical clairvoyance and efforts to

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<sup>44</sup> Gersão, p. 38.

<sup>45</sup> Gersão, p. 39.

<sup>46</sup> Gersão, p. 139.

solve fourth and fifth power equations. The young man's life prior to joining the war revolved around his ambitious academic research, aiming to find a universal solution to Galois' unresolved problem, and believing that "he was on his way to soon coming face to face with an indomitable law that would solve all equations to any power, from the most simple to the most infinitely complex."<sup>47</sup> But when Eva calls him by the old nickname, in their hotel room soon after the wedding reception, Luís loses his temper as he angrily forbids his wife from using the "idiotic" name that he claims he only used to quietly tolerate, despite once having introduced himself as Galois, the scientist that he most admired: "It had been he who had spoken of the man's clear-sightedness, of his last night of perspicacity. It had been he who had said he would trade his entire life for one night of such vision."<sup>48</sup>

Luís Alex's vehement rejection of his former role model, as well as his passion for mathematics in general, represents one of the first moments that signal a turning point in the man's behaviour, drawing Eva's attention towards a radical transformation. Intrigued by Luís' complete loss of memory of his former ambitions, the woman struggles to understand her husband's sudden aversion towards what once most defined him as a human being, conveying a deep metamorphosis in his personality under the influence of war. As her husband fails to remember the very building blocks of what constituted his former self, Eva feels that Luís Alex's disconnection from his past goals of becoming the new Galois marks the end of his contact with reality:

*"[I]f we started to forget what we wanted to discover, and after that our names, and after that the country we came from, how could we agree on what time to go out? (...) all of that was connected by a tenuous thread that could quickly break and that, despite it being so tenuous, still allowed for a small correspondence so we wouldn't be just floating on the surface of the earth like mud, until we did, in fact, float like mud. (...) Did he really not remember having asked me to find him the complete biography of the very same Évariste Galois?"<sup>49</sup>*

In fact, Luís Alex's initial reason for joining the war did not stem from a curiosity for combat nor from any kind of patriotism, but rather from his passion for mathematics, as he would only be allowed to finish his degree in times of war after completing the mandatory

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<sup>47</sup> Jorge, p. 41.

<sup>48</sup> Jorge, p. 41.

<sup>49</sup> Jorge, p. 42.

military service. At the time, war was only a means to an end for him, that of continuing his scientific discoveries, and a necessary step to be able to return to his studies undisturbed: “If I have to do what keeps me from doing what I most want, I should do it as soon as possible. I desperately want to do the military service so that I can get back to mathematics and show those dogfaces there is a solution, a formula to solve Galois’s problem.”<sup>50</sup> However, once he takes part in the war, his interests and beliefs begin to change and the once idealistic scientist, whose unique vocation in life was to interpret complex equations, seems entirely transfigured, taking the appearance of a stranger who considers mathematics an outcome of war, “a place he had disembarked at in childhood, by a desperate mistake.”<sup>51</sup> He confesses to Eva that the battles he fought had helped him discover his true self, under the captivating influence of his captain and the brutal scar that adorns his chest: “You can’t imagine, Evita, the intuition I have for this type of combat. I’ve been on missions for a year, and the best results among the companies are the ones obtained by the Captain’s company, and in the Captain’s company is my platoon that has the most tangible results.”<sup>52</sup> He sees the captain’s scar as a symbol of bravery and sacrifice for a man’s deepest beliefs, whereas Eva considers the brutality of his mark to be the sign of an obsolete view of the world ruled by violence and fear, “the last man of the century to see himself in his scar.”<sup>53</sup> Their divergent opinions on Jaime Forza Leal’s scar create an invisible and impenetrable wall between the two young lovers, “diverged like the two banks of a river,”<sup>54</sup> as its significance extends over their views on war and the world.

One of the emblematic episodes that plays a vital role in defining the man’s transformation is the scene of the bird hunting. The newly-wed couple is accompanied by the captain and his beautiful, quiet wife, Helena, on a hunting trip during which the two men show off their ability to handle firearms and hit moving targets, skills that the war has helped them perfect. Offering a theatrical depiction in which each sequence amplifies in tension and suspense, the vivid narrative is written in the present tense to underline the emotional intensity of one of the key moments that unveils Luís Alex’s metamorphosis under the stupefied eyes of his wife: “I hear the Captain shaking the weapon as though he had discovered a profane sound in that device, his wife holding her scarf with both hands as if not wanting to hear, the groom behind the Captain, as if he were his shadow.”<sup>55</sup> The once shy and idealistic university student,

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<sup>50</sup> Jorge, p. 142.

<sup>51</sup> Jorge, p. 55.

<sup>52</sup> Jorge, p. 55.

<sup>53</sup> Jorge, p. 59.

<sup>54</sup> Jorge, p. 59.

<sup>55</sup> Jorge, pp. 47–8.

passionate about the abstract world of numbers and equations, turns into a blood-thirsty soldier, absorbed by admiration towards his captain and reduced to a mere shadow of the man that he deeply, blindly worships.

The lieutenant is cruelly amused by the idea of the birds' fire-coloured feathers being washed away by the tide, leaving nothing behind their killing expedition, and his laughter sounds oddly unfamiliar and distant to Eva, who fails to recognise her own husband, fascinated with the transformation of the strange man in front of her eyes: "The groom laughed with an unfamiliar sound, so unfamiliar it became imperative to search out his voice within it. Come to think of it, it was the only manifestation of his body that contained the secret of his change."<sup>56</sup> Blocking out the words that Luís Alex utters, she begins to closely study his anatomy in a desperate attempt to decipher the mystery of his sudden and unexplained metamorphosis:

*"I got really close to his teeth and stood there watching his lips move (...), and it fascinated me that I identified not a single sound from the groom, as if all that there was of him, of his own, was in fact the body, like a closed shell, and the soul had disappeared. During that absence, the shell could have opened and another spirit could have entered, and could now be speaking with the same tongue, only using a different language."*<sup>57</sup>

Eva's depiction of this transfiguration is reminiscent of the ancient belief that the soul leaves the body through the mouth, inspired by the Greek myth of Charon, the ferryman of Hades who carries the souls of the deceased across the river Styx. In her review of the ancient funerary practices inspired by this myth in Latin and Greek literature, Susan T. Stevens writes that "the head was commonly believed to be the seat of the soul which passed out of the body through the breath."<sup>58</sup> The mouth was seen as the doorway between the realm of the living and that of the dead, so its opening and closing through laughter can be symbolically interpreted as the last breath through which Luís Alex abandons his former self to take on a new, strange and distant spirit.

Eva's relationship with Luís Alex changes irremediably the moment when Helena, the captain's ravishingly beautiful and mysteriously quiet wife, reveals the secret photographs of the men's cruel actions during the war, tracing the coordinates of their military operations.

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<sup>56</sup> Jorge, p. 49.

<sup>57</sup> Jorge, p. 49.

<sup>58</sup> Susan T. Stevens, 'Charon's Obol and Other Coins in Ancient Funerary Practice', *Phoenix*, 45.3 (1991), 215–29 (p. 221).

Thus, seeing the once studious and dedicated student turned into a brutal soldier that hangs and tortures African prisoners, murders old women and new-born children, burns down villages and destroys homes, is a powerful image of the absurdity of war and the way it changes even the most innocent of people. Helena's insight into the story behind each photograph, compiling the details disclosed to her by Jaime, amplifies the irrationality of war and Luís Alex's radical transformation, who seems to have lost all trace of humanity. Eva now strives to understand this extreme change in her husband, trying to find the exact factor that had triggered this "taste for decapitation," which she believed could offer her the tools to "understand the hordes of barbarians throughout time, even the quiet ones without swords that no one talks about, of whom no compromising pictures are kept."<sup>59</sup> Eva sees the harmful influence of war as the decisive element in the savage acts performed by her husband, who now becomes no different than the cruel primitive tribes plundering homes and burning villages. Pondering on the causes of her husband's transfiguration into a seemingly heartless war machine, Eva wonders whether, contrary to all expectations, mathematics had an influence on the changes that had occurred in the man's personality:

*"Did he have somewhere inside him a powder ball waiting to flare up and had mathematics merely been the spark? Or, by contrast, had combustion been fuelled by the risks of mathematics, with that untimely spark setting off the flame at the wrong moment in his life's pattern? Had the same nerve that impelled him to search for a generalising algebraic formula in a group theory also been what pushed him onto the roof of a hut with a black man's head, dripping blood, stuck onto a stick?"<sup>60</sup>*

In her attempt to rationalise Luís Alex's behaviour, Eva makes a reference to the terrors of the twentieth century, creating a parallel between the cruelties of the African colonial wars and those of the Second World War and bringing into question the roles that the executioners at Auschwitz played in the advancement of science, given their "vivid interest in the decomposition of the body."<sup>61</sup> She concludes that "there may be merely a few dance steps or a few muscle exercises separating science and crime. Between good and evil, a shroud of construction paper."<sup>62</sup> Thus, war is the ultimate form of crime that turns science into cruelty

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<sup>59</sup> Jorge, p. 141.

<sup>60</sup> Jorge, p. 143.

<sup>61</sup> Jorge, p. 143.

<sup>62</sup> Jorge, p. 143.

and innocent men into ruthless executioners, pointing towards the fluidity of boundaries between good and evil.

Mathematics is the symbolic element that connects the couple, the constant that had kept them together during the years by remaining unchanged across the continents where they once met and where they were living together during the war. After her husband's return from his last mission, Eva's attempt of rekindling the passion and reliving their love is only encouraged by her hope of rediscovering the former happiness and intimacy that the couple once shared, believing that "mathematics would be part of it all like a phosphorescent number penetrating between the flesh and the bones,"<sup>63</sup> which he once chose to temporarily abandon while fulfilling his patriotic duty for the country. Thus, mathematics is the element that epitomises the very last moment in the couple's peaceful life as it used to be prior to the war that radically changed everything, reducing the lieutenant "to a muscle possessing the vague memory of having a spirit,"<sup>64</sup> entirely voiding him of his former self. When she meets the biracial journalist who joins her in the quest for discovering the true reality of Africa and later on becomes her lover, Eva confesses that she feels deeply torn for loving a man who does not exist anymore, painfully witnessing his brutal transformation: "The problem is that some time ago I fell in love with a restless boy in search of mathematical harmony, and today I'm waiting for a man who beheads people and holds up their heads on a stick."<sup>65</sup>

### **Speech, language and voice**

The characters' speech and voices represent important factors that indicate their social origins and deepen the divide between them, with the novelists using language as a tool to define the perceptions of the socio-political strata in 1960s Mozambique. This aspect can be observed not only in the main characters' speech, but also in fragments attributed to a variety of voices in the two novels, whose narrative structures juxtapose the plurality of voices belonging to the narrator and the characters, reflecting different modes of expression and views of the world.

In *A Árvore das Palavras*, Gersão introduces a number of colloquial Portuguese-speaking voices to reflect the inequalities that characterise the complex relations and social positions in both Lourenço Marques and rural Portugal, indirectly outlining the characteristics of late colonial Mozambique and Salazarian Portuguese society. The voices of the main

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<sup>63</sup> Jorge, p. 255.

<sup>64</sup> Jorge, p. 254.

<sup>65</sup> Jorge, p. 172.

characters are overlapped with those of secondary and episodic characters that contribute to recreating the local atmosphere of Lourenço Marques, such as the Mozambican maid, Lóia, whose colloquial, non-standard speech offers an insight into the position of black women in the Portuguese colony. In her analysis of the novel through Bakhtin's concept of complex language systems, Karen C. Sherwood Sotelino notices that "[t]he commonality among Gersão's protagonists is that they consistently find their voices, their sense of identity, through writing whose form disrupts standard written Portuguese. Her literature claims its existence, in part, through resistance to the complex sentence structures, standard punctuation and point of view of Portuguese literature prior to the 1974 Revolution."<sup>66</sup>

The characters' voices contribute to tracing their personalities and reveal deeper features of their identities. For instance, Amélia's formal and calculated speech, often marked by hyper-correction, foreign words, inclusion of proper names and formal syntax, can be interpreted as a means to hide the insecurities regarding her inferior social status. Sotelino notices the use of words such as "verdadeiramente" (truly) in ample, declarative sentences aiming to create a false sense of authority, thus reflecting the character's shame of her socially inferior class.<sup>67</sup> Another characteristic of Amélia's speech is the frequent use of full proper names of aristocratic families, a borrowing that indicates the character's admiration for the rich and desire to become part of their ranks, while supporting the illusion of being close to these elites in an attempt to identify herself with them: "It seemed to Amélia that Dora's friends had strange names and a special ability to scatter them around, as if they were floral arrangements or cherries in a basket from which, if you pulled out one, the others would follow."<sup>68</sup> Amélia eagerly listens to the discussions that Dora Flávia, her wealthy employer, has with her equally rich friends, remembering all the details of the conversations where the lady of the house tells Graça Casaleiro about the arrival of a luxury yacht at the Clube Naval, a trimaran built in Capetown, or details about her weekend schedule at the tennis or golf club, holiday plans and cruises to Japan, as she mentions to friends like Paulina Gameiro, Conceição Santana or Pureza Antelo. The woman's intrusive preoccupation with these conversations reflects her desperate efforts to become part of the rich world, while trying to cover her unease regarding her humble origins.

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<sup>66</sup> Karen C. Sherwood Sotelino, "Narrator versus Character Voice: Colonial Echoes in Teolinda Gersão's "A Arvore das Palavras"", *Hispania*, 90.2 (2007), 224–33 (p. 225).

<sup>67</sup> Sotelino, p. 228.

<sup>68</sup> Gersão, p. 117.

Fascinated by names and their meaning, which she believes to be as revealing as photographs, Amélia idealises the name of Alegna d'Ortsac, the owner of a beauty salon who used to write an advice column in the newspaper, which she imagines as a foreign, elegant woman. To her extreme disappointment and anger, the name that she worships turns out to be just Ângela Castro spelled backwards, which she considers a blatant lie that makes her feel “violated, mocked,”<sup>69</sup> who made her dream without even having existed. The more interested Amélia is in the allure of grandiose family names that indicate noble or rich origins, the more she dislikes her own name, which she gained through marriage: “Amélia Capítulo. Lord, how she hated that name. Not Amélia, which had even been the name of a queen, the last queen of Portugal. (...) Amélia was her name, and she liked it. But Capítulo was just impossible, how could anyone be called Capítulo? She never mentioned it in Dora Flávia’s house. She was known there only as Amélia.”<sup>70</sup> To her, Laureano’s last name is connected to disillusionment and exasperation, the symbol of her shattered dreams of having a sheltered, luxurious life amongst the rich.

While working as a seamstress not just for the rich by doing small tailoring jobs for her neighbours, Amélia also makes sure to notify her clients, as often as possible, of her unavailability on Wednesdays, which she spends working in Dora Flávia’s mansion: “She said this for the sheer pleasure of linking the name of that elegant residential area with her own, for the pleasure of knowing that the word would soon get around: ‘Amélia’s not here on Wednesdays.’ Or: ‘Amélia isn’t here then, she’ll be in Sommershild.’”<sup>71</sup> Trying to seem indifferent in her “expressionless voice” and remaining mysterious and brief in her details, she purposely leaves out her attributions, that of mending children’s clothes and the maids’ uniforms, implying that her duty is to design luxurious dresses for the lady of the house:

*“She left space, in that silence and in the haughty expression on her face, for the assumption or at least the suspicion, that she was making dresses for Dora, dresses that were, in fact, bought in Lisbon or other European cities, in South Africa or at the fashion shows held at the Hotel Polana. And if Dora was sent silks from Hong Kong or Macau, she would have some couturier make them up.”<sup>72</sup>*

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<sup>69</sup> Gersão, p. 120.

<sup>70</sup> Gersão, p. 124.

<sup>71</sup> Gersão, pp. 93–94.

<sup>72</sup> Gersão, p. 94.

When she is asked to sew the hem on one of Dora's evening dresses, she takes immense pride in displaying the gown in her workshop for all the visitors to admire: "She had left it there, like a talisman that would free her from the world of cheap shops like A Feira or Lourenço Marques Mercantil in Rua dos Irmãos Roby. As if the dress, on the clothes hanger, were an external sign of change."<sup>73</sup> Amélia sees this opportunity as an open door to a world that had always been out of her reach, hanging the dress on display for all her clients to see and signal a change in her status.

Amélia's cautiously elevated speech contrasts with the illiterate voice in her aunt's letter to Laureano, offering a glimpse into the simple Portuguese provincial life and the modest background that Amélia struggles so much to hide. The misspellings, colloquial tone and mispronunciations reminiscing of an oral discourse reflect the aunt's socio-dialect, marked by illiteracy and poverty, a reminder of the past that Amélia strives to leave behind, giving the reader a better understanding of the woman's frustration regarding the limitations of her past in Portugal and the dissatisfactions of her present in Lourenço Marques. As Sotelino notes, Gersão's use of language aims to reflect the distorted standard Portuguese usage, making it "the disruptive language of a disruptive population."<sup>74</sup> By using the socio-economic implications of language, the author denounces the centralising system of the dictatorship that marginalises the poor, rural and provincial population of Portugal, both on the continent and in the African colonies.

In *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, the use of language reflects the opposition of voices that constitutes the narrative dynamics, in the form of a dialogue between Eva and the narrator of *Os Gafanhotos*, turning the omniscient storyteller, distant and calculated observer in the short story into a silent interlocutor in a gender-determined novel that bears the weight of the female gaze. From the very first paragraph of her account, Eva subtly draws attention to the impossibility of the omniscient narrator to cast light on the darkness of the past by merely complying with the norms of an ideology that suppresses the voices of gender, racial and political minorities. She ironically describes *Os Gafanhotos* as "a delightful narrative" that seems to please with its conformity to official history, comparing it to an obsolete device with a long-lost purpose that is the alcohol lamp: "your account was a kind of alcohol lamp that has lit up, for this afternoon, a place that grows dimmer from week to week, from day to day, with the speed of years. Besides, what you sought to clarify became clear, and what you sought to

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<sup>73</sup> Gersão, pp. 94–95.

<sup>74</sup> Sotelino, p. 229.

hide remained hidden.”<sup>75</sup> In this way, she denounces the narrator’s intention to only partially reveal the facts, bringing to light only those agreeable aspects that conform to the norm and obscuring the inconvenient truths that may challenge history. Thus, Eva exposes the limitations of an authoritative, trustworthy omniscient narrator, the chronicler of *Os Gafanhotos* being discredited for the biased approach and turned into an unreliable storyteller whose voice distances itself from the truth.

The descriptive language of *Os Gafanhotos* is characterised by a superlative tone that praises the heroism of the Portuguese military, exaggerating the bravery, distinctiveness and honourability of men and ridiculing women’s signs of weakness, which are all grouped together as an identical, indistinguishable mass, just as the Africans are depicted. Full of exclamations, lengthy descriptions, excessive adjectives and repetitions, the language of the story seems to be recreating a discursive tone reminiscent of Salazarist propaganda, whose objective was to maintain the illusion of normality in Africa and mitigate the impact of war. The light-hearted, idealised tone dismisses not only the violence of war, but also the impact of death, turning the groom’s suicide into the result of “an excess sense of harmony, happiness, and beauty” and war into a necessity “to balance the excess of energy overflowing from the soul.”<sup>76</sup> This meaningless explanation that resorts to the alignment of stars to justify death, in a superlative and exclamative tone, reinforces the falsity of the discourse and its departure from reality. Additionally, the general conservative discourse of the Estado Novo gains a lascivious dimension that oversexualises the narrative with innuendos reflective of an overtly masculine tone, such as references to the groom’s “hands like centipedes”<sup>77</sup> touching the bride’s body, and “fleshy rifle” as a phallic metaphor that reinforces the male connection to violence. The atmosphere of serenity, with its idealised depiction of violence, turning women into objects of desire and Africans into inferior slaves, is later on challenged in Eva’s account. Her ironic voice, full of witty metaphors and emotional cues that recreate the personal dimension of memory, is complemented by the voices of minor characters, especially those of women, that are never heard in *Os Gafanhotos*.

In her analysis of the diversity and complex meaning of language in Lídia Jorge’s work, Lígia Silva notes that the writer offers the possibility for her novel to be read “as a site of conflicting and possibly liberating ‘languages-in-use,’ which unsettles the patriarchal myth of

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<sup>75</sup> Jorge, p. 35.

<sup>76</sup> Jorge, p. 33.

<sup>77</sup> Jorge, p. 15.

one monologic language of truth.”<sup>78</sup> The use of a distinct female voice commenting on the hidden meanings of canonical history, what *Os Gafanhotos* seems to convey, represents Jorge’s answer to the homogenising tendencies of the dictatorship, “the possibility of liberation through discourse,”<sup>79</sup> fighting against the established order of the Salazarian society. When Eva begins her monologue in the first person, after the clearly marked end of *Os Gafanhotos*, the distinct shift in voice and language occurs gradually and shyly, with frequent repetitions of the words “said Eva Lopo,” always between parentheses, as if her weak, timid voice needed external confirmation to assert itself. Yet as the character gains in confidence, moving away from the confined space of the hotel to explore the outside reality of colonial Mozambique, so does her voice gain in strength and becomes powerful in articulating Eva’s and other women’s need to make themselves heard. Her desire to scream out the injustices she witnesses is met with the screams of the other women denouncing the silent violence they were subject to. In this way, Eva uses speech to raise against the patriarchal dictates and, by asserting herself through language, she accentuates the voice of those who are oppressed and speechless in the official discourse. The distancing from a univocal language and the adoption of a plurality of voices furthermore reinforce the nonlinearity of history, contesting the non-inscription of marginal memories and undermining the official discourse.

### **Consumerism and empowerment**

Within the context of the widespread circulation of images in the 1960s and the spirit of ’68, Lourenço Marques, the capital of colonial Mozambique, represents the image of a liberal city, highly influenced by the cosmopolitanism of adjacent South Africa, and where the Portuguese settlers could benefit from the joys of consumerism and Anglo-Saxon lifestyle much more than in Portugal itself. Thus, my reading of authors whose work focuses on developed European countries, like Britain, France and Italy, is justified in the climate of the forward-thinking Portuguese society of the Mozambican urban areas since, in the case of Eva, she belonged to the fringe of Portuguese society that could benefit from the wealth of other European cultures, while Amélia, living in Lourenço Marques, was very close to a similar social reality. Hence, in Luisa Passerini’s words, “the profound transformations in the fifties and sixties that beset the status of women – protagonists of the new consumerism, of changes

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<sup>78</sup> Lígia Silva, ‘(Re)Telling History: Lídia Jorge’s *O Dia Dos Prodígios*’, in *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies 2: Lídia Jorge in Other Words/Por Outras Palavras*, ed. by Cláudia Pazos Alonso (University of Massachusetts Dartmouth: American Press Inc., New Bedford, Massachusetts, 1999), p. 20.

<sup>79</sup> Silva, p. 21.

in the care of one's body, of new everyday behaviours – were also transformations in the internal condition.”<sup>80</sup>

Amélia's aspiration to integrate into the ranks of the elites is also manifested through the inclination towards consumerism, stemming not just from a simple desire of consumption, but also from the empowering virtues that it was invested with in the 1960s society. Although women's role in the conservative Estado Novo society was limited to the domestic sphere and determined by biology to fulfil their destinies as mothers and wives, consumerism can be interpreted as a symbol of subversion towards this predefined status and a means of personal emancipation. As Arthur Marwick notes, representative of the High Sixties, “a time of aspiration after self-fulfilment,”<sup>81</sup> the ambition for personal progress “springing from material change and challenges to ancient custom (...) came in matters of self-presentation,”<sup>82</sup> influenced by “the matching of new commodities, themselves vital elements in transforming lifestyles, to increased incomes.”<sup>83</sup> Moreover, in her analysis of the way in which the diffusion of modern consumption goods converges with state sovereignty and citizenship within the context of fascist Italy under Mussolini's rule, Victoria de Grazia observes the integrative power of mass-distributed consumer goods, rendering the fascist regime, despite its immense dictatorial and propagandistic efforts of controlling women's collective identities, unable to exert its influence over the proliferation of commodities. Underlining the conflict between the language of politics and that of consumption, de Grazia writes that “as early as the 1920s, women emerged as major protagonists of what in a present-day context is characterised as post-political citizenship; their presence in the public arena was defined not so much by the transformation of the political system as by notions of the self, of collective identity, and of entitlement associated with the diffusion of mass consumption.”<sup>84</sup> Benefitting from the power of decision in their own household, increasing their influence over family expenditures and gaining the financial independence to influence the movement of consumer goods have contributed to women's emancipation, even in repressive societies under a fascist rule.

Complementing de Grazia's analysis of consumerism in fascist Italy, Inês Brasão offers an insight into the Portuguese case by looking at the way in which the consumer behaviour of

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<sup>80</sup> Passerini, p. 34.

<sup>81</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958-c. 1974* (Oxford [England]; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 381.

<sup>82</sup> Marwick, *The Sixties*, p. 366.

<sup>83</sup> Marwick, *The Sixties*, p. 359.

<sup>84</sup> ‘Nationalizing Women - The Competition between Fascist and Commercial Cultural Models in Mussolini's Italy’, in *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, ed. by Victoria De Grazia and Ellen Furlough (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 337–58 (p. 356).

the 1960s collides with the socio-political definition of women's role during the Estado Novo. Thus, tracing the changes in consumption patterns influenced by the modernising impact of women's magazines, advertisement, music and cinema that promoted the *American way*, Brasão notices the way in which cosmopolitanism, as a "desire to absorb everything that was considered modern,"<sup>85</sup> challenged the dictatorial image of the ideal woman as a model of moral virtue. Torn between the confinement to domesticity and a desire for the mundane, the era's openness to foreign cultural references had an impact on the reconstruction of gender roles, in which masculinisation becomes synonymous with modernisation. Yet despite a clear inclination towards the Western European model of consumption, the image of femininity in Portugal remains generally conservative, as the "acquisition of objects of comfort and beautification" does not represent "an obstacle to the housewife paradigm,"<sup>86</sup> which continued to define the status of women at the time.

Women's status at the margins of consumption in the nineteenth century, when they were legally and financially dependent on their husbands and restrained from playing public roles, evolves to being the centre of consumerism, opening a world in which they no longer have to fulfil only the necessities of others, such as their families, but also their own desires and needs. Despite still being criticised for reinforcing sexist stereotypes of traditional beauty and being controlled by emotion, advertisement targeted at women in the 1960s increasingly revolves around feminine aspirations, rather than the traditional roles of homemakers and caregivers for children. Thus, consumer goods become aspirational, as illustrated by one of the iconic objects that epitomises Amélia's desire for social and personal change. When she spends her hard-worked savings to buy a luxurious French perfume in Casa Hofali, the luxury department store reserved for the rich, Amélia claims this is a gift for a tall, blonde and, most importantly, foreign young lady who embodies the image and personality of her ideal self. As she opens the carefully wrapped box in the bus stop, under the curious eyes of the passers-by, the extravagant notes of the fragrance offer Amélia a glimpse into the luxurious world of the elites, the only ones entitled to use and display superfluous objects, imagining herself as one of them.

The second part of the novel, which depicts Amélia's wanderings through the city and offers an insight into her thoughts and feelings, is abundant in consumerist references in

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<sup>85</sup> Inês Brasão, 'Gender and Consumer Behaviour: A Portrait of Portugal in the 1960s', in *Consumption and Gender in Southern Europe since the Long 1960s*, ed. by Kostis Kometis, Eirini Kotsovoli, and Nikolaos Papadogiannis (London: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2016), pp. 85–101 (p. 85).

<sup>86</sup> Brasão, p. 98.

Lourenço Marques during the 1950s and 60s. Names such as Casa Hofali, which “sold only the inessential things of life,”<sup>87</sup> Costa & Cordeiro, Lopes & Ramos or John Orr denote some of the department stores where Amélia enjoyed spending her Sundays alone, fascinated by their advertisements and their promise of a wealthy, carefree life. As she chooses to lie to her family about the way she spends her free days, preferring the solitude and anonymity of the bright, mesmerising lights in the shopping district, the woman uses the space of consumerism to break from the unsatisfying reality of her everyday life and imagine a different existence, “as if nothing were real, as if she were caught up in a scene where she was enjoyably lost, dazed by the sound of voices, dazzled by the bright blinking lights.”<sup>88</sup>

Amélia’s attachment to everyday objects is also a reflection of her adulation of the Anglo-Saxon world and the neighbouring South African culture, geographically so close to Mozambique, yet so unattainable in her idealised view. Refusing to use the local salon and thus blend in with the community, Amélia prefers to buy imported hair dye to achieve her ash-blond locks, a product that she finds trustworthy mainly because of its provenance: “the foreign words on the packet seem to her a guarantee of quality, for she feels an unconditional admiration for other languages, of which she understands only a few words. This admiration extends to the foreigners she sees, especially if they’re blond, blue-eyed, six-foot-tall South Africans.”<sup>89</sup> For Amélia, hair dye is not just an object designed to enhance her external appearance, but also an instrument to support her emancipation and desire for social progress: “With a little persistence and a lot of hair dye, she believes that she could be mistaken for a foreigner, which, for her, would be the very highest of achievements.”<sup>90</sup> In Amélia’s case, being associated with foreign origins refers to social status rather than national lineage, as her definition of enviable foreigners involves only those rich, Aryan-like Anglo-Saxons whose financial means are far superior to those of the Mozambicans or Portuguese.

As Kathy Peiss notes in her essay addressing changing cultural perceptions in the relationship between women’s identity and appearance, the cultural and ideological construction of cosmetic practices is closely connected to the belief that “identity was a purchasable style.”<sup>91</sup> While in the nineteenth-century traditional discourse, makeup and beauty products were seen as a deceiving artifice meant to distort reality, a mere “corporeal

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<sup>87</sup> Gersão, p. 122.

<sup>88</sup> Gersão, p. 129.

<sup>89</sup> Gersão, p. 57.

<sup>90</sup> Gersão, p. 59.

<sup>91</sup> Kathy Peiss, ‘Making Up, Making Over - Cosmetics, Consumer Culture, and Women’s Identity’, in *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, ed. by Victoria De Grazia and Ellen Furlough (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 311–36 (pp. 311–12).

hypocrisy,” the modern shift in female identity since the early twentieth century influenced the way in which these commodities were perceived by society and the role they played in the formation of the female self. As “makeup contributed to the constitution of women’s identity, no longer to its falsification,”<sup>92</sup> shaking to the core the obsolete cultural hierarchies among women, cosmetics provided women with a means of articulating their own concerns and demands, contributing to the renegotiation of their role within the society. No longer confined exclusively to their position as silent homemakers, the transformation in female identity is distinctly supported by the new economic opportunities of the twentieth century, thus benefitting from the widespread expansion of consumerism.

On the other hand, an important part of the feminist critique of consumerism in the twentieth century focused on the instrumentalisation of women’s bodies and appearances, denouncing the role that self-adornment plays in perpetuating women’s oppression. Betty Friedan, in her influential work *The Feminine Mystique* (1965), criticises the manipulative influence of consumption into subordination, turning women into naïve, passive victims of the masters of persuasive advertisement. Quoting one of the executives in the industry of “motivational manipulation,”<sup>93</sup> Friedan brings to light the way in which the shopping of goods, often superfluous, impractical and purely aspirational, could give housewives “the sense of identity, purpose, creativity, the self-realization, even the sexual joy they lack.”<sup>94</sup> She deplors the exploitation of generations of women, who are raised into perpetuating excessive consumption as a characteristic of the female social construct, occupying their minds with the triviality of capitalism: “Like a primitive culture which sacrificed little girls to its tribal gods, we sacrifice our girls to the feminine mystique, grooming them even more efficiently through the sexual sell to become consumers of the things whose profitable sale our nation is dedicated.”<sup>95</sup> Thus, closely connected to Georg Simmel’s idea of “the blasé metropolitan attitude”<sup>96</sup> of urban life and the false needs that the mass culture creates, the gender roles that consumption reinforces have a powerful impact on the politics of cultural identity. In her discussion on the contradictions of consumerism, Mica Nava brings together the dual signification of consumption in modern society as both a place of resistance and submission: “if consuming objects and images is potentially subversive, this potential is countered always

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<sup>92</sup> Peiss, p. 330.

<sup>93</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 182.

<sup>94</sup> Friedan, p. 182.

<sup>95</sup> Friedan, p. 203.

<sup>96</sup> Georg Simmel, ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’, in *Modernism*, ed. by Michael H. Whitworth, Blackwell Guides to Criticism (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2007), pp. 182–89.

by its potential re-appropriation and transformation into yet another model of regulation.”<sup>97</sup> The nuanced, often contradictory nature of consumerism as a tool of both empowerment and subordination plays a definitive role in the formation of female identity in the twentieth century.

While Amélia uses consumerism as a means to transcend her limited condition in the developing colonial society, Eva’s journey of discovery in Africa is fuelled by the advantaged position given by her university degree, which equips her with the appropriate theoretical tools to criticise this very system. Nevertheless, Eva’s vantage point in the society facilitates her fight for social justice, giving her the ability to break the political order assigned to women as dedicated mothers and homemakers, reflecting, in Passerini’s words, the “image of the new woman – in a position of power and capable of challenging the traditional rules of female modesty.”<sup>98</sup> Sophisticated, liberal and middle class, Eva belongs to a generation that can freely fight for feminine autonomy and power of speech to influence history, portraying the image of the European who can see Africa’s social order in terms of colonialism, gender and racial oppression, fighting to bring justice to the subjugated minorities. Eva’s privileged position within the society is that of the 1960s students, whose involvement in politics generated an unprecedented influence on the youth culture, reflected in their protest against power and the structures of society, “subverting the authority of men over women and parents over children, and entailing a general sexual liberation,”<sup>99</sup> as Marwick notes. A student of History at university in Lisbon, Eva benefits from the superior economical prerequisites and intellectual background that support her interest in politics, two factors that contribute to distinguishing her from the less educated and less economically fortunate youths of her generation, such as Amélia. As Detlef Siegfried writes in his analysis of the youth rebellion of 1968, university students represented the motor of the protest movements, as “[t]he political interest of highly educated youths differentiated them from their peers with a lower level of education.”<sup>100</sup>

Situated at the opposite pole of consumerism, Eva does not share Amélia’s aspirational views of objects, for whom the drive for consumption becomes a personality trait. Remaining indifferent to the attraction of goods, Eva disregards the preoccupation for physical appearance common in Amélia, as well as in the young wives at the Stella Maris hotel, which she classifies

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<sup>97</sup> Mica Nava, *Changing Cultures: Feminism, Youth and Consumerism*, Theory, Culture & Society (London: Sage, 1992), p. 165.

<sup>98</sup> Passerini, p. 97.

<sup>99</sup> Arthur Marwick, ‘Youth Culture and the Cultural Revolution of the Long Sixties’, in *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960-1980*, ed. by Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), p. 44.

<sup>100</sup> Siegfried, ‘Understanding 1968: Youth Rebellion, Generational Change and Postindustrial Society’, in *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960-1980*, ed. by Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), p. 67.

as that group of “women with the ironed hair,” as she refers to throughout the narrative. She remains a mere spectator to the ritual in which the pressing iron brings the women’s vulnerability to the surface, in the humid, lingering smell of the hotel’s laundry room, turning them into offerings on the shrine of an illusory and ephemeral beauty that only lasts until the next day: “Unmoving, their hands laid flat gripping the board, their neck stretched out along it. They assumed the pose of sheep in ancient sacrifices, the board a fragile altar. So majestic was that scene in the Stella’s laundry room that it could not have disappeared without leaving some trace.”<sup>101</sup> And, as Naomi Wolf notes, “the beauty myth is always actually prescribing behaviour and not appearance,”<sup>102</sup> leaving women vulnerable to external approval. As the young women remain victims of their own frivolousness and infatuated concern for appearances, Eva gradually distances herself from the other wives at the hotel, choosing to explore the outside world of colonial Africa, although failing to acknowledge that her triumph over a futile concern for looks is only supported by her privileged position that places her above consumerism and cosmetic embellishment.

### **Images of the rich and privileged**

Amélia’s veneration of the Portuguese aristocracy of Lourenço Marques is reiterated throughout the novel, a defining trait of the character’s view of society. Fascinated with the affluence of their mansions and the luxuriousness of the social activities that they enjoy, the woman’s admiration stems exclusively from the privilege of money rather than their virtues or quality of their actions, education or personality. Despite the time she spends strolling around and working in Sommershild, Amélia’s account of the aristocracy makes little reference to their occupation, except for one mention to Dora Flávia’s engineer husband, leaving the impression that their privileged status in the society comes from hereditary titles and ranks. Given the variety of their daily leisure activities, the women in these rich families spend most of their days at the tennis, golf or jockey club, while participating in charity tombolas, dog shows, sweepstakes or international events at the racetrack merely as a concession made to petty local life.<sup>103</sup>

Driven around by their uniformed chauffeurs in luxurious cars, the privileged circles of Lourenço Marques seen through Amélia’s eyes have the luxury to travel the world by hopping

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<sup>101</sup> Jorge, p. 111.

<sup>102</sup> Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used against Women* (London: Vintage, 1991), p. 14.

<sup>103</sup> Gersão, p. 116.

on the first plane, “as easily as putting on a change of clothes,”<sup>104</sup> or by taking the train, in which case “their name would appear in the newspaper (...), as if the timetable were regulated by the frequency with which they packed their bags, and as if their comings and goings were the sole reason for the trains to run.”<sup>105</sup> Contemptuous about Mozambican beaches, they spend their summers in South Africa, Amélia’s long-life dream destination, where waters are “so much cooler, breezier and foamier,”<sup>106</sup> or they plan cruises to Japan in the company of other rich families. For them, South Africa was just a suburb, with vast and imposing shopping centres, despising those who stayed in the Johannesburg hotels where the Portuguese language was spoken. In their vast mansions, they enjoy all the luxuries and comfort of the high life, undisturbed by the harsh African weather thanks to air conditioning that they use to replicate the European climate: “They thus controlled the climate and could almost change geography. Everything, even the climate (she saw now), was simply a matter of having enough money.”<sup>107</sup> As the woman notices, the privileges of class help to surpass the adversities of nature, on a continent steeped in extreme geographic, but also social and financial contrasts.

In Amélia’s eyes, the world belonged to the rich elites of the city, whom she saw as people “who enjoyed life everywhere, who knew what they should or shouldn’t wear, who they should mix with, who they should despise, because, as she was discovering, the games played by that exclusive world were many and complex.”<sup>108</sup> No matter how futile their daily activities seemed, playing cards and drinking tea, the ladies were the ones deciding who is allowed to enter this “idle, brilliant world,”<sup>109</sup> dissecting everyone’s fashion sense or their virtues as high-class hosts, as Amélia learns from eavesdropping on their conversations: “there were those who knew how to draw up a menu when they received guests at home, something they all took turns at doing (...): *vichyssoise* (for example) and *vol au vent* was acceptable, but only someone with no taste and no imagination would serve their visitors prawn or lobster curry.”<sup>110</sup> Highly critical of vulgarity and untasteful ostentation, the unforgiving world of aristocracy is quick to judge any faux pas in appearances and manners, maintaining its exclusivity.

Behind the scenes, this privileged universe was tormented by scandals, rivalries and intrigues, perpetuated by the women’s ceaseless gossip. What made this “a world that very few

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<sup>104</sup> Gersão, p. 114.

<sup>105</sup> Gersão, p. 116.

<sup>106</sup> Gersão, p. 116.

<sup>107</sup> Gersão, p. 116.

<sup>108</sup> Gersão, p. 115.

<sup>109</sup> Gersão, p. 118.

<sup>110</sup> Gersão, p. 118.

people entered and in which few stayed for very long”<sup>111</sup> was its ruthlessness and strictness, remaining implacable to outsiders like Amélia: “Many people were never admitted to certain circles or were admitted to only be excluded again later; there were those who waited day after day for an invitation that never came, while some proffered an invitation that the invitees elegantly declined or else accepted as a mere formality, but never reciprocated.”<sup>112</sup> The more time she spends intruding into the conversations between Dora Flávia and her friends, fascinated by the web of intrigues, Amélia knows that she will never be more than a silent witness to these discussions, lacking the social status for being admitted into their ranks.

One of the most iconic locations in the affluent district of Lourenço Marques is the luxury Hotel Polana, a name that is repeated like a mantra in Amélia’s recollection of the city. It represents, by definition, the preferred party location of the elites, with its white façade and blue swimming pool, which appears like a piece of heaven to the woman who can afford but a quick glance around the areas reserved only for the few: “That side did not belong to her. She was merely a visitor and was permitted a rapid, almost furtive glance around. (...) Life, yes, even life did not belong to her.”<sup>113</sup> As it remains permanently closed to Amélia’s eyes, the hotel mysteriously hides a life that she imagines as joyful and carefree in the midst of the highest luxuries.

The image of the grandiose hotel is mirrored in *A Costa dos Murmúrios* through Stella Maris, the place where the families of Portuguese militarys live in sheltered isolation from the locals. The image of Stella Maris first appears in *Os Gafanhotos*, whose focus is the glamorous wedding reception, depicting the banquet table abundant in lobster, decorated with papayas “cut to resemble kings’ crowns” and pineapples like “the spectacular plumage of a well-endowed turkey,”<sup>114</sup> as well as the exquisite seven-tier cake, around which women in elegant evening gowns, with elaborate hairdos, and their military husbands danced all night and laughed in front of the photographer’s camera. Similar to the depiction of Hotel Polana in Amélia’s account, life at the Stella Maris in the short story is seen as frivolous, banal and lacking any substance that would influence the course of history, a place where women spent their days engaged in trivial activities. However, this aspect is overturned in Eva’s account, whose focus switches from the insignificant aspects depicted in *Os Gafanhotos*, with its detailed description of the pleasantries of the party, to the injustices of war and the oppression

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<sup>111</sup> Gersão, p. 115.

<sup>112</sup> Gersão, p. 117.

<sup>113</sup> Gersão, p. 133.

<sup>114</sup> Jorge, p. 2.

of women, showing the other face of life at the Stella Maris, and ironically praising the fictional author for omitting to depict the reality beneath the surface: “you did well to have all those people dancing, enchanted, under the invisible light of the comets.”<sup>115</sup> Moreover, Eva condemns the shallow depiction of history by reducing it to the superficiality of a wedding reception, protected by an isolating metaphoric glass ceiling: “I suggest that you bypass the dance where everything was as erotic as procreation itself and let the walls begin to crack and the roots begin to grow and the glass fall and shatter, so that we can understand that everything was as completely lethal as death itself.”<sup>116</sup>

Thus, the seemingly privileged lives of the militaries’ wives, protected by the comfort and convenience of the hotel that prevents them from interacting with the locals and witnessing the poverty in the streets, are not exempt from sadness, brutality and pain. Exiled in a foreign country tormented by war and often subject to violence, the unnamed and defenceless women in *Os Gafanhotos* are given an identity and a voice through Eva’s story, who turns her gaze upon the day-to-day life of the Portuguese families at the Stella Maris. While Amélia might show envy and resentment towards those women living at the hotel, spared from the need to provide for their families, Eva’s story proves that a socially advantaged background does not guarantee the easy, careless condition that Amélia imagines and that no one is immune to life’s biggest tragedies.

### **Space and the geography of the African city**

Another element that helps trace the depiction of social class in the novels is the way in which the two authors use space and geography to locate the characters from a psychological point of view, in an exploration of Amélia’s and Eva’s contrastive colonial experiences. The manners in which the two women experience the African landscape are also antithetical, the geography of their cities reflecting the women’s aspirations, experiences and interests. While Amélia spends her days working as a seamstress in her home atelier, sewing children’s clothes for the rich Portuguese families, she devotes her Sundays to strolling around the luxurious streets of Sommershild, the neighbourhood of the settler elites in Lourenço Marques. As she chooses to alienate herself from her own family, Amélia wanders through the privileged area of the Mozambican capital on elegant high heels and with a pink bag on her arm, admiring the imposing mansions on Avenida Duque de Connaught, the luxury restaurants and boutiques of Avenida Duquesa de Connaught, the expensive shops of Rua António Enes, or the yachts and

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<sup>115</sup> Jorge, p. 56.

<sup>116</sup> Jorge, p. 112.

pleasure boats harboured in the Clube Naval.<sup>117</sup> To Amélia, the only part of the city that is of any importance is this affluent area, with its broad avenues and secluded manor houses, protected by the thick wall of palm trees and vegetation, completely separated from the *caniço*, the shanty town which merely existed, together with the rest of the poor areas, to serve the rich.

However, Amélia notices that the imposing avenues of Sommershild waver between extremes and become deceiving when they lead, at the opposite end, to the vast slums where the majority of the population resided and marking a sudden change of scenery in the geography of the city: “At a certain point, as the avenues plunged into the tangled skein of the *caniço*, their geometry grew blurred, whereas this was never a danger with the ‘real city’, defended as it was by the sea.”<sup>118</sup> Unpredictable and inconsistent, in opposition to the perfect symmetry and order reigning the avenues of the aristocratic neighbourhood, the streets of the shanty town are tangled chaotically without a predefined urban structure, hiding danger and uncertainty at every corner.

The mansions of Sommershild are true reflections of the decadent lifestyle of the elites, with innumerable rooms, balconies, gardens and pergolas, all secluded by massive wrought-iron gates under the thick shade of bougainvillea and acacia trees, hardly allowing the passers-by to steal a glance of their camouflaged opulence. Despite the time she spends immersing herself in the cosmopolitan boulevards of the city, Amélia remains an outsider for the world of Sommershild, never truly allowed to take more than a brief, distant glimpse and constantly feeling ridiculed for her modest background: “She was on the margins, looking in, while life, like the sailing boats, passed her by. (...) It was as if the world were laughing at her, as if the parasols, the houses, the boats, the trees and, above all, the people were laughing at her.”<sup>119</sup> Instead of merging into the life of Lourenço Marques, the city that she chooses over the unhappy life in rural Portugal, Amélia fails once again to find a sense of belonging, as she continues to linger at the border between the world that she aspires towards and the reality that she chooses to reject so vehemently. As she remains outside the closed doors and gated gardens of the rich mansions, Amélia sees her own life going to waste without any signs of improvement, while the vision of the world that she admires continues to be so close, yet forever unattainable. Rejected by the adoptive family and the first love in her home village, then later on dismissed by the Portuguese elite in her new country, Amélia feels utterly deceived by the new life that she had invested with all her hopes and dreams. Her fantasy world

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<sup>117</sup> Gersão, p. 89.

<sup>118</sup> Gersão, p. 90.

<sup>119</sup> Gersão, p. 92.

does nothing but deny her access to its privileged ranks, facing her once again with the disillusionment of failure and dismissal: “The pain of being excluded. There were, it seemed, forbidden places, doors that only opened to the few.”<sup>120</sup>

After years spent strolling down the streets of Sommershild, Amélia becomes more and more aware of the futility of her dreams of integrating into the ranks of the privileged: “How could she ever have enjoyed those visits to Sommershild, enjoyed what she had called, in her initial euphoria, ‘the Sommershild era’? How could she have been so mad as to believe that her life would change, simply because she had started going regularly to a particular place?”<sup>121</sup> She regrets the naivety of her unfounded hopes, as her initial excitement of witnessing the life of the aristocracy turns into a bitter reminder of failure and exclusion. The city itself becomes the symbol of Amélia’s disappointment with her life in Africa, constantly bringing out her resentment towards her social condition.

While Amélia enjoys spending her Sundays secretly strolling around Sommershild, hidden from the eyes of her family, the novel offers a contrastive image of the city of Lourenço Marques as seen by Gita and Laureano on their exploratory trips. The father and young daughter share their love for the capital of Mozambique, wandering around the streets and meeting the shopkeepers of small local businesses, enjoying being part of the big, kaleidoscope-like community: “The city surrounds us with its many arms, its many circles. No one can spoil that sense of belonging, of being contained. We are part of a whole, a living city.”<sup>122</sup> In contrast to Amélia’s aversion towards the markets and poor areas, and her preference for the rich neighbourhoods, Gita and Laureano are fond of the everyday life of the city, imprinted onto the lives of its inhabitants, whose streets they know by heart “like lines engraved on the palms of [their] hands.”<sup>123</sup> Gita’s childhood memories capture the dynamic nature of her hometown, turning it into a character of her story:

*“The city is a living, breathing body, mine, yours, other people’s, the world’s; it’s an endless intersecting of bodies, caught in the uncountable moments of time, repeated over and over like the waves of the sea. And it’s pointless trying to fix your gaze on it as it is on the waves, because no sooner*

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<sup>120</sup> Gersão, p. 110.

<sup>121</sup> Gersão, p. 96.

<sup>122</sup> Gersão, pp. 46–7.

<sup>123</sup> Gersão, p. 47.

*do they rise up than they've crumpled onto the sand, and our gaze with them.*"<sup>124</sup>

The city's irregular, unstable and asymmetric geography, as seen through Amélia's eyes, appears as radically different in Gita's account, who perceives it as "an orderly city, arranged on regular lines,"<sup>125</sup> that refuses to be tamed in the lush nature of its jungle. Organised and linear on the surface, yet unsubmitive to the will of the people, the city has a life of its own and the power to influence its inhabitants' existence.

Not unlike Amélia's exploration of the rich neighbourhoods in Lourenço Marques, the image of the city of Beira in *Os Gafanhotos* focuses on the affluence and luxury that the Portuguese settlers enjoy, reflecting the image of the African city as seen from above, from the eleventh floor of the Stella Maris hotel terrace. Similar to the perfectly ordered streets of the rich neighbourhood of Sommershild depicted in Amélia's memories, the city in *Os Gafanhotos* is "flat and straight, as if drawn geometrically over swampland."<sup>126</sup> As one of the guests at the wedding reception explains to Evita, the colonial city of Beira, and Africa, by extension, represent the best possible place, offering the European settlers a privileged environment where they can benefit from the perks of a fully modern life, while at the same time taking advantage of Africa's political and social underdevelopment: "It's still too early for you to have noticed, but you will realise that this is one of the few ideal places in the world! Look at this view and you will see that all it needs to be perfect is a few skyscrapers along the coast."<sup>127</sup>

Eva's account challenges the idealised view in *Os Gafanhotos*, not only in regards to history or the depiction of gender and race, but also in terms of geography and the perception of space. Thus, in opposition to the image of Beira as an ideal place as well as in contrast with Amélia's habitual expeditions to the bourgeois area of Sommershild, fuelled by the character's constant attempts to immerse herself into the world of the rich and powerful, Eva's view of the African city focuses on her investigative travels to the shantytown where the average people lived, secluded from the ignorant eyes of the Portuguese settlers. Influenced by her efforts to unmask the true reality of African life as experienced by the indigenous Mozambicans, Eva seeks the help of a journalist at the *Hinterland* local newspaper, who will become an essential character in the development of her journey of discovery, fuelling her political curiosity towards the reality of colonialism; not only is he the instrument through which the woman

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<sup>124</sup> Gersão, p. 47.

<sup>125</sup> Gersão, p. 48.

<sup>126</sup> Jorge, p. 7.

<sup>127</sup> Jorge, p. 4.

channels her voice, but also the means through which she uncovers the true face of colonial Africa, hidden from the eyes of the Portuguese militaries and their families. As the journalist takes her to a run-down street frequented by sex workers, Eva discovers the cruel reality of the African city, grey, muddy, riddled with poverty and famine:

*“After a certain point, as the houses became fewer, two rows of dirt-floored dwellings with zinc roofs began to appear as if cast upon the water. The two rows of houses rose above clay-coloured mud puddles. (...) There were half-dressed children hanging from the railings. They weren’t running or squealing, they were just looking, following us with their eyes, waiting to see where we would stop.”<sup>128</sup>*

Thus, Eva witnesses the journalist’s visits to his two families, first by a young white prostitute, who reprimands him for neglecting his own children, and the second by a black woman who smiles at the visitors calmly and unassumingly, accepting every sign of generosity. In Eva’s eyes, the latter embodies the double standards of the propagandistic image of racial and social cohabitation in Africa, as the woman’s wide, seemingly innocent smile contrasts with the feeling of despair reflected in the ruins of her house and neighbourhood: “She wore electric blue and she was laughing on the balcony of the apartment amid the unfinished windows. It made me imagine a postcard illustrating a particular notion of progress, of union between the races, created on the scaffolding of a house under construction already turned to rubble.”<sup>129</sup> As Eva observes, the raw reality of Africa, hidden from the view of the Portuguese middle class, refutes the colonial ideology that promotes social progress through racial collaboration. During the visit to the shanty town, Eva leaves the journalist’s car for only a few brief moments, when she witnesses the intense conversation between the man and his white mistress, feeling that her presence would only be “intrusive and inappropriate.”<sup>130</sup> Just as Amélia is confined to remain outside the gated community of the rich neighbourhood, despite her efforts to integrate within the aristocracy of Sommershild, so is Eva an outsider of the world she is trying to explore.

Not only the slums of Beira appear as dilapidated and in ruins, but also the rich areas with imposing houses catered by black servants are abandoned by their wealthy owners in an attempt to flee the war, leaving all their possessions behind. As the journalist tells Eva, “[i]f

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<sup>128</sup> Jorge, p. 176.

<sup>129</sup> Jorge, pp. 178–179.

<sup>130</sup> Jorge, p. 176.

you want to see the progress of a city, go to the poor neighbourhoods – but if you want to see the security of an era, go peek through the fences of the opulent neighbourhoods.”<sup>131</sup> Finding nothing but empty, neglected mansions that once belonged to the elites of the city, Eva understands that the withdrawal of their once affluent inhabitants is a mere sign of adaptation to the difficulties of war: “The wealthy bourgeois is the only one among the human species who has his antenna attuned to anticipate the shedding of blood upon the land,”<sup>132</sup> as the journalist ironically suggests. Even the main boulevards of the city are in decay, marked by enormous potholes and covered in dust. While the shanty town, with its vast construction sites and nauseating smell of fresh cement, is brimming with the energy of life, the rich neighbourhoods of the privileged colonial settlers had been depopulated, vulnerable under the threat of war.

As seen in this chapter, the multiplicity of class relations in the two novels contributes to a complex depiction of the cultural reality of Mozambique during the Portuguese rule, while also revealing often surprising and unexpected contradictions. Contrary to the expectations, the working-class woman shows no signs of interest or involvement towards radical social change and fight against social injustice, while the privileged middle-class woman makes it her mission to challenge gender, racial and social inequality, exploring the world beyond her advantaged position. As evidenced by the comparison in this chapter, topics such as class origin, education level, intellectual autonomy, speech and language, superstitious and scientific thinking, and even geography reveal the richness of these relations within Gersão’s and Jorge’s novels.

As I tried to demonstrate in this first chapter, the multiple relations within the triangle of class, gender and race in the two novels bring forth a series of different non-linear and ambiguous interactions, supporting a rich analysis of the multi-level connections between these literary works. In the following chapters, I will try to explore the ways in which the gender and race relations reveal the image of the silenced subaltern, questioning the oppression of the silenced voices in the fascist regime. Consequently, by looking at the representation of traditional gender roles, racial violence, imperialism and colonialism, the subsequent chapters will continue to address gender and race by constantly referring to social class as the defining building block of society both in Mozambique and Portugal during Salazar’s dictatorship.

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<sup>131</sup> Jorge, p. 148.

<sup>132</sup> Jorge, p. 148.

## *Chapter Two: Gender in A Costa dos Murmúrios and A Árvore das Palavras*

### **Introduction: the feminist context**

The rise of female consciousness in the 1960s in the Western world was prompted by women's participation in the great causes of the time, the civil rights' and students' movements, which "brought to the surface questions about secondary and inferior roles being performed by women,"<sup>1</sup> as Arthur Marwick noted. Fighting for equal pay, education and job opportunities, access to contraception, legal abortion on request and the facilitation of divorce, women's struggle for emancipation, autonomy and equality depicted marriage as "the atomisation of a sex so as to render it politically powerless,"<sup>2</sup> as stated in an American student' organisation leaflet. Kate Millett's influential 1969 *Sexual Politics* denounced patriarchy as the "most ingenious form of interior colonisation, (...) sturdier than any form of segregation and more rigorous than class stratification," connecting it to other forms of oppression such as racism and imperialism, and affirming sexual domination as "the most pervasive ideology of our culture."<sup>3</sup> Refusing to accept the polarity of masculine-feminine, women's rejection of traditional gender roles represented an important step in the reoccupation of the normative space.

While women in European countries such as Britain and France were leading the way in challenging the status quo, the cultural oppression of women in Portugal during the Estado Novo was reinforced by the regime's ultraconservative gender politics. Following the First Republic at the turn of the twentieth century, the Portuguese first wave feminists had succeeded in securing basic rights such as freedom to travel, access to higher administrative and judicial positions, coeducation and employment in the school system, as well as declaring marriage a social contract that could be dissolved. Yet António de Oliveira Salazar's rise to power prompted a steep return to the traditional gender roles of mothers and wives. Despite announcing the equal treatment of all citizens by law, the 1933 Constitution made an exception for women in denying their right to equal citizenship through the Addendum to Article 5, based

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958-c. 1974* (Oxford [England]; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 680.

<sup>2</sup> Marwick, pp. 684–85.

<sup>3</sup> Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p. 25.

on their “natural” sexual difference and for the best interest of the family, while restricting access to education, work outside the home and legal right to divorce, proclaiming Catholic marriage indissoluble. While even Franco’s Spain granted women the vote, this right was limited in Portugal to women with a secondary degree, while men only had to be literate to exert the same right. Moreover, in an extension of early Roman Law dating from the 1500s, the 1939 Civil Code forbade women from having a passport or travelling abroad without their husband’s permission, even when separated, and allowed the man to murder his wife in flagrant adultery with only a six-month exile as punishment. Married women also needed their husbands’ permission to pursue a profession or manage their personal finances until the updated Civil Code in 1966.

Creating a parallel between a well-managed household and an efficiently run state economy, the fascist propaganda succeeded in granting “an illusory rhetorical status to the housewife,”<sup>4</sup> as Hilary Owen notes, looking to instil a sense of social significance for women by depicting them as crucially pivotal in the society through their biologic function. As opposed to other fascist regimes that relied on the image of a charismatic dictator to seduce and mobilise the population, Salazar promoted a modest, reserved and private image as an example for the masses, in his own “personal brand of feminine asceticism,”<sup>5</sup> as Ana Paula Ferreira observes. Moreover, Hilary Owen stipulates that, in the Portuguese society, “normative images of sexual and social relations emphasised the natural complementarity of gender roles and the primacy of procreation as the only justification of the couple.”<sup>6</sup> Sexuality was, therefore, regulated and repressed as a threat to the stability of the family and state: “the mere shade of an active sexual demand in the proverbial daughter of Eve is chastised under the brand of a sentimental, shameless individualism endangering family, nation and empire.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, the obligation to give birth and start a family was embedded in the social fabric of the fascist Portuguese society, determining women’s compulsory domestic role and using their bodies as an instrument of power, illustrating Nira Yuval-Davis’s point that “it is not the exchange of women but the control of them (or their subordination) which is so often at the base of the social order.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hilary Owen, *Portuguese Women’s Writing, 1972 to 1986: Reincarnations of a Revolution*, Women’s Studies, v. 29 (Lewiston, N.Y: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Ana Paula Ferreira, ‘Loving in the Lands of Portugal: Sex in Women’s Fictions and the Nationalist Order’, in *Lusosex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-Speaking World*, ed. by Susan Canty Quinlan and Fernando Arenas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), pp. 107–29 (p. 124).

<sup>6</sup> Owen, *Portuguese Women’s Writing, 1972 to 1986*, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ferreira, ‘Loving in the Lands of Portugal: Sex in Women’s Fictions and the Nationalist Order’, p. 111.

<sup>8</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*, Politics and Culture (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 13.

While the official statements on the status of women during the Estado Novo point towards a total relinquishment of feminist values, keeping women under the siege of their biological nature in the service of the state, a closer look at the counter-discourses of fascist propaganda provides an insight into the manifestation of female consciousness even during this repressive period. In fact, Ferreira believes that the “consensual fictional poetics of womanhood and femininity encompassing heterogeneous spaces and peoples characterised as ‘naturally’ different”<sup>9</sup> even contributed to the appearance of a series of literary works signed by women and focused on their ideological struggle in an attempt to reclaim power. Irene Lisboa, Maria Lamas (the leader of the National Council of Portuguese Women), Maria Archer, Natália Correia and Agustina Bessa-Luís are some of the names that contributed to creating a counter-culture of feminist literature since as early as the 1930s and 40s, as “the previously unsurpassed emergence of women as authors of narrative works threaten their own disciplinary formation as ‘feminine literature’”<sup>10</sup> by repossessing the language that had once been used against them.

Additionally, one of the most noteworthy examples of female works that paved the way for Jorge’s and Gersão’s generation is the 1972 seminal writing *Novas Cartas Portuguesas*, in which Maria Teresa Horta, Maria Isabel Barreno and Maria Velho da Costa exposed women’s challenging condition under the oppressive rule of the Catholic patriarchy. In *Portuguese Women’s Writing*, Hilary Owen acknowledges the crucial role that this work played in the articulation of feminist critique and anti-war protest, providing a critical framework for her own reading of texts by women of Jorge and Gersão’s generation from the post-revolutionary period through the lens of gender, sexual difference, and literary and political representation.<sup>11</sup>

In this chapter, I intend to explore gender and the status of women during the Estado Novo through a close analysis of *A Costa dos Murmúrios* and *A Árvore das Palavras*, which deal with the construction of female identity during the fascist regime. The two novelists, Lídia Jorge and Teolinda Gersão, benefit from the legacy of the first generation of women writers during the dictatorship who challenged the system through their work, as they reflect on the status of femininity and womanhood during the Estado Novo. By looking at the same novels as in the previous chapter, changing the focus from social class to gender, my aim is to offer a more complete image of identity formation from different perspectives that complement one

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<sup>9</sup> Ana Paula Ferreira, ‘Home Bound: The Construct of Femininity in the Estado Novo’, *Portuguese Studies*, 12 (1996), 133–44 (p. 134).

<sup>10</sup> Ferreira, ‘Home Bound: The Construct of Femininity in the Estado Novo’, p. 141.

<sup>11</sup> Hilary Owen, *Portuguese Women’s Writing, 1972 to 1986: Reincarnations of a Revolution*, p. 1.

another. Lídia Jorge's novel depicts the status of women during the colonial wars in the 1960s in Africa, a context in which women are trapped between their natural duties as wives, mothers and homemakers, and the everyday violence of domestic life, in which they are denied agency over their own condition. Set prior to the wars in the 1950s and early 60s, Teolinda Gersão's novel portrays the female condition representative of the policies of the Estado Novo, depicting the struggles of a white Portuguese woman who never manages to adapt to her new country and to life as a wife and mother, thus failing to conform with the rules of the fascist regime.

This chapter intends to explore how the construction of gender roles in the colonial society contributes to the representation of postcolonial identity. The two novels depict sexuality and gender "as a traditionally marginalised cultural site that nevertheless challenges and redefines the boundaries of nationhood,"<sup>12</sup> while pointing towards an ambiguous female condition in which femininities come together, sometimes unexpectedly, to reflect forms of submission and resistance. The images of gender are mediated through the voices of the female narrators, revealing the ambivalence of gender construction in the Portuguese society in Mozambique. Both novels have in common the portrayal of a troubled feminine identity, where women are either unable to engender the duties imposed to them by the Estado Novo, failing to give in to their assumed nature of nurturers, or suffer the consequences of a domestic life that renders them silent and powerless. Thus, my analysis will focus primarily on the female voices in the two works, researching the depiction of the body, sexuality and motherhood, the roles played by women in the society and the relationships between women and the men in their lives. As the novels expand the critique of gender by highlighting a crisis of masculinity during the fascist regime, contesting ideals of manliness and heroism such as that of head of the family or participation to war, this chapter will also address images of masculinity during the dictatorship in order to provide a more accurate and complete depiction of gender in the Estado Novo.

### **Female voices in *A Costa dos Murmúrios***

One of the characteristics of Lídia Jorge's work is the constant exploration of the feminine theme, which, according to Helena Kaufman, "takes various forms and meanings: a simple choice of female characters and destinies as a centre for narrative, the careful examination of woman's psycho-social existence, and the more extensive use of the feminine metaphor in the creation of a text that by recovering the marginal in language approaches

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<sup>12</sup> *Lusosex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-Speaking World*, ed. by Susan Canty Quinlan and Fernando Arenas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. xv.

Kristeva's 'semiotic discourse.'<sup>13</sup> In *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, Jorge attempts to depict a female subjectivity that revolts against the phallic order of representation and the silencing of the subaltern subject, refusing to comply with the ideal image of the submissive and silent woman of the Portuguese dictatorship and thus seeking to "exorcise the ghost of patriarchal discourses."<sup>14</sup> The female voices address the role that women played in the war, between complicity and resistance in a space traditionally defined as the privileged territory of masculinity and patriarchal domination. During the Colonial Wars, the vast majority of women were confined to a passive position outside the combat, anxiously waiting for their husbands and sons to return to the safety of their homes in Portugal. During wartime, the image of the patriotic woman promoted by the national propaganda showcased traditional roles like that of "a mother prepared to bear sons and sacrifice them to the motherland, or a housewife prepared to follow her military husband in his various shifts of location, maintaining his honour through grace, fidelity, order and other domestic virtues."<sup>15</sup> Thus, even though they were traditionally excluded from regular armies, it would be unfair "to assert that armed conflict was alien to women;"<sup>16</sup> whether mothers or wives, they were still deeply involved in the drama of war, even when being physically distanced from the battleground.

Jorge's novel draws attention to the less common case of those women who followed their husbands to Africa, contributing to creating social stability in the combat areas, which made them not only witnesses, but also accomplices of men during the war. Together with the glorification of the family unit during the nationalist regime, the presence of women in Africa was also encouraged for supporting the ongoing process of colonisation, contributing to spreading the Portuguese civilisation and domination through family, deemed as "the united cell of moral and political control."<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Portuguese women's presence in Africa also contributed to the development of the educational system in the colonies, including the foundation of universities in Luanda and Lourenço Marques, while being instrumental in

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<sup>13</sup> Helena Kaufman, 'Reclaiming the Margins of History in Lídia Jorge's "A Costa Dos Murmúrios"', *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 29.1 (1992), 41–49 (p. 44).

<sup>14</sup> Hilary Owen and Cláudia Pazos Alonso, *Antigone's Daughters: Gender, Genealogy, and the Politics of Authorship in 20th-Century Portuguese Women's Writing* (Lewisburg, Pa. : Lanham, Md: Bucknell University Press ; Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), p. 197.

<sup>15</sup> *Women Soldiers: Images and Realities*, ed. by Elisabetta Addis, Valeria E. Russo, and Lorenza Sebesta (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1994), pp. xvi–xvii.

<sup>16</sup> Addis, Russo, and Sebesta, pp. xvi–xvii.

<sup>17</sup> Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, 'África No Feminino: As Mulheres Portuguesas e a Guerra Colonial', *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 2004, 7–29 (p. 17).

maintaining an appearance of social normality and humanising life during war, as Margarida Calafate Ribeiro observes.<sup>18</sup>

Eva's reinterpretation of *Os Gafanhotos* challenges the assumptions of the canonical framework and, as Owen notes, "questions the nature of the relationship between the singular event, the 'smallness' of history as a minimal unit here emblematised by women, and the general conceptual framework or (...) 'metahistory' to which the singular event relates."<sup>19</sup> While still confined to the private sphere of the family, the women depicted in the novel come to prove that war ceases to be an exclusively masculine phenomenon, valorising their experience in Africa and illustrating the feminine contribution to the course of history. The dialogue between Eva and the narrator of *Os Gafanhotos* reveals the interest in exposing the reality of the anonymous female figures at the wedding reception: "But why do you ask me for the real names of the people who danced on the terrace those two days? Why do you insist on that hotel?"<sup>20</sup> Eva's critique of the short story centres on its trivialisation of these occurrences in women's lives, completely dismissing their relevance to history and keeping them hidden from the readers' eyes. Eva's account brings to life the individual stories of the female residents at the Stella Maris hotel, voicing the dramas and sometimes excruciating tragedies in the daily lives of the militarys' wives. Thus, the narrative exposes a series of apparently minor events that point towards the injustice and brutality of domestic violence, allowing death, grief and despair to take centre stage in "domestic episodes [that] opened and closed also like the taking of a breath."<sup>21</sup> By being compared to the vital act of breathing, a necessary yet involuntary, usually unnoticed gesture, these seemingly inessential incidents become crucial to life at the hotel in revealing the condition of the female residents.

While *Os Gafanhotos* denies the relevance and legacy of these female-centred events, excluding them from the course of history, the novel brings them back to light and reflects their intensity as experienced by the female characters. Hidden in the shadow of the combats, women's lives at the Stella Maris are overpowered by the hegemony of the colonial war, taking place "at the same time as the triumphant march over the mortal heart of the guerrilla war in Cabo Delgado, of which next to nothing was known but about which there was little doubt."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ribeiro, pp. 21–24.

<sup>19</sup> Hilary Owen, 'Back to Nietzsche: The Making of an Intellectual/Woman: Lídia Jorge's *A Costa dos Murmúrios*', in *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies 2: Lídia Jorge in Other Words/Por Outras Palavras*, ed. by Cláudia Pazos Alonso (University of Massachusetts Dartmouth: American Press Inc., New Bedford, Massachusetts, 1999), pp. 78–98 (p. 82).

<sup>20</sup> Lídia Jorge, *The Murmuring Coast*, trans. by Natália Costa and Ronald W. Sousa, Emergent Literatures (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 107.

<sup>21</sup> Jorge, p. 108.

<sup>22</sup> Jorge, p. 108.

Revealing the unspoken stories behind these “real names” represents one of the central pretexts for revisiting the past and rewriting history in Eva’s account. The long sequence of silenced voices that are finally given the right to speak begins with the story of Ramos’s wife, whose name is in fact never fully disclosed, who is brutally punished by her husband for her innocent carelessness with the baby, leaving the man’s powerful “vocal signature”<sup>23</sup> imprinted on the walls of the Stella Maris and in the memories of its residents. Her story is shortly followed by that of Elisa Ladeira, savagely beaten by her husband, lieutenant Astorga, in the hotel’s corridors, who leaves her for a blonde dancer at the Moulin Rouge and makes his wife “spurt blood from even less likely places.”<sup>24</sup> Remembering the woman’s excruciating screams that resonated through the building, Eva contrasts “the real Astorga” with his image from *Os Gafanhotos*, showing that “his fist was much faster, his hand much heavier”<sup>25</sup> when he beats his wife by the lift door. Eva’s gaze then follows the story of how a little girl was punished for throwing a pair of scissors from the terrace balcony, landing in Fonseca’s wife’s beehive coiffure, who insisted on having the child tied up and sequestered behind a window.

Another example is that of pilot Fernandes’ wife, known for the nickname of Mosca Morta (Dead Fly), pointing towards an inoffensive, submissive, passive and quiet figure, but whom Eva portrays as “present and talkative” as she repeatedly reprimands her husband for his stubbornness to participate in combats: “You’re lying, you’re lying, you already have too many flight hours!”<sup>26</sup> When the man dies during his next mission, leaving her a widow with two orphan children, everyone at the hotel turns against the wife, including the other women who fail to show any solidarity and accuse her of driving Fernandes to his death because she wanted to be the wife of the pilot with the most flight hours. Disappointed to find out Eva’s side of the story, the women are desperate to accuse her, feeling “cast aside like rotten fruit because there was no one to blame,”<sup>27</sup> overwhelmed with the futility and painful triviality of death during wartime, “as stupid an act as a storm that crashes down over houses and ruins flowers.”<sup>28</sup> Their insistence in rejecting the possibility of a simply accidental occurrence of death stems from their preference to “confirm an order of severity, and then of justice, and then of correlation between evil and punishment.”<sup>29</sup> Eva indicts the hypocrisy of society for its desperate need to find a scapegoat in women and exonerate the man of his fault of being too proud and ambitious,

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<sup>23</sup> Jorge, p. 108.

<sup>24</sup> Jorge, p. 109.

<sup>25</sup> Jorge, p. 109.

<sup>26</sup> Jorge, p. 112.

<sup>27</sup> Jorge, p. 117.

<sup>28</sup> Jorge, p. 117.

<sup>29</sup> Jorge, p. 117.

which caused his own and his co-pilots' deaths. She is not afraid to speak up and tell everyone what she had repeatedly heard the woman telling her husband, thus unmistakably absolving her of the cruel accusations and refusing to "corroborate a belief that had absolutely nothing to do with the turbulence of the world."<sup>30</sup>

Criticising the shallowness of *Os Gafanhotos*, whose narrative sequence fails to include "the interweaving of the simultaneities"<sup>31</sup> that dominates everyday life during the war, Eva's account discloses the unbearably painful case of lieutenant Zurique's pregnant wife, mirroring the devastating aspects of human condition that even the privileged ones are subject to. The woman had spent her nine months of pregnancy meticulously planning every detail of her child's birth, carefully preparing and even booking the best sea-view room at the hospital. Everything seemed to be going smoothly and easily, completely painlessly for the future mother, who remains calm and dignified as she heads towards the hospital to give birth in what she imagined to be the "white tranquillity of a clinic."<sup>32</sup> During the evening of her labour, the women at the Stella Maris gather in the hall watching the future mother being taken in the taxi to the clinic, sharing candid stories about their children and the joy of motherhood in a calm, touching atmosphere. However, the peacefulness of the evening is tragically interrupted by the infamous news that the baby was left to die in the clinic reception, in a preposterous bureaucratic ordeal, because the mother did not have with her the deposit money required and was thus denied assistance at the hospital. Eva's story depicts the extreme absurdity of a situation in which a woman in labour, whose husband is away on a mission, is left to suffer through the pain of giving birth at the doors of the clinic, with the stillborn baby tearing through her muscles and sphincter: "There were no words to describe it – she had been right there for an hour, calm, letting the water run slowly and unconsciously onto the surface of the sofa. Wasn't this a painful coincidence?"<sup>33</sup>

Despite the agonising sadness of the woman's drama, who had shocked the entire community of the Stella Maris and shown the extreme absurd of war hundreds of miles outside the battlefield, this event remains unaccounted for in the pages of history until it is brought to life in Eva's story, proving that the brutality of reality was categorically different to the calm of *Os Gafanhotos*, as it "came mixed in with Zurique's wife's sphincter."<sup>34</sup> As Eva confesses, this event always made her think "of all the small muscles that lie behind the course of

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<sup>30</sup> Jorge, p. 118.

<sup>31</sup> Jorge, p. 173.

<sup>32</sup> Jorge, p. 173.

<sup>33</sup> Jorge, p. 175.

<sup>34</sup> Jorge, p. 187.

History,”<sup>35</sup> embarking in this way on a mission to reveal the hidden mechanisms that mobilise history and truth. Her entire definition of history is based on the contribution of those minor characters involved in tragic coincidences that form the intricate network of reality, even when they are left outside the official chronicles: “in my concept of History there is room for the influence of invisible muscles that lower and raise the anus,”<sup>36</sup> thus pushing the boundaries of hegemonic discourse. Rising against the prioritisation of public events and the dismissal of the private sphere as a contribution to historicity, Eva succeeds in demonstrating that “a concept of history based upon this false dichotomy [between the public and the private spheres] suppresses both the diffuse plurality of the historical and its inscription on the physical body,”<sup>37</sup> as Ferreira concludes.

The rewriting of history, with the inclusion of the subaltern images of hidden, silently suffering women at the Stella Maris, results in creating a version of history that is more faithful to reality and thus counters the hegemonic male-driven culture. However, the exposure and indictment of violence, so deeply embedded in the narrative of power, does not necessarily result in shifting the balance of power towards these women, who continue to embody the same roles of obedient mothers and wives assigned to them by the patriarchal system. According to Owen, the women fail to emerge “as empowered agents of their own history or as subjects of resistance to a particular version of history as hegemonic,” serving instead to “highlight the formal terms on which certain traditional inclusions of the feminine in war history are already negotiated.”<sup>38</sup> As they are depicted assuming “the pose of sheep in ancient sacrifices,”<sup>39</sup> neither of these women’s real names are truly revealed; presented as mere cases, coincidences of a cruel reality, they are destined to carry their husbands’ names as a legacy of the guilt they share in propagating the circle of violence. Continuing to play the submissive role normatively assigned to them, by accepting their husbands’ aggressiveness, they become yet “another vehicle for the propagation of their sexist speeches and remain passive in the face of the atrocities committed by their companions, mainly for refusing to intervene and pretending not to understand all that could compromise the glorious image of the Portuguese heroes in

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<sup>35</sup> Jorge, p. 187.

<sup>36</sup> Jorge, p. 203.

<sup>37</sup> Ana Paula Ferreira, ‘Lidia Jorge’s “A Costa Dos Murmúrios”: History and the Postmodern She-Wolf’, *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, 45.2 (1992), 268–78 (p. 273).

<sup>38</sup> Owen, ‘Back to Nietzsche: The Making of an Intellectual/Woman: Lidia Jorge’s A Costa dos Murmúrios’, p. 85.

<sup>39</sup> Jorge, p. 111.

combat.”<sup>40</sup> The women’s no longer silent voices, in Eva’s retelling of history, do not gain any control to change the reality of war, but contribute to perpetuating their complicity, even indirectly, to the brutality of colonialism.

### **The image of Helena de Tróia**

As Eva gradually distances herself from the women at the Stella Maris, refusing to conform to the same predetermined gender roles that reinforce the colonial order, she grows closer to the woman who becomes one of the prominent female figures in the story. Helena, captain Jaime Forza Leal’s wife, nicknamed Helena de Tróia (Helen of Troy) for her ravishing beauty, is herself separated from the other women, both physically, as she lives in the isolated Italian house away from the Stella Maris hotel where the other Portuguese families resided, but also morally and intellectually, as she will prove to embody a form of resistance that justifies the rewriting of History.

Her image first appears in *Os Gafanhotos*, depicted as the breathtakingly attractive yet submissive redheaded woman dancing in the “austere” arms of her possessive husband: “She stood out from everything and everybody (...), in and of herself – and for her hairdo, a daring array of floating curls tumbling down on all sides, a carrot-coloured cascade.”<sup>41</sup> Helena’s radiant appearance makes her stand out and hypnotise the gazes of both male and female viewers, attracting “looks and sweat like a beckoning lighthouse when its light is seen from the sea.”<sup>42</sup> Aware of the singularity of her vibrant look, Helena enjoys parading her beauty, matching her nails to the free-flowing hair, in contrast with that of the other women in the Portuguese community with their Mediterranean dark brown hair, worn in the typical style of the times, meticulously straightened and tamed back down or tied into a bun or a beehive. The attention that his wife receives makes the captain jealous, enraged by the “looks that rained down like darts,”<sup>43</sup> so his “natural” instinct is to nonchalantly slap her under the gaze of the wedding guests.

The image of Helena in Eva’s account maintains the same entrancing beauty, captivating the audience with her unusual charm. In fact, Eva’s description of the stunning

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<sup>40</sup> Ariane de Andrade da Silva and Eduardo da Cruz, ‘Mulheres em Guerra: A Construção Identitária das Personagens Femininas no Romance A Costa dos Murmúrios, de Lídia Jorge’, *MEMENTO - Revista de Linguagem, Cultura e Discurso Mestrado em Letras*, 6.2 (2015), p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> Jorge, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> Jorge, p. 23.

<sup>43</sup> Jorge, p. 23.

woman reflects a form of “desirous contemplation,”<sup>44</sup> as Ronald W. Sousa remarks, with an intense focus on her physical appearance: “She was a beautiful woman; nude she resembled a dove, as other women resemble a frog and others a whale. It wasn’t only her voice that evoked a dove, as she called out to the boat; it was also her legs, her breasts.”<sup>45</sup> Helena’s nonchalance in Eva’s presence is observed during her repeated visits to the house where the woman is confined to wait for her husband’s return from battle, showing her silhouette half naked as she parades around the living room, demanding confirmation of her beauty: “The dress slid down, it fell around her feet, and, in an instant, she was undressed, like a slippery fruit sliding out of its skin.”<sup>46</sup> Her seducing gestures seem to have a mesmerising effect on Eva, who feels that Helena’s nudity “filled the room like an expanding gas,”<sup>47</sup> wild and unrestrained in the eyes of her admirer. Eva’s contemplation culminates with the prelude of a sexual encounter between the two women, arising from Helena’s invitation to take revenge on their husbands: “I have Helena’s leg in my hand, I ask her to bend it so I can see the calf muscles move. The leg just fills out a little and becomes firmer. The same happens with the thigh. Helena flexes and unflexes her thigh. Her slip is so flimsy she might as well not have had one on.”<sup>48</sup> Despite her visible attraction and fascination with Helena, Eva rejects the instinct of giving in to temptation, invoking the restrictions of a religious education and the preconditioning of nature that make her refuse the proposal:

*“I can’t, Helena. If I got close enough to you to touch you I would come apart into blood-coloured mud. Nature, or maybe just the priest to whom I was sent in my childhood (...) keep me from touching you for any reason other than pure contemplation. I close my eyes and I foresee a kind of red catastrophe starting at your lace pillowcase and spreading out to the blue sea, tinging it all in the same colour. We would have to return to our first nursing to correct this defect. Or even earlier, because I have no body part that can bury you under marble. What I love in you cannot be buried in earth nor does it aspire to be. Men, yes, they make me happy because they bury me*

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<sup>44</sup> Ronald W. Sousa, “‘I Was Evita,’ or Ecce Femina. Lidia Jorge’s *The Murmuring Coast*”, in *Lusosex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-Speaking World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), pp. 168–83 (p. 168).

<sup>45</sup> Jorge, p. 65.

<sup>46</sup> Jorge, p. 165.

<sup>47</sup> Jorge, p. 165.

<sup>48</sup> Jorge, p. 233.

*in the earth and make me mortal. (...) Between you and me, identity is a mirror that reflects us and implacably isolates us.*"<sup>49</sup>

As the novel is based on Eva's recollection of events that took place twenty years before, triggered by the reading of *Os Gafanhotos*, her contemplative gaze reflects a distance between the character involved in the story and the voice of the narrative, namely between Evita and Eva, connected through memory and experience but distanced through maturity and knowledge. As Sousa observes, "her repeated assuring of us, and herself, that 'I was Evita' serves, along with other functions, to suggest a distance between her past and present selves and an attitude of experience-based knowledgeability with regard to the recalled events."<sup>50</sup> Indeed, the evolution of the character is highlighted from the very first paragraph of the novel, which clearly identifies the storyteller – Eva Lopo – whose name undeniably refers to the main character in *Os Gafanhotos*: the diminutive Evita marks the appearance of an innocent, passive and silent woman, paralysed in a man's world, whereas Eva represents the empowering, primordial female gaze whose aim is to shed light over the hidden corners of history.

Despite being a disruptive figure in the canonical gender narrative, the character of Evita is guilty of a political ambiguity betrayed by her depiction of Helena. By choosing to focus on Helena's physical beauty and portraying her as the "cause of the conflict,"<sup>51</sup> Evita's gaze has been critically blamed for exposing a certain degree of solidarity with the system against which she revolts. As Paula Jordão claims, Evita's demeaning critique of Helena places the woman on a position of inferiority, thus associating herself with the patriarchal discourse: "The classical patriarchal conception which regards the female body as the cause and justification of war and masculine possession, is allied with the colonialist [view], according to which the female body symbolises the conquered land."<sup>52</sup> According to Jordão, rather than contradicting this discourse, Evita's gaze becomes an accomplice in placing Helena in the symbolic space reserved to women and non-Europeans, seen as part of nature and not culture, occupying a passive, ingénue role, unpredictable and dominated by emotion and carnality. Thus, marginalising the female body, Eva reinforces the preconception of the feminine embodiment as "intrinsically unpredictable, leaky and disruptive."<sup>53</sup> In this context, Eva's

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<sup>49</sup> Jorge, p. 236.

<sup>50</sup> Sousa, "I Was Evita," or *Ecce Femina*. Lidia Jorge's *The Murmuring Coast*, p. 170.

<sup>51</sup> Jorge, p. 69.

<sup>52</sup> Paula Jordão, 'A Costa Dos Murmúrios: Uma Ambiguidade Inesperada', in *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies 2: Lídia Jorge in Other Words/Por Outras Palavras*, ed. by Cláudia Pazos Alonso (University of Massachusetts Dartmouth: American Press Inc., New Bedford, Massachusetts, 1999), pp. 49–77 (p. 54).

<sup>53</sup> *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*, ed. by Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 2.

position becomes defensive of the oppressing regime rather than contributing to destabilising it, perpetuating the discourse that submits women to an order of subordination.

Helena's character is recurrently depicted as theatrical and preoccupied with her performativity and the way she is perceived; whether parading her beauty at the wedding reception or showing herself naked to Eva in the confidence of her bedroom, each of her gestures is performed as if in front of an audience. The character's presence evokes John Berger's thoughts on the objectification of women in his influential 1972 work, *Ways of Seeing*, which interprets the representation of the feminine in traditional paintings under the control of the male power as bearer of the gaze. For Berger, a woman is constantly under the pressure of creating an expected image of herself, intrinsic to her existence ever since childhood and subject to the close examination of public gaze: "She has to survey everything she is and everything she does, because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life. Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another."<sup>54</sup> Noticing the perpetuation of the female objectification in modern images such as advertisement and cinema, Berger believes that the treatment of the feminine remained unchanged throughout the centuries, whether in classical nude paintings or in television: "Women are depicted in a quite different way from men – not because the feminine is different from the masculine – but because the 'ideal' spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him."<sup>55</sup>

Building on Berger's interpretation of the feminine imagery, Laura Mulvey's use of psychoanalysis to reveal the interpretation of sexual difference controlling the spectatorial and erotic gaze in film has been used by academics such as Ronald W. Sousa and Mark Sabine to decipher Eva's sexually contemplative depiction of Helena. Denouncing sexual imbalance by revealing the use of women in Hollywood films to ensure a pleasurable experience for male viewers, Mulvey points out two mechanisms through which cinema produces pleasure, firstly through the objectification of the image (the Freudian term of scopophilia), and secondly through the identification with the image resulting from the needs of the Freudian Ego, both reflecting the mental desires of the male subject. According to Mulvey, "[w]oman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on

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<sup>54</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, Penguin on Design, Reissued as part of the Penguin Design Series (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 2008), p. 40.

<sup>55</sup> Berger, p. 58.

the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.”<sup>56</sup> Sexual imbalance is, in this way, represented through the relations of power reflected by the act of looking, where the bearer of the gaze is the masculine subject who distances himself and asserts power over the female object: “the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence.”<sup>57</sup>

In *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, similarly to the male gaze in film narrative, the act of looking through Evita’s eyes turns Helena into a passive image revealing herself in front of an almost cinematic audience: “she said pensively, putting her clothes back on pensively, as if she were supposed to be seen from different angles by a pensive public.”<sup>58</sup> Helena’s “pensive” attitude betrays her awareness and even her need for attention from a spectatorship, displaying her nakedness in complicity with Eva’s lustful gaze, and making “the diction of acting and of the (female) film star one of the structuring discourses”<sup>59</sup> in these scenes. Yet the complexity of the gaze demonstrates that it cannot be simply reduced to Mulvey’s masculine spectator, as Evita distances herself from the traditional paradigm of the male gaze by both identifying herself with Helena and thus taking the female position of passive object of desire, “the cause of the conflict,” but also by invoking the voyeuristic canonical male subject.

Moreover, the balance of power between the two women does not actually tip towards the bearer of the gaze, as in the canonical paradigm of the male spectator, but to the object of desire. Continuously aware of Evita’s gaze, Helena exerts control over the viewer through her demand for attention and choice of gestures, nonchalantly revealing her nude body, until the culminating point of the proposition that she herself makes to Evita, to take revenge on their husbands and, implicitly, on male domination, overturning the objectification of women. Making the connection between gender and war ideology, Helena’s invitation is more than just an act of sexual subversion, becoming a form of resistance against the regulations imposed on the female body. Thus, her “innocent eyelashes batting”<sup>60</sup> are only a reflection of the expectations created by a male-oriented gaze, but not the reality as the character revolts against her preassigned status of passive object. And by looking back and analysing Helena’s subversion to the hegemonic gender roles, Eva occupies a disruptive position herself through

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<sup>56</sup> Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), pp. 833–44 (p. 834).

<sup>57</sup> Mulvey, p. 838.

<sup>58</sup> Jorge, p. 166.

<sup>59</sup> Sousa, “‘I Was Evita,’ or Ecce Femina. Lidia Jorge’s *The Murmuring Coast*”, p. 174.

<sup>60</sup> Jorge, p. 69.

her inquisitive awareness of women's status in the patriarchal society, deconstructing the assumed gender frames.

Exiled in a remote house where she is surrounded only by her black domestic employees, Helena refuses to leave the apartment while her husband is away in combat, confined within a self-inflicted ivory tower which she initially portrays as a sign of solidarity. However, she tries to maintain contact with the other Portuguese women at the Stella Maris through Eva's input, in an attempt to control the events from a distance and make her presence felt. Continuously invoking the army's estimations of possible casualty rates, she spends her days frantically calculating the odds of her husband's chances of survival during combat, in a seemingly excessive act of devotion. However, after two months of self-imposed imprisonment, Helena finally finds the strength to voice her fear of Forza Leal by confessing her wish for freedom: "I need something to happen in Cabo Delgado! (...) Let something explode in Cabo Delgado now that the war is going to end and only a few will be returning to Mueda and to the areas of the war."<sup>61</sup> Barely able to gather the courage to express her terror of a violent relationship, Helena lives with the yet unvoiced fear that her husband might actually safely return from his mission, having to go back to a marriage in which she is devoid of any power and fearful for her own life. Her ambiguous stance, playing the odds not in favour of Jaime's survival, but his death, defines Helena as "un-self-consciously resistant to the logic of the war"<sup>62</sup> as "her actions suggest (literally) *anything* but – perhaps better, *something other than* – *agreement* with the language justificatory of the armed conflict."<sup>63</sup> Thus, Helena's attitude towards patriarchy and war, even though at times depicted as ambivalent and evasive, reflects a form of resistance to the male domination that subjugates women into submission through the use of physical and mental violence.

When she eventually has to face the probability that her hopes might not come true ("She says, as if she were speaking of an incurable disease, that she has waited and nothing has happened"<sup>64</sup>), it becomes clear that Helena's confinement within the walls of her home is in no way a loving, faithful gesture of solidarity with Forza Leal, but a means of negotiation with the divine to grant her the freedom that she craves, in a strange expression of religiousness: "It's not always, however, that God negotiates with people about such small and precious things as

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<sup>61</sup> Jorge, p. 209.

<sup>62</sup> Ronald W. Sousa, 'The Critique of History in Lidia Jorge's A Costa Dos Murmúrios, or Helen of Beira Meets Luis of Troy', *Cincinnati Romance Review*, 16 (1997), 135–43 (p. 136).

<sup>63</sup> Sousa, 'The Critique of History in Lidia Jorge's A Costa dos Murmúrios, or Helen of Beira Meets Luis of Troy', p. 137. [emphasis in original]

<sup>64</sup> Jorge, p. 230.

a widow's pension, posthumous decorations, nice ceremonies with war widows listening to the rifle salutes and the mortar fire. Helena wasn't heard, and therefore she will want to die."<sup>65</sup> The woman's thoughts of ending her own life are a suggestive reflection of the silenced violence within her marriage, and Eva's story gives her the opportunity to voice her fears and unmask the true nature of captain Jaime Forza Leal, previously seen as a war hero in *Os Gafanhotos* and through Luís Alex's worshiping gaze. As she cannot find the courage to take her own life and, in this way, escape the marriage that she desperately dreads, Helena is condemned to a future of bitter resignation, under the threat of her husband's unpredictable and violent temper.

Helena's involvement in the events often contributes to unmasking the truth and exposing the reality depicted in Eva's narrative. The death of her favourite male help, Mateus Rosé, the only employee that she had been allowed to hire herself, represents a turning point in Helena's evolution. Seeing him dying of the same bottled poison that had killed innumerable Africans over the weeks has a devastating impact on the lady of the house, who seems to finally acknowledge the seriousness of this phenomenon: "Helena de Tróia bends over the dead man; she bewails death, not the dead man. The image of a white woman's full dress, open like a peacock's dazzling fan over the black body of her houseboy stretched out on the green lawn is an image of splendour."<sup>66</sup> The narrator paints a sublime picture of Helena's beauty, who remains ravishing and is transfigured through pain into an angelic image of deep emotion. Once more, Eva's account challenges the quiet and naïve image of Helena from *Os Gafanhotos* by giving her a powerful voice that utters the uncomfortable truth and gains depth through the intensity of her feelings. Eva ironically condemns her speech because it shatters the superficial serenity of the short story, thus acknowledging the impact that her words have in revealing the truth. Her mysterious silence in *Os Gafanhotos* is left unexplained, as the narrator implies a lack of complexity and substance in the beautiful, yet enigmatic woman, which Eva contradicts:

*"It was too bad that she had spoken. Helena de Tróia should not have a tongue, she should have been mute, she should never be able to speak.*

*That's true, in your account she never does speak.*

*Thank you for never having her speak and, above all, for the fact that we never understand why she doesn't speak."*<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Jorge, p. 230.

<sup>66</sup> Jorge, p. 123.

<sup>67</sup> Jorge, p. 121.

Witnessing the death of Mateus Rosé truly opens Helena's eyes towards the atrocities of war and makes her abandon the comfort of her sheltered, isolated life, thus adding wisdom to her physical beauty: "I want to spend the entire night with my eyes open – my entire life and whatever life there is beyond this life I want to spend with my eyes wide open, I don't want to sleep ever again."<sup>68</sup> The events gradually precipitate, unfolding with Helena's sequestration inside the home and her refusal to see any visitors, as Forza Leal indicates after his return from combat. The only visible inhabitants of the house remain the black employees and the captain who is increasingly abusing his whiskey, as he proclaims that a woman's place should be in bed, obediently waiting for her husband when the man is away and the punishment that she deserves for any mistakes she commits: "Lying down, sick, their two arms alongside their head or their chest. Moreover, if they've sinned it's also in bed, and they should be found in bed, and it's there they should be killed when found sinning."<sup>69</sup> Forza Leal's misogynistic point of view offers yet another insight into the domestic life of the couple, pointing towards the constant physical and emotional abuse that Helena has to face, locked inside her bedroom away from the world, forced to remain trapped inside the ivory tower.

The dynamic between the two main female characters can also be interpreted through the deeper meanings of their names with mythological and religious values, as Hilary Owen notes: "Eva and Helena, as figures, symptomatize History as teleology, Helen of Troy being the archetypal end of a civilization and Eve the beginning of the history of man's sufferings on earth."<sup>70</sup> Eva is thus correlated with the biblical image of the Woman, seemingly weak and innocent, yet revealing her deceitful and lascivious nature by causing the fall of humankind from paradise, punished for her "transgressive curiosity" by being forced to remain outside the margins of History and suffer through the pain of bearing children. Consequently, in a reflection of the repressive gender politics of the Estado Novo, "women continue to have their wings tied, their bodies firmly attached to the birthing function by those who create (and inscribe) History,"<sup>71</sup> confined to their sacrificial roles of Evas since the beginnings of time.

## **The female body and motherhood**

The exploration of the female body in *A Costa dos Murmúrios* and *A Árvore das Palavras* represents an essential framework for defining the representation of gender. While its

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<sup>68</sup> Jorge, p. 130.

<sup>69</sup> Jorge, p. 269.

<sup>70</sup> Owen, 'Back to Nietzsche: The Making of an Intellectual/Woman: Lídia Jorge's *A Costa dos Murmúrios*', pp. 81–82.

<sup>71</sup> Ferreira, 'Lídia Jorge's "A Costa dos Murmúrios": History and the Postmodern She-Wolf', p. 274.

physical dimensions are delimited by nature and biology, the body can be interpreted as a cultural and social construction revealing the political boundaries in society. In her analysis of corporeal feminism, Elizabeth Grosz affirms that “the body, or rather, bodies, cannot be adequately understood as ahistorical, precultural, or natural objects in any simple way; they are not only inscribed, marked, engraved, by social pressures external to them but are the products, the direct effects, of the very social constitution of nature itself.”<sup>72</sup> Thus, rather than existing in the isolating frame of nature, the body is closely connected to the social, political and cultural environment, and constantly shaped by the norms of society, turning it into “an embodying of possibilities, both conditioned and circumscribed by historical convention, (...) a manner of doing, dramatizing and reproducing a historical situation,”<sup>73</sup> in Judith Butler’s words. Moreover, in Foucault’s view, “[t]he body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas),”<sup>74</sup> reflecting its essential role in the representation of history.

As both novels are located in Mozambique prior to or during the Colonial Wars, when the country was a province of Portugal under the fascist regime of Salazar, the representation of the female body within this context is determined by the regime’s use of the body as an instrument of control. In fact, the fascist rhetoric is highly concerned with regulating the body, making the relation between body and power a constant marker of the social configuration of the political apparatus:

*“[t]he body is indeed the privileged object of power’s operation: power produces the body as a determinate type, with particular features, skills and attributes. (...) Power does not control the subject through systems of ideas – ideologies – or through coercive force; rather, it surveys, supervises, observes, measures the body’s behaviour and interactions with others in order to produce knowledges. It punishes those resistant to its rules and forms; it extracts information from its punitive procedures – and uses this information to create new modes of control, new forms of observation, and thus new regimes of power-knowledge as well as new sites of resistance.”*<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. x.

<sup>73</sup> Judith Butler, ‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory’, *Theatre Journal*, 40.4 (1988), 519–31 (p. 521).

<sup>74</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’, in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. by Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 148.

<sup>75</sup> Grosz, p. 149.

Moreover, the prevalence of the body in the conceptualisation of fascism is characterised by the regime's "vision of society as a collective body,"<sup>76</sup> working by "treating the human body as a 'political space,'"<sup>77</sup> as expressed by the Nazi sports theorist, Alfred Baeumler. Influenced by the virtuous Catholic rhetoric, the ideal fascist body was healthy, strong, chaste, repressed in its lack of emotion and sexuality, and incorruptible by pleasure, "a body as absence"<sup>78</sup> in its reflection of the society that the Estado Novo aimed to create. In its quest to construct a perfectly disciplined and tamed corporeality, the fascist rhetoric treated the body "as a symbolic form transcending sexuality, exemplifying nature and the nation,"<sup>79</sup> freed of its carnal weaknesses.

While the male body was idealised for its virility and shaped by war, the fluidity and frailty of female corporeality warranted its inferiority, "associated with unruly passions and appetite"<sup>80</sup> and whose emancipation represented a threat to the unity and integrity of the fascist state. Aiming to subordinate individual wills under a collective, homogenous and uniform body politic, sexuality and power of expression were sanctioned by the regime as markers of moral corruption and deviant behaviour, while making motherhood the main prerogative of women in the nationalist agenda. Confined to the private sphere of the home and family, which was considered "unthreatening because it connected vertically with the state rather than horizontally within society,"<sup>81</sup> women were denied access to the public space of political involvement and subjugated by being removed from the workplace through pronatalist policies.

Moreover, women's entire education was centred on inculcating the social and moral values of the family with an economic mission, as Ferreira notes: "Bound exclusively to the role and consequent duties of the savvy mother-housewife, they are ultimately held responsible for the economic welfare and the entire Portuguese nation-family; and also for the behaviour, if not the very thoughts and desires, deemed appropriate for its members."<sup>82</sup> This made them solely responsible for educating the future men of Portugal, requiring a sacrifice of their own identities as women in favour of maternity, as Adrienne Rich mentions: "Institutionalised motherhood demands of women maternal 'instinct' rather than intelligence, selflessness rather

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<sup>76</sup> Mark Neocleous, *Fascism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 82.

<sup>77</sup> Neocleous, p. 82.

<sup>78</sup> José N. Ornelas, 'The Fascist Body in Contemporary Portuguese Narrative', *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 39.2, Special Issue: Portuguese Cultural Studies (2002), 67–77 (p. 75).

<sup>79</sup> George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*, 1st ed (New York: H. Fertig, 1985), p. 153.

<sup>80</sup> Ornelas, p. 66.

<sup>81</sup> *Spanish Cultural Studies. An Introduction: The Struggle for Modernity*, ed. by Helena Graham and Labanyi, Jo (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 184.

<sup>82</sup> Ferreira, 'Home Bound: The Construct of Femininity in the Estado Novo', p. 135.

than self-realisation, relation to others rather than the creation of self.”<sup>83</sup> The quest for these prerogatives in the Portuguese society of the time is reflected in the female characters of the two novels in often contradictory ways, showing not only the pressure of patriarchy over women’s bodies, but also forms of resistance that help them silently revolt against the burden of motherhood.

In the case of *A Árvore das Palavras*, following her traditional fate as mother and wife, the main character, Amélia, abides by the rules of the regime in choosing to marry a man that she meets through a matrimonial advert in the newspaper, leaving her native country behind to start a family in Mozambique. Struggling with breastfeeding and a screaming child in an unfamiliar world devoid of any friendly faces, Amélia can barely cope with her duties as a new mother, quickly becoming “so impatient that her milk has dried up completely and her tongue too, as if everything in her had become all thinness and haste.”<sup>84</sup> Thus, despite her distrust of the Africans, she hires Lóia for help with raising the child and looking after the house, giving her newly born daughter, Gita, the strength she needed to survive the harshness of Africa. As the baby gains a “firm, pliable flesh, plump but not fat, covered by a skin as soft as silk,”<sup>85</sup> she quickly overcomes the frailty that she was born with, despite having once been “as pale as wax with arms as thin as Amélia’s sewing thread.”<sup>86</sup>

In the first part of the novel, Amélia’s image as a mother is depicted from Gita’s childlike perspective, who sees the introvert and troubled woman as distant and mechanical, spending most of her time at home alone, locked in her sewing atelier in the “irritating, monotonous hum”<sup>87</sup> of the machine, leaving all the house chores to the black servant and avoiding the company of her husband and daughter by invoking frequent headaches or urgent work tasks. She appears as strict, unforgiving and cold in Gita’s eyes, constantly pushing her daughter away with high expectations and restricting her right to the carelessness and playfulness of childhood. Gita remembers the times when Amélia loses her temper over the girl’s innocent, unintentional mistakes, ruthless in punishing her for falling over the kitchen floor while trying to reach the tap, then ending up deeply regretting her impulsive reactions: “That was what always happened in the end. Amélia would sit down on the floor and start to cry.”<sup>88</sup> Despite the severity that she shows in educating Gita, the troubled young mother

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<sup>83</sup> Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1976), p. 42.

<sup>84</sup> Teolinda Gersão, *The Word Tree*, trans. by Margaret Jull Costa, Dedalus Africa (Sawtry, UK: Dedalus, 2010), pp. 16–17.

<sup>85</sup> Gersão, p. 17.

<sup>86</sup> Gersão, p. 17.

<sup>87</sup> Gersão, p. 20.

<sup>88</sup> Gersão, p. 23.

constantly fears that her own daughter resents her and that Lóia had replaced her role as a parent in the girl's life, blaming the African woman for the distant relationship with her daughter.

In the first and third parts of the novel, the narrative voice belongs to Gita and the way she refers to her parents is indicative of her relationship with them. While she calls both Amélia and Laureano by their proper names throughout her narrative, Gita also frequently refers to her father in the second person, marking a close connection between the two characters, full of affection and empathy for the man who spends every free hour with his child. However, Gita never calls Amélia mother, nor does she address her directly to illustrate a rapport between the two female characters, exposing their distant and rigid interaction and an almost non-existent mother-daughter bond.

Having seen her dreams of becoming part of the rich elite fall apart, Amélia's last hope of clinging onto success is through her daughter, as it becomes obvious from the investment that she makes in the ballet school: "The idea of placing me in Madame Solange Quebec's ballet class, frequented by all the elegant young girls of the city, sprang directly from her hierarchical view of hair colour and her desire to rise up her social ladder."<sup>89</sup> Signing Gita up for the sport of the elite girls par excellence, the mother wants to offer her daughter the chance she never had to escape her modest class condition. However, Gita lacks the passion for ballet and refuses to force herself through the "close-fitting leotard, the sweat and tears of trying to perform the splits, the blood on [her] toe nails"<sup>90</sup> when taking off the uncomfortable pointe shoes, revolting against the mechanical discipline forcefully imposed by her mother and refusing to feel like a "performing dog."<sup>91</sup> Gita also feels constricted by the appearance that Amélia tries to impose on her, with stiff silk, percale and lace dresses, full of frills and ribbons that restrict her like a mannequin, comparing herself to a dead "celluloid doll, with ringlets and glass eyes, standing in the window."<sup>92</sup> In her efforts to keep Gita well dressed and groomed, Amélia fears that her daughter might look like she "came from the shanty town,"<sup>93</sup> embarrassing her in front of the neighbours with an untidy appearance. But as soon as she leaves the house, the girl rebelliously takes off the uncomfortable shoes and the hair ribbon matching her dress, letting her hair flow freely in a defiant act to her mother's strict standards.

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<sup>89</sup> Gersão, p. 59.

<sup>90</sup> Gersão, p. 59.

<sup>91</sup> Gersão, p. 63.

<sup>92</sup> Gersão, p. 63.

<sup>93</sup> Gersão, p. 63.

When Laureano is not offered the work promotion that would have improved the family's financial situation, Amélia's resentment towards her husband turns into uncontrollable rage, calling him "a stupid African marmot"<sup>94</sup> and savagely tearing apart every stitch of the man's new jacket, which he had bought to celebrate his future achievement, in a gesture that profoundly marks Gita's childhood memories. The sight of the torn jacket represents a hurtful image in the girl's eyes, who associates it with a savagely butchered living being: "The jacket in tatters on the table: the collar thrown to one side, like a puppet's tie, the long, long sleeves spread out, unstitched, the lining hanging out of the pocket like the entrails of some slaughtered animal."<sup>95</sup> The same night, Gita crafts a fetish doll out of fabric scraps representing Amélia and invokes the *xipocué*s, the African spirits of the dead, to wish her mother's departure, to be taken away by the sea that had brought her to Mozambique in the first place and never return. This ends the first part of the novel that depicts the character's childhood, showing a last glimpse of Amélia before the infantile curse becomes a reality.

In the third and last part of the novel, as she grows older, Gita begins to understand Amélia's inner struggles that pushed her mother towards the desperate decision of silently abandoning her family without looking back. Gita's last memory of her mother is that of a "body in flight, for whom there was no turning back,"<sup>96</sup> seeing her "walking round and round in circles as if she was bewitched."<sup>97</sup> The woman, who had been so petrified of spells and curses her entire life, ends up losing herself in the charms of her own imagination by choosing to move away for a new husband, despite blaming herself for once believing in the foolishness of "honest gentlemen and marriages made at a distance."<sup>98</sup> She only takes with her a small suitcase, leaving behind all her clothes, letters, photographs and newspaper cuttings with personal advertisements, horoscopes and articles, small pieces in a puzzle that once made up her whole life, now waiting to be picked up by the abandoned daughter to recreate the image of her estranged mother. The young girl turning into a woman herself reopens the wound left by her mother's departure and begins to finally understand Amélia's tormented existence, knowing that her mother's choice to leave behind every piece that once made up her life is intentional. Amélia's last gesture before departing is a desperate attempt to connect with her daughter and to end her lifelong loneliness by finally opening her heart and giving Gita the chance to know her not only as a mother, but also as a woman: "Now, though, the image I have

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<sup>94</sup> Gersão, p. 82.

<sup>95</sup> Gersão, p. 83.

<sup>96</sup> Gersão, p. 162.

<sup>97</sup> Gersão, p. 163.

<sup>98</sup> Gersão, p. 128.

of Amélia is almost touching. Or perhaps I just see her differently. I took what was left of her (...) until a clear figure finally emerged: a face that I look at and which, in turn, looks at me with large, sad eyes.”<sup>99</sup>

While the child once felt aversion towards a distant and exigent mother that fails to show affection or to connect with her daughter, the now adult finally understands the deep, ingrained sadness that marked Amélia’s destiny. As she remembers her crying on the floor, Gita now sees her mother as a “lost child,” overwhelmed with an unbreakable and incurable “sadness that was greater than us and older too. She brought it with her and took it away again when she left. No one could break that sadness. No one was to blame.”<sup>100</sup> Amélia gives up her destiny as a mother and abandons her family without looking back, physically distancing herself from the world that she never truly wanted to be a part of. After years of depression and disappointment, Amélia blocks the despair of a meaningless everyday life by imagining herself as Patrícia Heart, a tall, blonde, rich and admired foreigner that encompasses all the qualities of her ideal self. Carried away by her illusions, she decides to try her luck once again, fifteen years after her arrival to Mozambique, by replying to Bob Pereira’s matrimonial newspaper advert, a successful Portuguese man with a “car, own house, flourishing business,”<sup>101</sup> looking for a wife to join him in Sydney, a city that reminded her of Capetown, the place that she had always dreamt to see but never had the chance to. Impersonating her idealised character, Amélia establishes a relationship with the man in Australia and eventually leaves her family to start, once more, a new life overseas. As she encompasses all of the features that Amélia believed would offer her the life she wanted, Patrícia Heart represents a new form of femininity that provides the character with a means to escape the unfulfilling reality of her class condition.

While *A Árvore das Palavras* depicts the reality of the female condition in the working class of the fascist Portuguese society in Mozambique, with the failures and limitations of motherhood and marriage, the main character of *A Costa dos Murmúrios* provides a different perspective by addressing the image of femininity at the border of social and cultural independence. Thus, benefiting from a privileged financial and educational position in the Portuguese society, Eva Lopo vehemently rejects motherhood in what can be interpreted as a subversive political gesture that shows resistance against the traditional gender roles of the fascist regime. Her stance becomes clear on the night of Zurique’s wife’s labour, when all the women at the hotel gather to share their moving stories of the pain and joy of childbearing,

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<sup>99</sup> Gersão, p. 189.

<sup>100</sup> Gersão, p. 189.

<sup>101</sup> Gersão, p. 137.

with Eva radically distancing herself from the collective identification with their roles as mothers:

*“I didn’t have a son, I didn’t want to have one, I didn’t see myself as mother to anything, therefore a delivery didn’t remind me of someone being born of me but of my being born of someone else. I recalled stories from my mother, from my mother’s friends, about the birth of their children, and they were exactly like those these women with beehives and ironed hair told, gathered together there under the same common gesture of opening their legs and letting a wailing animal out onto the surface of the Earth.”<sup>102</sup>*

Eva cynically views childbirth as a demeaning step that brings women closer to animality and a pre-human condition, abandoning the privileges of civilisation and thus placing themselves on an inferior position to men. Moreover, as she ironically calls these stories “extremely delightful,” Eva depicts motherhood as a return to a basic condition and renunciation to an intellectual and cultural position: “they reminded me of nests and ponds with their eggs, (...) of croaking sounds and of life between the mating and the laying stages.”<sup>103</sup> Remembering her Contemporary History course at university, during which the thirty women in the class would always remain silent and leave the only three men to answer the professor’s questions, Eva criticises her generation of women for their desire to subject themselves to the limitations of motherhood, making it their only purpose in life:

*“Some of the ladies were already pregnant, others had gotten married and were on their way to getting pregnant with every night that passed, others were single wanting to become pregnant as soon as possible. Still others had only had the first declarations of love to cling to, but they were already stretching their necks toward the prospect of getting pregnant. Nature was fiercely vibrant in my Contemporary History class.”<sup>104</sup>*

Condemning her female colleagues for having succumbed to the nationalistic agenda that glorified motherhood as a woman’s only vocation, Eva associates the women with the “stretching necks” with birds and creatures whose sole existential purpose was to reproduce, thus instinctively surrendering to the call of nature over the progress of civilisation. Despite

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<sup>102</sup> Jorge, p. 174.

<sup>103</sup> Jorge, p. 174.

<sup>104</sup> Jorge, p. 202.

the society's pressure over her generation, Eva herself refuses to capitulate to the same forces that render her peers vulnerable because, as Carolyn Kendrick notes, "maternity equals self-sacrifice in the patriarchal system, and results in the total destruction of the woman as a woman,"<sup>105</sup> thus refuting the myth of motherhood that would constrain her to an inferior role in the society.

Amélia's failure to identify herself as a mother and Eva's vehement refusal of becoming one mark a disturbance in the representation of femininity as motherhood, with both characters contradicting the roles traditionally assigned to women by Salazar's fascist regime. By demystifying the idealisation of motherhood, the works denounce the injustice of the patriarchal order imposing upon women a discontented existence that associates maternity with a woman's natural state and indicts the rejection of motherhood as a failure as both women and citizens. Thus, the contestation of the hegemonic construction of womanhood, conventionally limited to the private sphere of the home and family, reflects the complexity that the two novels depict in the framework of gender formation, actively searching for an alternative feminine identity, freed of the allegedly sacred maternal instinct.

## Gender relations

In the depiction of gender in the two novels, the role played by the male/female dynamics represents one of the key axes in defining gender identity. Thus, within the representation of romantic relationships, one of the main recurring themes in *A Costa dos Murmúrios* is that of a multilevel political, sexual and racial violence, preponderantly drawing attention to that endured by women. As Ana Paula Ferreira notes, "Lídia Jorge explodes the myths that have sustained the violence of all forms of colonial wars, including those waged against women's bodies,"<sup>106</sup> recalibrating the historical compass controlled by male hegemony. The interaction between men and women in the context of Portuguese colonial Africa during the war is governed by the control over the female body, with instances such as the confinement of wives during battles, visible in the case of Helena and the women at the Stella Maris. Indeed, in Ronald W. Sousa's words, "in the rarefied culture of the military, possession of the female body is the ratification of a phallogocentric symbolic economy, with all of the authoritativeness that it arrogates to itself."<sup>107</sup> Albeit an expression of voluntary choice made through marriage,

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<sup>105</sup> Carolyn Kendrick, 'Refuting the Myth of Motherhood in Portuguese Literature: A Study of Agustina Bessa Luís "Vale Abrão"', *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, 57.2 (2003), 43–56 (p. 44).

<sup>106</sup> Ferreira, 'Lídia Jorge's "A Costa Dos Murmúrios": History and the Postmodern She-Wolf', p. 269.

<sup>107</sup> Sousa, 'The Critique of History in Lidia Jorge's A Costa Dos Murmúrios, or Helen of Beira Meets Luis of Troy', p. 136.

the imprisonment of women in the private sanctuary of the hotel represents one of the primary conditions for ensuring the functioning and perpetuation of the male-dominated system.

Eva's account reveals the intricate levels of violence hidden behind the superficial and quiet harmony of *Os Gafanhotos*, which was "as calm, as peaceful, and as essential as the synthesis of alcohol, as the reproduction of the amoeba,"<sup>108</sup> where any gesture of brutality is disregarded as a banal instance of everyday life, unworthy of the attention of History. As previously discussed in this chapter, the tumultuous relationship between Helena and Forza Leal offers a powerful example of the way in which men used force to impose their domination on women. At the wedding, the Captain slaps his wife as a mere punishment for her eye-catching beauty, in a casual gesture that is deemed as "natural" by the narrator of *Os Gafanhotos*:

*"Naturally, the Captain slapped his wife. More naturally still because it had to do with dynamics and kinetics the woman ended up leaning against the railing of the balcony that separated the Stella from the Indian Ocean. Having been slapped, her face was naturally even prettier. Naturally, a tear fell from one of her eyes, because the other was covered by one of the many tresses of her full, glowing hair. Naturally, her husband approached her, pulled her to himself, and she offered her face, her tear, and her hair, leaning all of it on his shoulder, naturally."*<sup>109</sup>

With her beauty intact, even when in tears, Helena simply turns the other cheek without any sign of revolt against her husband, whose brutal action is given no other justification than an egoistic instinct of possession and blind jealousy. The Captain's gesture causes a chain reaction that extends over the other couples present at the reception, following the same laws of "dynamics and kinetics," inspiring the other husbands to prove their ownership of their wives in similar testaments of gratuitous cruelty. The circle of domestic violence is thus extended with another woman falling victim to a demonstration of force in the public eye:

*"Naturally, the other couples tried to imitate them, but imitation was difficult, and the slapping didn't quite have that violent, aesthetic impact that had been attained by the groom's captain. In spite of that, one woman (...) under the impact of her husband's closed hand, crashed hard against the*

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<sup>108</sup> Jorge, p. 23.

<sup>109</sup> Jorge, p. 24.

*railing and almost went over it (...)! But if she had gone over she would not have died, despite being on the Stella's eleventh floor. Why should she die? At any rate, her husband saved her with a judo chop. Their reunion was wonderful. At the moment when they inevitably came together, they exchanged all the fluids that could possibly be exchanged there—a trickle of blood ran from the orifice in her ear.*"<sup>110</sup>

Ironically, the husband's reassuring "judo chop" prevents the woman from getting severely injured, as she only suffers the force of his heavy hand with a few drops of blood, and ending in a "wonderful reunion" that restores the calm atmosphere of *Os Gafanhotos*. These seemingly innocent episodes, superficially mentioned in passing in the short story, become a starting point for Eva's detailed account of domestic violence in an effort to expose the hidden suffering endured by women under their husbands' rage and jealousy. The notion of imitation is frequently repeated in connection to the propagation of domestic violence in the Portuguese community, working as the fuel that "makes the world go round."<sup>111</sup>

As violence is disseminated from the highest ranks, the powerful image of invincibility portrayed by the General, deciding the military attack strategy of the Portuguese troops, inspires the men at the hotel to emanate the same strength and determination, transposed through the easiest form of brutality, against the weaker ones: "The women, whose name I can't be bothered to remember, were on that day even chattier than usual, and during that night there was news that some officers of impeccable reputation – whose names I can't be bothered to remember either – had to beat their wives. Not to mention their children. The General's energy had touched them, too, in uncommon fashion."<sup>112</sup> Eva's sharp sarcasm, describing the respectful officers forced to punish their wives and children for the nuisance of excessive chattiness, influenced by the presence of the General, indicts these acts of unnecessary, unjustifiable domestic violence. These gratuitous forms of brutality lying at the very heart of the sacred institutions of marriage and family demonstrate the restrictions that women faced when having to fulfil their mandatory roles as wives, always at the mercy of their husbands' short tempers.

In the case of *A Árvore das Palavras*, the troubled relationship between Amélia and Laureano reinforces the fallibility of marriage in a society where women are forced to perform

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<sup>110</sup> Jorge, p. 24.

<sup>111</sup> Jorge, p. 55.

<sup>112</sup> Jorge, p. 52.

their duty as wives through external obligation rather than personal desire. Having answered Laureano's matrimonial advert only to take revenge on a former lover, Amélia yields to the society's pressure and accepts his marriage proposal because of what her adoptive family and the entire village had expected of her. Failing to gain love or respect for her husband, she ends up bitterly resenting the man who did not succeed in offering her the comfortable, luxurious life that she had dreamt of. Disappointed by her first love, Joaquim Albano, who abandons her for Adelina, a richer, more respectable girl in the village, whose father owned a grocery shop, the men in Amélia's life fulfil a mere instrumental role aimed at improving her social condition, as she loses any hope of achieving romantic happiness. Consequently, as she decides to leave her husband for a wealthier man in Australia, Amélia continues to perform her role as a wife, this time to Bob Pereira, ironically following what the patriarchal society dictates. Instead of abandoning the institution of marriage to achieve fulfilment on her own, she remains a prisoner in the comfort of matrimony rather than striving for personal independence.

Amélia leaves Mozambique for Australia the same way she did with Portugal, to start anew once more in the hope of a better life, this time next to a wealthier man that can offer her more than her first husband. Looking at one of the photos that Amélia leaves behind, Gita describes Bob Pereira as a "ridiculous" name belonging to "a fat man wearing a felt hat, standing beside a blue convertible, in front of a prefabricated wooden house."<sup>113</sup> While her mother's fate remains unclear, Gita's story mentions that, during his stay in Lourenço Marques, her second husband was a guest at the Hotel Polana, the very place that the woman had idealised for years as the privileged location of the rich and powerful. Thus, Amélia finally sees herself opening the doors that had always been closed to her before meeting a wealthier man, helping to end her misery of being excluded from the world of the rich. In her analysis of Gersão's 1981 novel *O Silêncio*, Isabel Allegro de Magalhães points out the feminist dimension of time in an attempt to "protest against the limits of the socio-symbolic contract,"<sup>114</sup> through the main character's search for utopia as "the capacity to see afresh."<sup>115</sup> Similarly to the protagonist who leaves her partner in a desire to be free from a restrictive present, Amélia decides to begin anew by "refilling the meaning of a time that today's woman no longer feels as a compensatory prison of lack of space, but as a richness triggering change."<sup>116</sup> Thus, for Amélia, the female

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<sup>113</sup> Gersão, p. 163.

<sup>114</sup> Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Sexo Dos Textos: E Outras Leituras*, Estudos de Literatura Portuguesa (Lisboa: Caminho, 1995), p. 73.

<sup>115</sup> Magalhães, p. 74.

<sup>116</sup> Magalhães, p. 78.

condition becomes a way to overcome the limitations of class, as she uses her physical beauty to step up on the social ladder by marrying a wealthier man.

The gender relations in the two novels bring forth a series of contradictions at the very heart of the family, the cell that constituted the basis of the fascist Portuguese society. Hence, the brutal displays of violence against women in *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, in both public and private contexts, and the mundane nature of marriage in *A Árvore das Palavras*, lacking the warmth and intimacy expected of all human relationships, expose the problematic imposition of matrimony as a compulsory female duty. The female characters constitute unequivocal examples of the way in which society exploited women through the perpetuation of strict and repressive gender roles like those of wives and mothers.

### **Images of masculinity**

One of the most crucial elements that both novels have in common is the female narrators' point of view, offering a depiction of male subjects negotiated through the interaction with women and seen through the female gaze. The complexity of the female condition is closely connected to the representation of masculinity, portraying an intense crisis in the experience of both genders during the dictatorship. While women were restricted to the domestic sphere and coerced into fulfilling their duties as devoted mothers and wives, men were seen as the head of the family, responsible for financial support as they were frequently the sole bread-winners. In his analysis of the relation between nationalism and sexuality, George Lachmann Mosse describes the idealisation of masculinity as the very foundation of society, turning manliness into the symbol of "the nation's spiritual and material vitality"<sup>117</sup> and stereotyping masculinity chiselled through the experience of war and the camaraderie of the trenches, in "a form of friendship superior to other human relationships."<sup>118</sup> The traditional representation of masculinity during the Estado Novo, with "a crucial role in shaping the economic, cultural and political status of men,"<sup>119</sup> is contested in the two novels, exposing a turning point in the definition of normative social roles and challenging the logic of patriarchy.

In the case of *A Árvore das Palavras*, the representation of masculinity is limited to the only main male character, Laureano, and is closely tied to the experience of womanhood, mediated by the main female characters' perspectives. As previously mentioned, Amélia's

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<sup>117</sup> Mosse, p. 23.

<sup>118</sup> Mosse, p. 129.

<sup>119</sup> Eve Sedgwick, 'Gosh Boy George, You Must Be Awfully Secure in Your Masculinity!', in *Constructing Masculinity*, ed. by Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 11–20 (p. 12).

relationships with men are determined by her social aspirations, using marriage as a means to achieve a more financially secure future, and thus experiencing class through her female condition. Striving to overcome her background as a poor, orphan girl from a remote Portuguese village, the naïve nineteen-year old woman hastily embarks on a lifelong journey to Mozambique in the hope of a fulfilling marriage. Quickly disillusioned by the modest conditions that she encounters in Africa, Amélia ends up resenting Laureano for his lack of ambition and energy, failing to progress in the same way that she wanted, by gaining the financial means to climb the social ladder. Socially frustrated in relation to the male gender, she sees her husband as closer to the simple African mentality that she despises, content with the bare minimum, with no desire to strive for a better future:

*“Amélia, who told us over and over that what mattered was earning money, getting on in society and going up in the world. However, there were some people, she would say, fixing us with angry eyes, who were so like the Blacks you would think they’d been born here. Children of the jungle. All that was missing was for them to roll out their mat on the floor of a straw-thatched hut and go to sleep.”<sup>120</sup>*

Gita’s memories bring back the girl’s solidarity with her father, rejecting Amélia’s ambitions and condescending opinions: “That was how life was: there were those who rose and grew more refined and those who went backwards. Laureano and I belonged to the latter group.”<sup>121</sup> Similarly to Amélia, Laureano moves to Mozambique aged nineteen to escape a life of poverty in rural Portugal, where he was responsible for supporting his mother and younger brother by raising sheep and working in a shoe factory since early childhood. His modest, yet dignified job in Lourenço Marques offers him the comfort of owning a home, thus helping him to start a family with the woman that replies to his newspaper advert. However, unlike his wife, the man is comfortable with his socio-economic condition and refuses to see Africa from a coloniser’s point of view, aiming to blend in and empathising with the injustices and poverty that he witnesses in his adoptive country, thus becoming “representative of those Portuguese whose sense of national ethnic boundary is not frozen in nationalistic, racist precepts,”<sup>122</sup> as Karen Sherwood Sotelino notes.

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<sup>120</sup> Gersão, p. 56.

<sup>121</sup> Gersão, p. 56.

<sup>122</sup> Karen C. Sherwood Sotelino, ‘Narrator versus Character Voice: Colonial Echoes in Teolinda Gersão’s “A Arvore das Palavras”’, *Hispania*, 90.2 (2007), 224–33 (p. 226).

In contrast with Amélia's hostility and frustration with Laureano's attitude, Gita's childhood recollection of her father in the first part of the novel portrays him as "the beloved man of the house,"<sup>123</sup> as the child impatiently waits for him to come back from work every day, playing hide-and-seek games, preparing his shaving soap on Sundays and reading the newspaper on his lap. Often when Laureano's name is mentioned, the narrator starts a second person dialogue, pointing towards the strong connection between the man and his daughter and reflecting his defining role in the child's growth: "Living is very easy, because I use you as the point from which to measure north and south. As long as you exist, the meridians arrange themselves in their proper positions and the oceans do not overflow."<sup>124</sup> The intimacy that connects father and daughter becomes palpable within the way in which the atmosphere of the house changes when Laureano comes back from work: "Everything turns inwards, becomes intimate, dense, just like when you pause in the middle of doing something and can suddenly hear the rain. (...) But right from the moment you arrived and even before that, you were always a presence, a whole."<sup>125</sup> The candid warmth between father and daughter compensates for Amélia's distant and rigid attitude, who begins to feel like an outsider in her own home.

In the third part of the novel, Gita's story depicts the effects that Amélia's abandonment have on Laureano. The once happy, attentive and alert man, "whistling softly to himself, thinking his own thoughts,"<sup>126</sup> who enjoyed looking after the house and getting involved in his daughter's education, slowly loses his joy and will to live, silently turning into "a bird that fell to earth, (...) a bird that didn't open its wings in time and could never fly again."<sup>127</sup> Laureano finds solace in his black maid Rosário, only a few years older than his daughter, but who fills the lonely, quiet house again with laughter. Complementary to the struggles faced by women in having to fulfil their predefined roles as devoted wives and mothers, the male character in *Árvore das Palavras* illustrates the difficulties faced by men, especially those belonging to the working class, in having to maintain the stereotypical masculine strength, resourcefulness and ruthlessness in providing for their families.

Going back to *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, where the main character is invested with a privileged position of narrative authority as "both intradiegetic agent and extradiegetic

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<sup>123</sup> Gersão, p. 14.

<sup>124</sup> Gersão, p. 26.

<sup>125</sup> Gersão, p. 25.

<sup>126</sup> Gersão, p. 164.

<sup>127</sup> Gersão, p. 164.

narrator,”<sup>128</sup> Eva’s gaze illustrates the construction of masculinity during the colonial wars as a distortion of the ideal image of the brave, patriotic warrior envisaged by the nationalist rhetoric, and inevitably creating “parodies of the iconography of white male heroism that overturn the conventional representations of European colonial agency and power.”<sup>129</sup> The novel depicts what was termed by R. W. Connell as ‘hegemonic masculinity,’ which encompasses not necessarily “normative notions of masculinity (in terms of toughness, independence, assertiveness) as any stable set of acquired attributes, but rather as socio-historical configurations of multiple gender practices that together work to legitimate male dominance.”<sup>130</sup> The image of Luís Alex shows the tensions between the romanticised figure of manliness in the myth of the war experience and the reality of the traumatic Colonial Wars, mirroring the complexities of idealising and representing the male figure during the nationalist regime in Portugal. The former brilliant mathematics student, entirely dedicated to his academic research, is forced to participate in the war in order to be allowed to finish his final year of studies. What started as a mere formality for completing the mandatory military service becomes the means through which the scientist discovers what he strongly believes to be his true vocation as a soldier, his mathematical brilliance being replaced by an “intuition”<sup>131</sup> for combat. As his passion for science is substituted by an ardour for war, Luís Alex personifies the stereotype of manhood propagated by the fascist regime, intensely preoccupied with the military values of honour, discipline, camaraderie and patriotism. The transition from the intellectual academic to the manual labour of the soldier status denotes a transformation in the form of masculinity that Luís Alex chooses, adopting the more conservative instance of manhood encouraged by the regime.

Believing that a man’s ultimate goal in life is to achieve recognition for his acts of heroism and sacrifice for the country, he deeply laments the old General’s failure to distinguish himself as his last chance to participate in the war is coming to an end, feeling sad “thinking about how anguishing it would be to reach an age when the body starts losing its splendour, without ever having had the good fortune to participate in real military action, with bullets, life in danger, real fire,”<sup>132</sup> considering this a form of damage that “the state perpetrated in

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<sup>128</sup> Mark Sabine, ‘Colonial Masculinities under a Woman’s Gaze in Margarida Cardoso’s *A Costa dos Murmúrios*’, in *Gender, Empire, and Postcolony: Luso-Afro-Brazilian Intersections*, ed. by Hilary Owen and Anna Klobucka (New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 87–109 (p. 87).

<sup>129</sup> Sabine, p. 87.

<sup>130</sup> Quoted in Lynne Segal, ‘Genders: Deconstructed, Reconstructed, Still on the Move’, in *The SAGE Handbook of Identities*, ed. by Margaret Whetherell and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (London: Sage Publications, 2010), pp. 321–38 (p. 328).

<sup>131</sup> Jorge, p. 55.

<sup>132</sup> Jorge, p. 53.

depriving people of happiness.”<sup>133</sup> The lieutenant believes that participating in the war fighting for one’s country is the only way in which a man can leave his mark on the world, turning the times of peace into an absolute enemy: “The peace of the nation, in the General’s time, must have resembled a sleeping quarry.”<sup>134</sup> He sees the general and his peers as “scores of betrayed Portuguese boys, seeing wrinkles forming around their eyes without ever firing their weapons,”<sup>135</sup> as History deprives generations of their glory and turns them into victims not of war, but of peace. The involvement in the nation’s military actions defines a man’s virtue, as war becomes the motor that justifies the very existence of science, art and even mathematics, his former passion: “What was a country without the active memory of the enemy? the groom asked. Without the memory of its contemporary enemy, what is a contemporary a contemporary of?”<sup>136</sup> War justifies the abominable acts of violence performed by the lieutenant and his platoon, under his Captain’s command and the country’s blessing, the murdering of both enemies and innocent civilians, women and children in the African villages, as captured in the photographs that Helena reveals to Eva. Taken to document every operation and account for the participants in the war, to be honoured when the “white independence”<sup>137</sup> would be achieved, the images show the destruction caused by the Portuguese army in scenes of grotesque brutality, in which the groom is hanging and decapitating enemies: “as each picture was turned, tired, or laughing, his ears sticking out, burying cans, or pretending to run from the ants, the groom was everywhere and part of everything.”<sup>138</sup>

When he finally returns from a long, unsuccessful mission in Cabo Delgado, Luís Alex appears as a changed man, losing his fascination for combat and absolute faith in war and victory, devastated by the shocking experience of having spent two and a half months hidden in a hole underground without water, consumed by the fear of never coming back home alive and “without a chance of anyone making a name for himself.”<sup>139</sup> Crying in front of Eva for the first time, “with sobs and shouts,”<sup>140</sup> the lieutenant finally speaks up against the war not in his usual voice, but by adopting “a woman’s voice.”<sup>141</sup> “His voice, although constricted to the point of appearing to be pricked and scratched by a pin, did not convey the slightest inflection of weakness. On the contrary, strained like that in the Lieutenant’s mouth, it sounded like a

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<sup>133</sup> Jorge, p. 53.

<sup>134</sup> Jorge, p. 54.

<sup>135</sup> Jorge, p. 54.

<sup>136</sup> Jorge, p. 54.

<sup>137</sup> Jorge, p. 133.

<sup>138</sup> Jorge, pp. 137-8.

<sup>139</sup> Jorge, p. 250.

<sup>140</sup> Jorge, p. 250.

<sup>141</sup> Jorge, p. 250.

sign of intense fury or force.”<sup>142</sup> Despite its sharp feminine inflection and increasingly raised tone, his “woman’s” voice is depicted as empowering, no different than the voices of those women that Eva gathers in her recollection of reality, all of them contributing to shaping the truth. When he abandons the virile mask of the military, Luís Alex gains the confidence to speak up against the absurdity of war and unfairness of history, putting all his fury and energy into his voice to reveal the truth. But despite having found his true voice and escaping the oppression of war, reconciling with his vulnerable and seemingly feminine state, Luís Alex appears as irremediably changed in Eva’s eyes, who has to finally come to terms with the fact that her husband, the once curious and ambitious mathematician, had lost his passion for discovery:

*“The boy lying in the bathtub in a startled sleep had no interest in anything hidden, and that had been his greatest shortcoming. No, it wasn’t the killing itself that had destroyed him, or the intense woman’s voice he used to complain about it. It was the certainty that he would never again bend over a sheet of paper to complain about numerical solution, the limitation of numerical solutions.”*<sup>143</sup>

The man’s zealousness for scientific research is an inherent attribute of his former pre-war self, which he is forced to abandon in favour of a more mundane and practical military career that was incompatible with his academic vocation. Thus, upon his return from the Cabo Delgado mission, the lieutenant finds himself stripped of his enthusiasm for life in the armed forces, as well as devoid of passion for mathematics, the one trait that once defined him.

A more unilateral instance of manhood in the novel is that of Captain Jaime Forza Leal, who impersonates the traditional and conservative image of manliness envisaged by the fascist regime. From the moment he appears in *Os Gafanhotos* at the wedding reception next to his beautiful wife Helena, the heavily decorated captain displays the self-assurance and confidence of an indisputably powerful, respected man, proudly exhibiting a war scar on his chest as a symbol of courage and resiliency: “He wore his cotton shirt open, already soaked in perspiration by that time, and through the shirt one could see a deep scar that started on the chest at about the fifth rib, ran across his entire side, and disappeared in the middle of his back in a fleshy knot that looked like a flattened fist.”<sup>144</sup> The groom confesses to feeling envious of

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<sup>142</sup> Jorge, p. 250.

<sup>143</sup> Jorge, pp. 251-2.

<sup>144</sup> Jorge, p. 16.

the Captain's sign of distinction, earned in a rice paddy in Guinea, which he wears as his most prized medal and makes the lieutenant fantasise about getting a scar of his own, through pure imitation: "Tell me, do you think, would you like, would you care if I had a scar like the Captain's?"<sup>145</sup> While the "phosphorescence of that mark"<sup>146</sup> exerts a powerful fascination on Luís Alex, Eva considers it a reminder of an antiquated attitude towards war and manliness, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Reinforcing the stereotype of virility through combat, the scar, "by which imperialist ideology encounters an ironically symbolic expression,"<sup>147</sup> as Kaufman notes, supports the conventional image of masculinity but only in a superficial way, hiding the colonial violence that helped create it.

The dynamic between Forza Leal and Helena offers a deeper understanding of the images of gender that the characters embody, as the narrative gradually unveils the truth behind the woman's silence in *Os Gafanhotos*, showing distressing instances of violence, discontent and despair. As she confesses to Eva, her husband's heroic status of manliness, seen as a form of patriotic devotion and military prodigy, leads to a ruthless attitude, not only towards the nation's enemies, but also towards his own wife, who lives in fear of his volatile excesses of fury: "Oh, a person has to understand! You can't live with a man carrying a combat scar as deep as Jaime's as if you were living with a pharmacist! Women who think that living with a hero is a party with lots of whiskey have no notion of the effort you have to make to recognise a man in combat."<sup>148</sup> While being a symbol of heroism when seen from the outside, for his wife, Jaime's scar is just a reminder of the man's sadism and recklessness.

When in public, the couple seem to deliberately play their gender roles, exhibiting a calculated behaviour illustrating the balance of power between them. While Forza Leal maintains his arrogantly virile and domineering attitude, it is Helena who radically changes in his presence, choosing to play the submissive, innocent wife. In the bird hunting scene, previously mentioned in the chapter on Social Class, where the groom and his Captain are joined by their wives for their target shooting practice on the beach, Eva turns her gaze not only towards her husband's transformation, but also to Helena's. As Forza Leal opens the car trunk and asks his wife to guess what was hidden under the burlap by touching it, the woman feigns ignorance: "It was obvious she knew what the burlap hid, but she pretended not to know; it was all playacting."<sup>149</sup> The man pretends himself to give up as he reveals four guns under the

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<sup>145</sup> Jorge, p. 55.

<sup>146</sup> Jorge, p. 59.

<sup>147</sup> Kaufman, p. 44.

<sup>148</sup> Jorge, pp. 99–100.

<sup>149</sup> Jorge, p. 45.

fabric, at which point Helena continues her acting as she starts running across the beach dissimulating fear. It only takes a whistle command for her to come back, “with a scared look, zigzagging, pretending to be afraid,” further performing her role as she feigns interest in knowing more technical details about the guns, addressing her husband “in a child’s voice.”<sup>150</sup> The weapons depicted as a phallic symbol, the Captain’s condescending whistling and Helena’s childlike voice portraying her as a trained animal contribute to illustrating the caricatural performativity of traditional gender roles in their relationship. As Helena builds a façade of simulated obedience in Forza Leal’s presence, this becomes a sign of disquiet and fear of her husband’s displays of control.

One of the memorable examples testifying to Forza Leal’s machismo is his cruel revenge on Helena’s lover, whom she believed to be “the great love of her life.”<sup>151</sup> Upon discovering his wife’s infidelity, the Captain savagely mutilates the customs agent and challenges him to a Russian roulette game, disposing of his body in the ocean. As Luís Alex recounts the story with admiration and respect towards the Captain’s gesture, he believes this game of chance is a gentleman’s way to honourably resolve differences: “There were no screams, no accusations, no mess right there, chance is chance, luck is luck.”<sup>152</sup> After the last operation, when the groom returns as a changed man, describing himself as “tougher, sceptical, realistic,”<sup>153</sup> he understands that the true way to restore his honour would not entail punishing the lover, but taking his wife’s life: “Today my captain wouldn’t do the same thing, either. My captain is tougher now, he’s more of a realist. Today he’d get rid of the wife, not the agent!”<sup>154</sup>

While the Captain might impersonate the ideal of manliness to its most absurd extremes, it is the lieutenant’s figure that appears as a true caricature of the ideal man in the colonial hegemony. In following the Captain’s every gesture, praising his bravery, remembering and repeating his every word, the devoted admirer shows the dedication that Forza Leal’s own wife lacks in worshipping him, turning into a grotesque form of imitation. And the occurrence of his death does nothing but testify for this caricaturised transformation: while *Os Gafanhotos* implies that the groom’s death was caused by an overzealous engagement in a gentlemen’s game of Russian roulette with a local reporter who dared to disturb the joyful atmosphere of the wedding festivities, in a suicidal gesture provoked by “an excess sense of

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<sup>150</sup> Jorge, p. 45.

<sup>151</sup> Jorge, p. 213.

<sup>152</sup> Jorge, pp. 258–9.

<sup>153</sup> Jorge, p. 259.

<sup>154</sup> Jorge, p. 259.

harmony, happiness, and beauty,”<sup>155</sup> Eva’s story shows the lieutenant’s banal death, driving off a cliff, with his body found floating on the sea three days later.

Another male figure essential in representing the condition of masculinity in *A Costa dos Murmúrios* is that of the biracial Mozambican journalist at the Hinterland Mail local newspaper, whose help Eva seeks in her quest to reveal the truth behind the methyl alcohol poisonings of the Africans. During the groom’s absence, Eva’s friendship with the author of the ironic *Involuntary Column* turns into an illicit romantic affair, seeking his comfort after refusing Helena’s proposition. When initially mentioned in *Os Gafanhotos*, the reporter is depicted as the intruder disturbing the peaceful atmosphere of the wedding reception with his investigation of the tragic yet meaningless deaths of the Africans, interrupting the party with his harassing curiosity. Portrayed as “a typical example” of his profession, the unnamed man has a squalid, “sordid appearance, his shirt opened down his chest for lack of buttons, frayed cuffs, and as good with a joke as any of the Western world’s cynical journalists of the time,” guilty of turning arrogance into one of the universal “bad habits”<sup>156</sup> of his profession. In *Os Gafanhotos*, his interaction with Luís Alex leads to the lieutenant’s death, who appears to have fallen victim to the Russian roulette duel he instigated to restore the calm of the Stella Maris terrace, making the journalist “the catalyst of that final night.”<sup>157</sup>

Eva draws a parallel between the journalist’s image in *Os Gafanhotos*, “a character without weight but a sly character nonetheless,”<sup>158</sup> “anonymous and undecipherable,”<sup>159</sup> and her interaction with him, depicting the man in her story as “a perfect person—that is, a person who knew fear.”<sup>160</sup> He believes that his writing is committed to truth, invoking courage as he defends himself when Eva accuses him of complicity with the system for hiding the facts: “every Thursday I risk everything for the truth.”<sup>161</sup> His quest to reveal the truth and publicly indict the horrors of colonialism in his weekly commentary column is limited by the political system that restricts free speech: “In regimes like these, even when they’re in the process of falling apart, you don’t write, you encode. You don’t read, you decode.”<sup>162</sup> Laughing at Eva’s idealistic and rebellious pretence of “faith in a voice clamouring from the top of a building,”<sup>163</sup> the reporter condescendingly lectures her on the virtues of journalistic writing and its role in

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<sup>155</sup> Jorge, p. 33.

<sup>156</sup> Jorge, p. 30.

<sup>157</sup> Jorge, p. 128.

<sup>158</sup> Jorge, p. 150.

<sup>159</sup> Jorge, p. 179.

<sup>160</sup> Jorge, p. 150.

<sup>161</sup> Jorge, p. 126.

<sup>162</sup> Jorge, p. 150.

<sup>163</sup> Jorge, p. 127.

unmasking the truth: “I’m free to say what I want in the paper, but you have to know how to write without denouncing or deceiving.”<sup>164</sup> His poems written in freestyle verse, which he expected to be “easily deciphered by all of those awaiting a decisive transformation,”<sup>165</sup> fail to represent a political gesture and lack the authority to influence the course of history, remaining too abstract for the general public, or even for Eva, to understand.

Born to a black washer woman and one of the ten sons of a white doctor, who fathered children “as though he wanted to achieve eternity through reproduction,”<sup>166</sup> Álvaro Sabino follows his father’s example in getting his two lovers pregnant, four times with the white woman and another four with the black, in his self-confessed attempt to make a mark on his country’s history, encouraged by the belief that “the most decisive [point] happens in the womb.”<sup>167</sup> While his writing fails to influence history, he chooses a different form of resistance and “non-linguistic political intervention,”<sup>168</sup> that of sexual reproduction, and he even tries to convince Eva that her role as a woman is motherhood, reducing her to a mere body: “Your problem is that you don’t let your body speak.”<sup>169</sup> In his attempt to seduce Eva to join him in his sexually reproductive form of resistance, the journalist states that “sex is like God: the secret place of secret expression to which everything that has no other explanation is attributed.”<sup>170</sup> While he believes in the African independence and voices his opposition to the Portuguese invasion, the man continues to perpetuate the same form of silent, yet remorseless physical, sexual and spiritual violence inflicted against women's bodies during the European occupation and the Colonial War.

While he is accused of being the trigger of the tragic events that lead to the lieutenant’s death in *Os Gafanhotos*, Eva’s story shows that the journalist remains a fearful man as he cowardly flees the country, running away from the threat of a jealous lover, as well as escaping a penniless life in debt to his lovers and far too many children. Just as when she finds out about the ramifications of his amorous situation, Eva remains impartial to his lifestyle without casting any judgement on his choices: “Álvaro Sabino had done the right thing; I was happy for him. With so many kids, so many women, so many roots, so much root matter tied to the bottom of his life, it was the right thing for him to do to flee the city.”<sup>171</sup> The journalist, thus, remains a

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<sup>164</sup> Jorge, p. 128.

<sup>165</sup> Jorge, p. 207.

<sup>166</sup> Jorge, p. 128.

<sup>167</sup> Jorge, p. 127.

<sup>168</sup> Ferreira, ‘Lídia Jorge’s “A Costa dos Murmúrios”: History and the Postmodern She-Wolf’, p. 275.

<sup>169</sup> Jorge, p. 145.

<sup>170</sup> Jorge, p. 149.

<sup>171</sup> Jorge, p. 272.

coward, choosing to run away rather than face reality, and failing to represent anything in the grand scheme of political resistance: “He never called the dead dead, he never called the methanol poison, he never called the murders crimes; even the locusts Álvaro Sabino had called ‘flying emeralds’, and even our coupling he had called ‘Europe prone on top of Africa.’”<sup>172</sup> The only risk he takes is that of getting involved with the wife of a dangerous man as he chooses to give in to sexual temptation as an alleged gesture of political resistance against the Portuguese oppressors.

The male characters in the two novels discussed in this chapter demonstrate the issues in the traditional representation of masculinity during the fascist dictatorship, working to undermine the patriarchal definition of manhood and stripping men of their legitimate right to power. Contesting not only the control and violence inflicted upon women, forced to obey the fascist order imposing predefined identities in the domestic sphere, Lídia Jorge and Teolinda Gersão also rewrite those normative gender roles assigned to men, exposing the limitations in the idealisation of the male figure as father, husband and head of the family, or soldiers selflessly sacrificing themselves for the country. Located at the “threshold between fixity and annihilation, between identity and non-identity,”<sup>173</sup> the notion of masculinity, in line with the multiplicity of the condition of femininity, encompasses a variety of instances, of masculinities distanced from the singularity of the norm and defined through the performativity of gender roles.

Exposing the complex ways in which gender is articulated through historical circumstances and political discourses, *A Árvore das Palavras* and *A Costa dos Murmúrios* portray the plurality and irregularity of social and cultural constructions of femininity and masculinity, challenging the conventional gender roles envisaged by the Estado Novo. Reflecting Foucault’s model of gender, in which “identity is not fixed but fragmented and shifting,”<sup>174</sup> the characters in the two novels embody the fluidity and nonlinearity of the feminine and the masculine, disputing the stereotypes of the fascist political order. As the novels bring forth the silenced female voices and the multiple forms of violence perpetrated against women’s bodies for generations, deeply embedded in the colonial society, they illustrate the female revolt against the authoritarian imposition of motherhood and matrimony as sole attributes defining feminine identity during Salazar’s regime. And in yet another

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<sup>172</sup> Jorge, p. 273.

<sup>173</sup> *Constructing Masculinity*, ed. by Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson, Discussions in Contemporary Culture (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 3.

<sup>174</sup> Berger, Wallis, and Watson, p. 6.

testament to the complexity of the novels, the gender relations reveal a critical point not only in the formation of womanhood, but also in that of masculinity, illustrating the dangers and shallowness of stereotypical fascist gender roles.

## *Chapter Three: Race in A Costa dos Murmúrios and A Árvore das Palavras*

### **Introduction: empire and colonialism**

The overlapping of nation and empire has been essential for defining Portuguese identity over the centuries, starting with the maritime expansion in the fifteenth century until the Portuguese Revolution in 1974 and the subsequent African decolonisation. As Fernando Arenas noted, “the symbiotic relationship between nation and empire in the Portuguese collective unconscious and in the political praxis of the state”<sup>1</sup> was an important factor in the creation of Portuguese identity. However, the once pioneering nation-state who contributed to the expansion of globalisation and imperialism, a true herald of early modernity, saw itself, in the twentieth century, in a peripheral position in Europe, facing the imminent risk of losing possession of its African colonies, yet not fully integrated in the European community and increasingly more isolated in global affairs. Portugal’s political and economic situation is what gave it the peculiar state of “simultaneously a colonising and a colonised country”, according to Boaventura de Sousa Santos, for being “the least developed country in Europe and at the same time the sole possessor of the largest and longest-lasting Euro-colonial empire.”<sup>2</sup> Ironically for an imperial power, the country was “in the same position in relation to the major industrial powers that the African colonies were to Portugal,”<sup>3</sup> as Barry Munslow observed. In fact, according to Norrie MacQueen, the poor quality of life for the indigenous populations of Portuguese Africa made them “the most disadvantaged of the European empires,”<sup>4</sup> although the high levels of illiteracy and economic deprivation were in fact widespread throughout the whole empire, including in the metropole, thus aligning, in many ways, the social status of the Africans with that of the Portuguese.

The Estado Novo’s ambition of putting the country back on the world map of colonial powers had led it to propagandistically affirm that “Portugal is not a small country,” a slogan that Manuela Ribeiro Sanches interprets as “the smallness of the nation lacking an empire to

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<sup>1</sup> Fernando Arenas, *Utopias of Otherness: Nationhood and Subjectivity in Portugal and Brazil* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, ‘11/92 (Onze Teses Por Ocasião de Mais Uma Descoberta de Portugal)’, *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 29.1 (1990), 97–113 (p. 105).

<sup>3</sup> Barry Munslow, *Mozambique: The Revolution and Its Origins* (London ; New York: Longman, 1983), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Norrie MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa: Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire* (London: Longman, 1997), p. 12.

liberate itself from its periphery, thus asserting itself as a power nationally and internationally, while legitimising its colonial enterprise.”<sup>5</sup> Aware of the country’s precarious international status, seen as diplomatically and financially weak, constantly under political threat to the independence and integrity of its empire-state, Salazar’s passionate revival of the Portuguese imperial tradition was intended to re-establish the nation’s pride and importance in the world affairs. The Estado Novo’s colonial policy was thus devised to reinstate Portugal’s power in Africa by creating a common economy and promoting the integration and assimilation of African communities by turning them into Portuguese citizens, provided that “their way of life is sufficiently evolved to permit it,”<sup>6</sup> as stated by the minister for the overseas territories, Silva Cunha.

From the beginning of its colonial rule in Africa, the Portuguese slave trade, gold mining and ivory hunting resulted in a brutal form of trade believed to have caused the underdevelopment of the indigenous societies and which “retarded the productive capacity of the African people,”<sup>7</sup> making them entirely dependent on the Western civilisation for basic means of production. Thus, the metropole’s own financial struggles and industrial underdevelopment had led to a form of exploitative and even “parasitic” and “cannibalistic”<sup>8</sup> colonialism in Africa, characterised by forced labour and crop cultivation, economic protectionism and an unjust Latifundio system, which not only increased the colonies’ dependency, but also resulted in depriving Portugal of its alleged civilising mission. Apart from the obvious financial reasons, the civilising mission in Africa was fuelled by a colonial ideology characterised by deep racism that justified the unfair treatment of the indigenous populations through harsh life and work conditions; according to Salazar, the purpose of the Portuguese empire in the twentieth century was to “organise on the best possible lines measures for safeguarding the interests of those inferior races whose inclusion under the influence of Christianity is one of the greatest achievements,”<sup>9</sup> thus maintaining the exploitative European domination under the pretext of offering protection to the vulnerable, barbaric black race.

After the anticolonial movements of World War II and pressure from the United Nations, the Estado Novo regime rebranded several of its services in a process of de-

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Introdução’, in *Portugal não é um País Pequeno: Contar o ‘Império’ na Pós-Colonialidade*, ed. by Manuela Ribeiro Sanches, Ensaio (Lisboa: Livros Cotovia, 2006), pp. 7–21 (p. 7).

<sup>6</sup> M. D. D. Newitt, *Portugal in Africa: The Last Hundred Years* (London: C. Hurst, 1981), p. 185.

<sup>7</sup> Newitt, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Luís Madureira, ‘Tropical Sex Fantasies and the Ambassador’s Other Death: The Difference in Portuguese Colonialism’, *Cultural Critique*, 28 (1994), 149–73 (p. 155).

<sup>9</sup> António de Oliveira Salazar, *Doctrine and Action: Internal and Foreign Policy of the New Portugal, 1928-1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1939), p. 177.

fascisation, and in an effort to seem more in tune with the times. Salazar reclassified the colonies as “overseas provinces” in 1951 in order to legitimise Portugal as an Afro-European power under the pretext of multiracialism and the creation of a “hybrid tropical civilisation,”<sup>10</sup> while invoking the country’s ostensible civilising mission. Moreover, the adoption of the notion of “lusotropicalism” by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre in 1936 aimed to redeem Portuguese colonialism, allegedly characterised by cultural, ethnical and interracial hybridity, repositioning the Portuguese as more easily adaptable to civilisations outside Europe through miscegenation, and thus ranking it as superior in relation to other forms of colonialism for its “anthropologically informed consciousness.”<sup>11</sup> Cláudia Castelo offers a detailed critique of the Estado Novo’s employment of this thesis referring to the so-called unique Portuguese manner of relating to other cultures, which was “qualified by the use of adjectives with positive implication: ‘tolerant’, ‘syncretic’, ‘humane’, ‘fraternal’, ‘Christian.’”<sup>12</sup> This theory, alongside the glorification of Portugal’s maritime history of ‘discoveries,’ represented the backbone of national identity during the authoritarian regime, yet it flagrantly omitted the African perspective that witnessed a brutal racist politics, denying the existence of violence and creating a pretence of racial blindness.

Condemning the racial discrimination at the very basis of Lusitanian colonialism in Africa, Eduardo Mondlane, the President of FRELIMO, the Mozambique Liberation Front, denounced the myth of the “non-racial ‘colour-blind’ Portuguese”<sup>13</sup> which claimed that the equal citizens of a unified Portugal have no need to demand independence. Moreover, the other colonial nations considered Portugal’s alleged special relationship with its African possessions nothing but a disguise for its “excessive colonial ambitions and deficient colonial achievements,”<sup>14</sup> lacking the resources to exploit its empire like its international rivals. Furthermore, despite Portugal’s strategic move to rectify its domination in Africa, including the rebranding of the colonies in an attempt of de-fascisation and the ideological appropriation of the lusotropical mythology to sanction an obsolete empire, the colonies’ struggle for independence in the 1960s and 70s resulted in a long, difficult and economically draining war that also helped trigger the 1974 Carnation Revolution.

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<sup>10</sup> Madureira, p. 159.

<sup>11</sup> Arenas, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Cláudia Castelo, *‘O modo português de estar no mundo’: O luso-tropicalismo e a ideologia colonial portuguesa (1931–1961)* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, Biblioteca das Ciências do Homem, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Eduardo Mondlane, *The Struggle for Mozambique*, Penguin African Library (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 36.

<sup>14</sup> Patrick Chabal, *A History of Postcolonial Lusophone Africa* (London: C. Hurst, 2002), p. 30.

Revisiting Portugal's uncomfortable colonial past and bringing to light the racial violence that was once embedded in the empire-state, the two novels offer alternative perspectives on Portuguese identity that encompass differences in gender and race, disruptive of the dominant national myths of maritime empire and colonialism present in canonical discourses and male-dominated literature. Through their works, Lídia Jorge and Teolinda Gersão give female subjectivity a place in Portuguese contemporary culture, through a critique of patriarchal ideology that brings into question the seafaring imperialism that has always dominated the narrative of Portuguese nationhood. The critique of colonialism in the novels reveals the injustice behind a flawed, abusive system that benefitted the European patriarchal structures to the detriment of those marginalised from a gender and racial perspective, thus providing an alternative reading of the official discourse and dislocating the imperialist, male-centred and racially repressive imagery of the Estado Novo. Dismantling the myth and glory of the empire, *A Árvore das Palavras* and *A Costa dos Murmúrios* bring into question the privileged position of the white Portuguese in Africa in relation to the treatment of the "black other," through the contrasting experiences of the rich and the poor, the military elites and the women left behind the battlefield, as well as the status of the racial subaltern in colonial society.

In the first part, this chapter focuses on the female writers' use of history and memory in depicting the colonial experience in Africa, as well as the contrastive formation of truth and reality that constitutes the cornerstone of the two narratives. The subsequent sections of this chapter aim to retrace different racial experiences in colonial Mozambique as depicted in the two works, looking at the representation of blackness before and during the armed conflicts as seen by the Portuguese settlers. By addressing the experiences of Europeans that are both temporarily located in Africa in parallel to those identifying themselves with the Mozambican culture, the aim of the chapter is to explore not only the surface of racial segmentation as seen by those passing through, but also the deep unrest and struggles of the Africans during the Portuguese rule. This will be contrasted with the white experience in Africa in the two novels, taking into consideration radically different points of view that highlight the complexity of racial representation in colonial Mozambique.

### **History, memory and truth**

The triad of history, memory and truth represents the foundation of the two novels, bringing together different narrative perspectives that contribute to depicting the reality of life in Africa during the Portuguese occupation from a white standpoint. With the help of memory, the two narratives contradict the historical truth of a perceived space, namely Mozambique as

imagined by the Europeans, as an idealised space on the one hand, revered for its simplicity and innocence, and a primitive, underdeveloped world on the other hand, challenging Portugal's alleged civilising mission in Africa.

As narrative forms of rethinking the past and questioning historical knowledge, *A Costa dos Murmúrios* and *A Árvore das Palavras* are in line with Linda Hutcheon's definition of historiographic metafiction, incorporating a "theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs," thus becoming "the grounds for rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past,"<sup>15</sup> turning them into systems of signification for understanding history. In its critical and dialogical revisiting of history, the postmodern novel "reinstalls historical contexts as significant and even determining, but in so doing, it problematises the entire notion of historical knowledge."<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, historiographic metafiction challenge the idea that only history has a truth claim, "both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity."<sup>17</sup> Building on Foucault's and Derrida's writings on power and knowledge, Hutcheon notes that past is already inscribed in discourse and interpreted as historical facts through its traces in the present, constituted through selection and narrative positioning.<sup>18</sup>

Teolinda Gersão's novel offers an alternative view of colonial Mozambique through the perspective of Gita, an ethnically and culturally complex female character, whose personal and family history merges with that of her country of birth, in a complex juxtaposition of individual memory and collective truth. The historical discourse takes the perspective of the silenced outsider, the white African girl of Portuguese descent, whose voice offers an alternative to the colonial discourse of the dominant European elite. Similarly, Lídia Jorge's work contests the male dominated literature that perpetuates the violence it aimed to denounce in the first place by approaching the representations of war memory and trauma through the nostalgic vision of Portugal's colonial identity. Jorge stands up against the false representation of the real as clear, transparent and straightforward, deconstructing and rewriting the traditional war narrative to contradict the myths perpetuating racial and gender violence.

The conditions for rewriting and reinterpreting history in the two novels conform with Brian McHale's definition of "constrained realemes," in a system of signification respecting

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<sup>15</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York; London: Routledge, 1988), p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Hutcheon, p. 89.

<sup>17</sup> Hutcheon, p. 93.

<sup>18</sup> Hutcheon, pp. 96–97.

the official historical records, yet exploiting those “dark areas” of history not considered by the traditional discourse.<sup>19</sup> For this, Gersão and Jorge look at the silenced voices of the minor in the imperialist discourse, those belonging to the social, gender and racial subaltern of colonial history. Moreover, these fragmented voices contributing to the rewriting of history through a plurality of individual truths and memories contradict the possibility of a master narrative characterised by a universally accepted truth.

Through its postmodernist take on the past, Jorge’s novel becomes, in Paulo de Medeiros’ words, “primarily a vehicle for dismantling and reconceptualising the authority of historical discourse,”<sup>20</sup> tearing apart the very credibility of canonical, authoritative historical writing. As Maria Irene Ramalho de Sousa Santos wrote in her review, written soon after the publication of the novel, Eva Lopo’s account does not intend to imprint *Os Gafanhotos* with historical certainty, but to deconstruct the male historical narrative through a feminist perspective. Indeed, Jorge takes it one step further “by assuming this aesthetic appeal as a deliberate ironic appropriation of an unauthorised, literally unfaithful point of view that could never have access to ‘truth’ or ‘real’ or even ‘verisimilitude.’”<sup>21</sup> Moreover, as Isabel Moutinho also notes, the novel adopts a deliberately ambiguous stance in its postmodernist undermining strategy that criticises Salazar’s regime through its indictment of the artificiality of history and “reluctance to accept universal truth-claims and to make value judgements about the possibility of one truth or one reality.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, as the narrative focus progresses from Evita, the main character in *Os Gafanhotos*, a diminutive marking the appearance of an ingénue, passive and silent woman paralysed in a man’s world, to Eva, the strong, articulate voice behind the novel, the latter takes the form of an empowering, primordial gaze whose aim is to shed light over the chaos of the past.

Based on the dichotomy between truth and reality, Eva’s narrative defines itself as a direct reaction to *Os Gafanhotos*, aiming to delimitate the deeper meanings of history, contrasting a scattered and imperfect reality with the superficially perfect appearance of truth:

*“Truth is definitely not reality, though they may be twins, and in Os Gafanhotos it is only truth that matters. (...) The curiosities I tell you about,*

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<sup>19</sup> Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Taylor & Francis Ltd., 2004), pp. 86–87.

<sup>20</sup> Paulo de Medeiros, ‘Memória Infinita’, in *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies 2: Lídia Jorge in Other Words/Por Outras Palavras*, ed. by Cláudia Pazos Alonso (University of Massachusetts Dartmouth: American Press Inc., New Bedford, Massachusetts, 1999), pp. 60–77 (p. 63).

<sup>21</sup> Maria Irene Ramalho de Sousa Santos, ‘Bondoso Caos: A Costa dos Murmúrios de Lídia Jorge’, *Colóquio/Letras*, 107 (1989), 64–67 (p. 64).

<sup>22</sup> Isabel Moutinho, *The Colonial Wars in Contemporary Portuguese Fiction*, Colección Tàmesis, 252 (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK ; Rochester, NY: Tamesis, 2008), p. 76.

*these imperfect memories, if they don't lead to demonstration of any stunning truth in Os Gafanhotos, will be as useless as the Lieutenant's relentless pacing around the bedroom. Truth must be unified, unfragmented, while reality can be – must be, otherwise it would explode – dispersed and irrelevant, slipping, as you know, towards nowhere.*"<sup>23</sup>

The narrative of the short story is focused on depicting the truth, in an idealised form that rises above reality by omitting the marginal perspectives of those confined outside the limits of the canonical white male view. While the introductory story renders Evita silent and invisible, a passive witness to conversations carried by men and concerned only with the trivialities of her wedding reception, Eva uses her own narrative to regain the power of speech, giving a voice to those that had been silenced. From her point of view, reality is formed through the tension between facts and people, held together by the force of attraction between the multitude of fragments and trivial moments that participate into everyday life. As Linda Hutcheon notes, "[t]o elevate 'private experience to public consciousness' in postmodern historiographic metafiction is not really to expand the subjective; it is to render inextricable the public and historical and the private and biographical."<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the purpose of Eva's story is not necessarily to add a subjective dimension to history through the personal experiences of the minor, but to rewrite the canonical chronicles in order to challenge the very existence of public and private spheres traditionally used to exclude and inferiorise the other, and women in particular through their relegation to the private, domestic sphere.

Truth, as represented in *Os Gafanhotos*, is based on a logical concatenation of events that generate each other and reflect the certainty of history, whereas the reality depicted in Eva's story is nothing but a concurrence of facts, sometimes trivial and monotonous, other times excruciating and distressing, humbly put together by their narrator. As the journalist informs Eva, "what you see aren't causes and effects, they are formidable simultaneities,"<sup>25</sup> whose sequence, previously invisible in the short story, becomes the motor that generates reality. Eva describes the minor facts that constitute reality as decoys interfering with the formation of truth and creating disunity in the representation of history: "You avoided the temptation to include a paragraph depicting the lobby without the combatants as eunuch space,

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<sup>23</sup> Lídia Jorge, *The Murmuring Coast*, trans. by Natália Costa and Ronald W. Sousa, Emergent Literatures (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 83.

<sup>24</sup> Hutcheon, p. 94.

<sup>25</sup> Jorge, p. 172.

after the deployment that had them converge on Cabo Delgado.”<sup>26</sup> Omitting the images of Stella Maris during the military missions, when the hotel is only inhabited by women and their children, the narrative in *Os Gafanhotos* clearly defines the boundaries between reality and truth, selecting only the historically meaningful events and characters, and hiding those that appear to remain powerless and void of any significance in the grand scheme of historiography.

Standing up against the official culture of silence surrounding the Colonial Wars, the novel performs yet another essential postmodernist function, that of denouncing history’s hegemony over truth and memory through the use of parody, aiming “not only to restore history and memory in the face of the distortions of the ‘history of forgetting’ (...) but also, at the same time, to put into question the authority of any act of writing by locating the discourses of both history and fiction within an ever-expanding intertextual network that mocks any notion of either single origin or simple causality.”<sup>27</sup> Condemning the canonical rhetoric of heroism through its very structure, the novel’s two contradictory narratives, *Os Gafanhotos* and Eva’s account, presenting opposite views of similar events in history, are meant not “to provoke complete relativism in the reader, but rather to avoid an all-too-idealised view of memory’s reliability,”<sup>28</sup> as de Medeiros suggests. While contesting the dependable value of historical truth, Eva’s incomplete remembering of the past also works to challenge “the possibility of any discourse presenting itself as an instance of authority,”<sup>29</sup> thus bringing into question any writing of the past, whether based on canonical history or personal memory.

In its attempt to recover the past through the use of memory, the narrative points out the questionable and often unpredictable nature of the act of remembering, reflecting the tension between the creation of history and the interpretation of truth. In one of her comments on *Os Gafanhotos*, Eva herself recognises the difficulty of recounting the past through memory alone: “For you to write it like that, you have had to make a very arduous trip to a time from which anybody else would have difficulty returning.”<sup>30</sup> Aware of the irregularity and volatility of memory and the risks that it imposes in tracing the truth, Eva deems it as enigmatic as the peach, hiding its intricate and imperfect core under a smooth, neat and tidy surface: “As mysterious as the peach, a fluid memory is all that remains of any moment, no matter how intense the feeling must have been; and it lasts only up to the moment when it disperses into

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<sup>26</sup> Jorge, p. 83.

<sup>27</sup> Hutcheon, p. 129.

<sup>28</sup> Paulo de Medeiros, ‘Hauntings: Memory, Fiction and the Portuguese Colonial Wars’, in *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, ed. by T. G Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper, 2013, pp. 201–21 (p. 213).

<sup>29</sup> Medeiros, ‘Memória Infinita’, p. 64.

<sup>30</sup> Jorge, p. 33.

the air.”<sup>31</sup> Denying her disregard of history and admittedly fascinated by its pompousness, Eva rejects the artificiality that it imposes and advises the narrator of *Os Gafanhotos* to only tell the story in homage to the act of recounting and renounce all other intentions that they might have invested memory with, because “whatever remains of your memory about my memory isn’t worth a fruit’s rind left in the middle of a plate.”<sup>32</sup>

Both *Os Gafanhotos* and Eva’s subsequent account depict events taking place twenty years before, relying on the memories of the narrators that witnessed this history. However, the act of remembering in the larger narrative seems to oppose the challenges of forgetting in *Os Gafanhotos*, whose focus on Evita’s gaze brings back numerous concerns regarding the reliability of human memory, prone to the influence of time. As she confesses herself, her memory is limited to a series of unfinished, scattered and sometimes unrelated events, showing that its function is not that of providing a reliable chronicle, but of merely tracing the more significant and haunting episodes: “The fact is that I recall fragments. And why should I remember more?”<sup>33</sup> The story also evokes certain instances in which Evita fails to remember the identity of her interlocutors, despite her efforts of distinguishing the officers who only differed by “the stripes on the sleeves” of their uniforms, “identical in the way they stressed the final syllables, as if they were to be heard from a distance out on the vastness of the parade ground.”<sup>34</sup> While the short story relies on the act of seeing, presenting the sequence of events as a form of observed history, Eva’s account switches its focus to understanding the facts. Commenting on her impression of *Os Gafanhotos*, she even defines Evita as: “an intense eye, observing, nothing more than an eye. Besides, she had fallen in love with eyes, isolated, like islands outside the body. Evita would be, for me, an eye, or a look.”<sup>35</sup> Limited to the status of a mere witness to the events that she was taking part in, Evita is denied authority over history and reduced to the role of spectator, while Eva gains agency in her version of past reality through the ability to uncover and understand the elements constituting historical truth.

Ronald W. Sousa describes *Os Gafanhotos* as a “logical” narrative appearing to present “self-evident events,” which Eva Lopo discredits by sharing her own experience of the facts, in a “process of recollection [that] has in multiple ways problematised not only the content of that narrative but also, quite obviously, the wry possibility that such narration might pretend to

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<sup>31</sup> Jorge, p. 36.

<sup>32</sup> Jorge, p. 36.

<sup>33</sup> Jorge, p. 128.

<sup>34</sup> Jorge, pp. 4–5.

<sup>35</sup> Jorge, p. 38.

authoritativeness.”<sup>36</sup> The short story opens with the wedding of Evita and Luís Alex, describing the controlled, almost mechanical gestures of the two newlyweds in front of the photographer’s inquisitive camera, eager to capture every movement. The lovers move under the photographer’s strict instructions, whose aim is to recreate the standard images expected from this event, trying to catch the lovers’ kiss from every angle. The candid excitement of this scene extends over the guests, in a “shiver of joy (...) as if any worry that the Earth had lost its power to proliferate had been dispelled.”<sup>37</sup> As the bride is lifted off the ground and carried in the groom’s arms in a slow mechanical dance, the “spectacular pose”<sup>38</sup> directed by the photographer’s expert eye brings rounds of applause from the audience. Also, the deliberately strict table setting delineates a certain hierarchy which defines every character’s role, placing Evita in a predetermined space, once again under the photographer’s theatrical directions, like an actress on a stage as she is asked to cut the seven-tier wedding cake.

Constantly focusing on appearances in a deceiving ceremonial game, ominously announcing that “things were just beginning, like the early warning signs of a storm,”<sup>39</sup> the omniscient narrator of *Os Gafanhotos* strives to maintain a general atmosphere of serenity and joviality, despite the dissonance between the wedding reception and the time of armed conflicts between the Portuguese and the Mozambicans. Raquel Trentin Oliveira notices the absurd of the guests’ seclusion on the terrace of the Stella Maris hotel, far from the rest of the world and content in their ignorance, pointing out that “the narrator’s irony extends over the entire story, showing the incompatibility of history, the ridicule of actions, the excess of naturalness with which the characters face the facts, however absurd and intolerable.”<sup>40</sup> The discrepancy between actions and consequences points towards the characters’ choice to distance themselves from the facts, deliberately opting to forget rather than accepting responsibility for the war.

Opposing the peaceful calm of appearances in *Os Gafanhotos*, Eva sets up to challenge the memories depicted in the short story by presenting her own version of the events, rising against the silent injustice that she witnesses in Africa by constantly disputing the short story’s claims to historical authority. Towards the end of the narrative, Eva contrasts her account to the initial story by commenting on the idealised version in which *Os Gafanhotos* finishes in peace and harmony, “because of an excess of happiness and not because of an excess of

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<sup>36</sup> Ronald W. Sousa, ‘The Critique of History in Lidia Jorge’s A Costa Dos Murmúrios, or Helen of Beira Meets Luis of Troy’, *Cincinnati Romance Review*, 16 (1997), 135–43 (p. 135).

<sup>37</sup> Jorge, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Jorge, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Jorge, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> Raquel Trentin Oliveira, ‘Formas de Contar: “Os Gafanhotos” e A Costa dos Murmúrios’, *Revista Eletrônica de Crítica e Teoria de Literaturas*, 02.01 (2006), p. 6.

violence”: “Everything ends so well, everything is so covered up, so cloudy in the orthopteran light of the lamps! Everything ends so like the mild versions that have been produced! A major even apologises because, as he puts it, Africa now has variegated colours.”<sup>41</sup> Through this string of ironic exclamations, Eva accuses the narrator of covering up the genuine facts behind the external atmosphere of apparent happiness, which does nothing but conceal the true nature of reality. To counterbalance this version of history, Eva assumes an opposite voice pointing out the actual deviations from the facts: “I give you, however, a slight difference. Because there was a slight difference, although as far as that is concerned I have no greater authority to affirm anything, because the voices fade as the end slowly approaches on a silken foot.”<sup>42</sup> Once again, the female narrator utilises irony in order to emphasise the antithesis between the two versions of truth, repeating the idea of a minor, “slight difference” that will actually prove to be a major change in the development of the story, powerfully contrasting with the idyllic ending of *Os Gafanhotos*.

As both narratives rely on the first-hand experiences of witnesses to the events, the opposite views that they display hinge on the veracity of testimony. Yet the seemingly cerebral, objective short-story, whose distinctly male voice claims to speak the historical truth, puts into question the truth claims made by the women in Eva’s account. This gendered tension reflects Leigh Gilmore’s statement that “women’s testimony is exposed to doubt as a routine feature of its appearance in legal courts, the court of public opinion, and the literary marketplace.”<sup>43</sup> Additional to the gender bias, the reliance of testimony on memory alone makes it vulnerable to the passage of time, especially when it comes to traumatic events. As Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub suggest, “as a relation to events, testimony seems to be composed of bits and pieces of a memory that has been overwhelmed by occurrences that have not settled into understanding or remembrance, acts that cannot be constructed as knowledge nor assimilated into full cognition, events in excess of our frames of reference.”<sup>44</sup> In exhibiting the extreme experience of trauma, the fragmentary nature of memory becomes even more pronounced in its reflection of events that are too distressing and painful to be inscribed into conscious memory. Additionally, as Michal Givoni suggests in his review of the ethical redefinition of witnessing, after the Holocaust, testimony ceased to be a reliable source for the detailed reconstruction of historical facts: “its primary aim was to index the enormity of political

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<sup>41</sup> Jorge, p. 267.

<sup>42</sup> Jorge, pp. 267–68.

<sup>43</sup> Leigh Gilmore, ‘Testimony’, *Auto/Biography Studies: A/b*, 32.2 (2017), 307–9 (p. 307).

<sup>44</sup> Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 5.

violence, the silencing of its victims, and their ineffable trauma, while laying bare the inherent limitations that empirical representation and normative ethics betrayed once they were expected to convey and make sense of the catastrophic event.”<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, Felman and Laub talk about the faults and failings of memory that become a reflection of the trauma that a witness experiences, showing the importance of the silences, lacunae and confusions in testifying to the traumatic event, which are also the very elements that challenge the veracity of testimony: “The traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of ‘normal’ reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time. The trauma is thus an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after.”<sup>46</sup> Roberto Vecchi also points out that any testimony is based on a lacuna of experience that stems from the speaker’s own condition as survivor, invoking Primo Levi’s extreme experiences at the border between life and death: “it is the integral testimony that can fill the failure of the testifying act.”<sup>47</sup> And as Eyal Weizman concludes, “paradoxically, it is testimony’s imperfections that bear witness to the fact of violence.”<sup>48</sup> Eva’s self-confessed imperfect and incomplete memories point towards a past heavily charged with violence and trauma, in which the sequence of events loses its natural order of cause and effect, and becomes a series of “formidable simultaneities”<sup>49</sup> instead, a more truthful reflection of a traumatic past. Eva’s account raises the question of who is entitled to speak and which testimonies are worthy of being heard when bearing witness to an authoritarian regime whose key politics was centred on suppressing the voice of minorities. If testimony represents “those verbal acts in which a person bears witness to harm in a public forum,” as Gilmore suggests, it is crucial for the previously unheard voices to be given a platform: “When violence is part of ‘what happened,’ then testimony must be part of ‘what’s next.’”<sup>50</sup>

In his discussion on the particularities of canonisation of fictional accounts of late Portuguese colonialism in Africa and of the Colonial Wars, Roberto Vecchi points out the crisis of experience that the trauma of war generates. While the experience of World War I reflected

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<sup>45</sup> Michal Givoni, ‘The Ethics of Witnessing and the Politics of the Governed’, *Theory Culture Society*, 31.1 (2014), 123–42 (p. 136).

<sup>46</sup> Felman and Laub, p. 69.

<sup>47</sup> Roberto Vecchi, ‘Experiência e Representação: Dois paradigmas para um cânone literário da Guerra Colonial’, in *A guerra colonial: realidade e ficção; livro de actas do congresso internacional*, ed. by Rui de Azevedo Teixeira, Coleção artes e ideias (Lisboa: Notícias Editorial, 2001), pp. 389–99 (p. 393). [my translation]

<sup>48</sup> Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability* (New York: Zone Books, 2017), p. 45.

<sup>49</sup> Jorge, p. 172.

<sup>50</sup> Gilmore, p. 307.

“a decisive crisis of contemporaneity, that of inexorable erosion of the possibility to communicate and transmit experience,” the even more traumatic stage of World War II and the Holocaust showed that “the experience of the extermination camp dramatically focuses on the main question that the modern condition engenders: that of the witness.”<sup>51</sup> Vecchi states that the position of the witness stand proves that “between factum and fictum there is always a troubled and complex relation,” while modernity exacerbates and radicalises the relation between memory and history, the passage from the individual to the collective dimension of the past, and therefore the role of the witness in the development of historiography in filling in any factual lacunae.<sup>52</sup>

Vecchi observes that the canon of literary treatments of the Colonial War features the convergence between two key paradigms, namely the melancholy return to memory and the position of the witness, while highlighting that the dominant trait of this canonical literature is a self-doubting tendency to question the very act of writing: “the ethical preoccupation to fill in the lacuna of partial experience with an authorial act becomes an aesthetic element.”<sup>53</sup> These characteristics are particularly applicable to *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, in which the troubled relation between self and other and the difficulty of representation can be seen in the double narrative structure that opposes two different voices and views of the traumatic events. The impossibility of fully representing the experience of violence translates into a partial, constantly self-doubting account in which the individual position of the witness as survivor speaks about a shared collective experience. The silences and lacunae in Eva’s witness account, in which she collates all the other testimonies from the women whose voices had not been heard before, prove how the constant reliving of the trauma continues to affect the present. Yet, as Felman and Laub conclude, “the testimonial enterprise is yet another mode of struggle against the victims’ entrapment in trauma repetition, against their enslavement to the fate of victimisation,”<sup>54</sup> hence the need to speak up and make public this experience.

Similar to *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, the narrative of *A Árvore das Palavras* is based on different instances of memory triggering the understanding of truth, with a three part account featuring a first chapter, written in the first person and describing Gita’s idyllic childhood in Mozambique and her predominant identification with the African culture; a second part, written in the third person and combining a plurality of voices and temporal fragmentation, tracing

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<sup>51</sup> Vecchi, p. 391-2. [my translation]

<sup>52</sup> Vecchi, p. 392-4. [my translation]

<sup>53</sup> Vecchi, p. 398. [my translation]

<sup>54</sup> Felman and Laub, p. 70.

Amélia's and Laureano's difficult lives and struggles in Portugal, their motivation to begin a new life in the colony and their evolution as a couple; and a last part, written once again in the first person, which comes back to Gita, this time in the process of becoming an adult and understanding the way in which her parents' destinies have shaped her own, recovering her Portuguese heritage. The understanding of truth, namely in the characters' personal stories, is conditioned not only by the faithfulness of memory, but also by the child's own perception of reality. Moreover, direct communication between the characters is rare and often difficult, with each voice being mediated through that of the innocent girl with a superficial, often naïve view of the world.

Retracing Gita's memories of her early years, the first part reflects the child's deep fondness of her father and African maid, Lóia, while exacerbating her mother's strictness and sombreness. This distortion of reality and unilateral depiction of truth makes Gita an unreliable narrator, bringing into question the value of memory in recreating the family history. However, the girl redeems herself as a storyteller in the third chapter, offering not only a more impartial view of her parents' experiences in a more mature and wiser understanding of their struggles, but also adding her take on the tumultuous history of Mozambique at the time, in the early days of the Colonial War. Throughout the novel, the personal family history is juxtaposed with that of the country, depicting the difficulties of life in Africa for the indigenous Mozambicans and justifying their reasons to rise against the Portuguese domination, as well as the political situation in Portugal under Salazar, quoting Laureano's view of "an ill-governed country", 'badly run'"<sup>55</sup> by an obstinate leader who "sits rotting on his perch, surrounded by his fellow chickens, and listens to no one."<sup>56</sup> Gita's adolescence corresponds to the last years of Portuguese domination over Mozambique, as the country's fight for independence synchronises with the character's search for her own identity, in a journey of (self-)discovery at the border between remaining African and becoming Portuguese.

Gita's teenage years in Mozambique benefit from the country's privileged exposure to the modernising influence of South Africa, enjoying a degree of freedom and open-mindedness that Salazar's Portugal lacked. The girl and her friends are shocked to find out about the heavily controlled life in Lisbon, a place where "everything was forbidden,"<sup>57</sup> including every means of self-expression, where the population was sentenced to silence and obedience. Intensely

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<sup>55</sup> Teolinda Gersão, *The Word Tree*, trans. by Margaret Jull Costa, Dedalus Africa (Sawtry, UK: Dedalus, 2010), p. 50.

<sup>56</sup> Gersão, p. 54.

<sup>57</sup> Gersão, p. 171.

regulated under strict rules of good conduct, people in Portugal “lived in terror of ‘looking bad,’”<sup>58</sup> constantly worrying about maintaining a “composed and orderly”<sup>59</sup> appearance in regards to everything from clothes to everyday behaviour. As opposed to the emancipated position that Gita’s generation had in Mozambique, life for women in Portugal was constricted by fear, even in terms of their fashion choices: “the girls wouldn’t ever dream of wearing trousers, because that’s what boys wear and, of course, it would ‘look bad,’ and obviously they’d never wear shorts, and if you wore a bikini it would be the end of the world.”<sup>60</sup> Suppressed by a conservative regime that manipulated every aspect of their daily lives, Portuguese women were forced to “resemble prim little saints,”<sup>61</sup> permanently scrutinised by the public eye and the political police whose purpose was to ensure constant control over the population. This scrutiny thus resulted in a perpetual state of terror of not conforming:

*“They were afraid of everything, they wouldn’t take a step without glancing to either side, in case they were either getting ahead of the others or slipping behind; the streets were very narrow, and everything was small and mean, people clung together like a bunch of grapes, parents grandparents cousins godparents colleagues godchildren neighbours, all of them done up to the nines and unable to breathe for lack of air.”<sup>62</sup>*

Suffocated by the excessive social pressure of maintaining the pretence of perfection and humility, the population was subjugated by a culture of silence that forbade the public expression of a political conscience: “No one ever talked about politics because it was too dangerous and that’s why the newspapers, friends, relatives and neighbours all said the same thing, namely, nothing.”<sup>63</sup> This “narrow, torpid life”<sup>64</sup> envisaged by the fascist regime was also highly influenced by the conservative authority of the catholic church, promoting virtues such as chastity and purity: “They have to be virgins when they go to the altar because, if not, the country would collapse and the world come to an end.”<sup>65</sup> The precarious order imposed by these social, political and moral constraints had a paralysing effect on the entire Portuguese

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<sup>58</sup> Gersão, p. 171.

<sup>59</sup> Gersão, p. 171.

<sup>60</sup> Gersão, p. 171.

<sup>61</sup> Gersão, p. 171.

<sup>62</sup> Gersão, p. 172.

<sup>63</sup> Gersão, p. 173.

<sup>64</sup> Gersão, p. 173.

<sup>65</sup> Gersão, p. 173.

society during Salazar's regime, in contrast with the situation of the white settlers in Mozambique, who were able to behave and think much more freely.

When Gita makes the decision to go to university in Lisbon, as the only alternative to start a new life, she fears of being suffocated by the lack of liberty, but also of being misunderstood in her parents' country. While Portugal is ruled by conventionality, Mozambique is, to Gita, the land of individuality, in which even linguistics disobeys the rules in order to maintain its freedom of expression, making it an unrestricted "hybrid language, in which the grammar breaks down because [people] think differently and thinking has to be left free to happen."<sup>66</sup> Gita's affection for the country of her birth comes through both her childhood recollection and the teenage experience, convinced that "Africa was the most beautiful continent in the world,"<sup>67</sup> and singing its praises for the colourful versatility and unchained expressivity specific to Mozambique. Contrasting with the bleak, monotonous and oppressed life in Portugal during the dictatorship, the country as depicted in Gita's memories challenges the European preconception that sees Africa as primitive and uncivilised.

While Gita's depiction of Mozambique revolves around the country's beauty, immense variety and warmth, Amélia's views are ruled by her fear of the African vast unknown, reflective of the Portuguese perception of Africa and influenced by the colonial ideology that gave the metropolis the superiority to justify its civilising mission. Thus, rather than looking at the poverty and social issues tormenting the black population of Mozambique, Amélia focuses on the idyllic situation of the rich, white Portuguese in Africa, who enjoyed the freedom and wealth of the Mozambican capital without the repression that Salazar's Portugal entailed. The truth in Amélia's memories fails to reveal the reality of African life, encompassing neither the racial oppressions of the colonial system nor the genuine African way of life, demonstrating once again the inability of memory to construct a reliable version of history.

The fragmented reality constructed through the fusion of different interpretations of truth originating from the experiences of the female characters in the two novels contributes to shaping an alternative history that contests a unilateral understanding of the past. The role of memory in the reinterpretation of official discourse entails a degree of subjectivity that relativises the experience of reality according to each character's perspective, as the vision of the past in *Os Gafanhotos* evolves into a complex retelling of history in Eva's account, and

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<sup>66</sup> Gersão, p. 204.

<sup>67</sup> Gersão, p. 80.

similarly Gita's and Amélia's versions of truth contribute to tracing the relativity of reality of African life.

### **The representation of blackness in *A Costa dos Marmúrios***

The dissonance between history and truth becomes furthermore obvious in the depiction of the Africans in *Os Gafanhotos* and Eva's account, opposing a quintessentially colonial vision of white supremacy to the point of view of the oppressed subaltern rising against Portuguese patriarchy. Seen through the eyes of the ranked militaries, Mozambique is described as an idealised, purely utopic continent where the Portuguese enjoy the privileges of a Europeanised environment, thanks to the civilising impact of neighbouring South Africa, and the freedoms that Salazar's Portugal was deprived of. As one of the officers at the reception tells the bride, Africa represents the perfect place at the crossroads between the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, offering the white settlers all the necessary comfort at the expense of the indigenous Mozambicans: "We have everything they had in the eighteenth century, except their hideous physiocratic beliefs, all they had in the nineteenth century except the freeing of slaves, and everything from the twentieth century, except television, a poison in the form of a screen."<sup>68</sup> The character's view of Africa, in an ironically named "brilliant summation,"<sup>69</sup> reflects the extreme colonialist standpoint of the Portuguese military, as he places the economic theory favouring the working class and television, a symbol of free speech and information in the 1960s, in the same category as the abolition of slavery, considering them the most damaging elements of the last three centuries. For the colonists, Africa represents the ideal balance between the progress of the twentieth century and the regressive abuse of slavery of the eighteenth century, ensuring a convenient and abundant lifestyle for the European settlers.

The narrator of *Os Gafanhotos* uses chromatic elements to frame the African landscape, which is recurrently described as yellow, pale and dry, the opposite of the luxuriant and abundant green that the Europeans imagined. As the Commander implies in his explanation to Evita, at the time still unfamiliar with her new country, Africa is nevertheless a territory still unknown to the European settlers, denouncing the conventional ideas promoted by the Portuguese in relation to their colonies: "People have crazy ideas about Africa. They think Africa is an unspoiled, impenetrable forest where a lion eats a black man, the black man eats a

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<sup>68</sup> Jorge, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Jorge, p. 5.

roasted rat, the rat eats lush crops, and everything is green and black.”<sup>70</sup> The complexity of the black continent is thus reduced to a recurring monochromatic description of Africa as “pale yellow, like the colour of whiskey,”<sup>71</sup> ironically denoting the deep lack of understanding that the Portuguese manifested towards the territory declared by the regime as an overseas province, and thus an integral part of the motherland.

Coming back to the contrasting representation between history and reality, the racial problem emerges when the idealised view of Africa, as seen by the white Portuguese community from the comfort of the hotel terrace, is overturned by Eva’s description of Beira as witnessed during her exploration of the shanty town, depicting the rougher side of colonisation and the cruel poverty that ruled over the lives of the indigenous Mozambicans. The streets filled with half-dressed children and the dilapidated buildings populated by poor African families are never mentioned in *Os Gafanhotos*, just as they never get to be seen by the Portuguese living at the Stella Maris or the militaries relocated in the rich neighbourhoods of the city. The simplified image of Africa as a flat land in various shades of yellow, amber and the colour of dust gains depth in Eva’s story as Mozambique reveals its multi-coloured facets once ignored by the Portuguese. Thus, the woman helps paint Africa in a completely different light, proving the complexity of a continent that the Europeans were yet to discover, as she examines the miserable reality of the day to day life outside the secluded comfort of the hotel.

When the conversation at the reception turns towards the African uprising, condescendingly called a mere “savage rebellion” by the narrator, mirroring the men’s views on their military mission, it risks turning the good-humoured atmosphere of the party into a serious political debate exclusively reserved to men: “It was too early to call it an afternoon, much too early still to talk about war; besides, this wasn’t really a war but merely a rebellion being carried out by savages.”<sup>72</sup> The African revolts are no reason of concern for the Portuguese men, and nothing but a cause of ennui for women towards their husband’s military conversations. The narrator’s voice reflects the perspective of the privileged white male, full of contempt and even annoyance with the Africans, resenting them for causing an uproar that disturbs their pleasant, peaceful lives: “they hadn’t invented the wheel, or writing, or calculus, or historical narrative, and now someone had armed them to carry out a rebellion.”<sup>73</sup> Refusing

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<sup>70</sup> Jorge, p. 4.

<sup>71</sup> Jorge, p. 4.

<sup>72</sup> Jorge, p. 6.

<sup>73</sup> Jorge, p. 6.

to understand the Africans' motivation for fighting for independence, the Portuguese are simply, narrow-mindedly irritated with the necessity of spending their own time and resources to discourage the rebellion that risked to affect their comfort in Africa.

In her account, Eva comments on the Portuguese disregard of the war in Africa, as the military, reflecting the regime's propaganda, calls it a mere revolt and refuses to use the word 'war' proper. In an ironic polysemy, the noun is trivialised in its use to define day-to-day affairs, such as pregnancy and raising children, small local businesses or household chores, thus stripping the word of any impact. As Eva notices, this entire mechanism was intended to diminish the significance of the Africans' fight for independence, as "the devaluation of the word corresponded to an extremely clever and highly disguised mental attitude"<sup>74</sup> aimed at reinforcing the Africans' inferiority by ridiculing their cause. As Moutinho observes, throughout the narrative of *Os Gafanhotos*, the word is metonymically substituted with Mueda, the capital of the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado, where the Portuguese troops were heading to during the story; the name of the city stands for a "suppressed signified"<sup>75</sup> aimed at hiding any traces of war, similarly to the policy of the Estado Novo at the time, which insisted on maintaining the secrecy of the armed conflict.

The night is marked by the news of the tragic deaths of African men, whose lifeless bodies are carried by sea towards the shores under the terrified eyes of the wedding attendees. The countless mysterious deaths stir confusion and stupefaction among the Portuguese guests on the hotel terrace, witnessing the grotesque scene of piles of deceased bodies being disposed of in garbage dumpers, "to sweep the tragedy away from the city view,"<sup>76</sup> their memories marked by the image of "the white skin on the soles of the black men's feet, protruding from the dumpers as they hauled them away."<sup>77</sup> In an attempt to find a justification for the tragedy, one of the majors at the party launches the hypothesis of a collective suicide among the defeated peoples, making an analogy to the fate of the Incas after the death of their leader Atahualpa Yupanqui, as the Africans realise that "they would never be autonomous and independent."<sup>78</sup> Other guests dismiss the assumption of an honourable political gesture through suicide and believe that the dead bodies should be left to decompose on the beach, making an example of them to prove the Portuguese mission in Africa and thus justify a violent war: "They should

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<sup>74</sup> Jorge, p. 71.

<sup>75</sup> Moutinho, pp. 81–2.

<sup>76</sup> Jorge, p. 12.

<sup>77</sup> Jorge, p. 12.

<sup>78</sup> Jorge, p. 13.

have let them lie out there and rot in the sun, so others can understand our cause, our reason for being here, and our determination.”<sup>79</sup>

Simultaneously with the fallen African corpses, the night is filled with a thick cloud of flying locusts, covering the lamps in their green hue and making the atmosphere too dense for the wedding guests to see beyond the terrace, just like “the fog on the cliffs in Europe”<sup>80</sup> or “as the snow falls in the cold countries.”<sup>81</sup> In Eva’s memories, the locusts take over the entire landscape, turning the ocean into a sea of green wings in their slow, peaceful conquest of the African atmosphere, forgetting about the devastating plague that they inflict upon the local crops. As they seem to simply blend into the scenery, with their barely perceptible humming that lacks the strength to quieten the loud voices of the Portuguese militaries, the locusts taking over the city symbolise the Mozambicans, quietened by centuries of colonial oppression, yet persistently murmuring against the white occupation. As Moutinho notices, the whispering sounds of the locusts representing the Africans contribute to creating the complex polyphony of the novel, in which opposing forces fight over the right to determine the course of history.<sup>82</sup>

On the day after the wedding, it is the explanation of captain Jaime Forza Leal, “unexpected but at the same time so revealing,”<sup>83</sup> that sheds light on the event, making the tragedy appear like a mere sign of the mindlessness of the Africans who discovered a shipping of twenty methyl alcohol cans and confused them with white wine, thus leading to the absurd, reckless death of countless men. The captain’s account of the ridiculous accident comes as a revelation for the Europeans, whose shock quickly turns into complete lack of interest, devoid of any compassion towards the tragedy: “Many of the wedding guests were initially astonished at the blacks’ stupidity. Then they felt hatred for their stupidity, and, after that, indifference. It was difficult to feel solidarity with anyone who died because of such stupidity as those blacks.”<sup>84</sup> Immune to the sound of the dumpers carrying away corpses, “with such methodical regularity that they might have been loading dirt,”<sup>85</sup> and uninvolved with the fate of the tragically dead and those left to mourn them, the guests are revolted at the “acrid, clammy flavour of stupidity”<sup>86</sup> and believe it their mission to intervene in the colony for the sake of the indigenous Mozambicans, which are seen as a mere “bunch of savages that needed to be

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<sup>79</sup> Jorge, p. 14.

<sup>80</sup> Jorge, p. 27.

<sup>81</sup> Jorge, p. 200.

<sup>82</sup> Moutinho, pp. 84–85.

<sup>83</sup> Jorge, p. 17.

<sup>84</sup> Jorge, p. 17.

<sup>85</sup> Jorge, p. 23.

<sup>86</sup> Jorge, p. 17.

protected from themselves.”<sup>87</sup> The Portuguese guests at the Stella Maris continue their evening with dinner on the terrace so they would not miss the scene on the beach, which soon becomes a spectacle to the viewers: “Now that their knowledge had ended up producing coldness and distance, they could view what they saw as a kind of hunting scene. The question remained, however, what they could do to resolve the colony’s situation.”<sup>88</sup> Victims of their own ignorance, the Africans become no more than dead bodies in the arena, for the enjoyment of the Portuguese spectators, no different to those in a Roman amphitheatre entertained by the sight of Christians devoured by hungry lions.

Debating about the best solution to resolve the conflict in Mozambique, “this dramatic colony in the shape of an elongated heart,”<sup>89</sup> one of the paratroopers voices the frustration of the marginalised position that Portugal and its African colony share on an international level, politically and economically cornered outside the boundaries of global power: “Mozambique is to Southern Africa what the Iberian Peninsula is to Europe – they are both as the hem is to the pants.”<sup>90</sup> In order to solve the issues in Mozambique, the general proposes voluntary castration and sterilisation to curb the excessive birth rate in Portuguese Africa, in an attempt to exterminate, rather than educate and support progress in the colony, blaming the Mozambicans for the state of their country and of Portugal altogether: “If we had got some strong, determined blacks, fighters, we, the colonisers, would have emerged from our feebleness. They’re the ones to blame, and if we seem powerful to them it’s because they themselves are so weak. We have only them to fault.”<sup>91</sup> Invoking the Mozambicans’ weakness of character as the main cause for Portugal’s failure in Africa, the military find a simple justification for the brutality of the war. Convinced of the legitimacy of their mission in Africa, the armed forces believe that their presence in Mozambique helps defend the international interests of Europe, as “Lisbon had begun to seem like a village with church bells”<sup>92</sup> for them.

The depiction of the methyl alcohol poisonings in *Os Gafanhotos* is criticised in Eva’s account for its oversimplification, purposely omitting the gruesome details of the violent deaths through its constant effort of maintaining the deceptiveness of appearances. Thus, the corpses washed ashore with their eyes closed, in a seemingly peaceful way, reflect what Eva calls a “beautiful, complete and unified death, one that can only exist as desire,”<sup>93</sup> in a romanticised

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<sup>87</sup> Jorge, p. 17.

<sup>88</sup> Jorge, p. 18.

<sup>89</sup> Jorge, p. 18.

<sup>90</sup> Jorge, p. 22.

<sup>91</sup> Jorge, p. 23.

<sup>92</sup> Jorge, p. 25.

<sup>93</sup> Jorge, p. 57-8.

depiction of a gruesome scene. Yet, as Eva reveals, in reality, the black bodies suffered the aggressions of poison and the mutilation of violent ocean waves, appearing as “swollen and battered by the water to the point of being dismembered”<sup>94</sup> and surrounded by thick clouds of mosquitoes feeding on the rotten flesh. As the deaths intensify throughout the city, the authorities and the press maintain a complete silence, omitting to even mention the cruel tragedy that hits the African community: “It was a question of fairness: if they omitted the deaths and the suffering of the Portuguese soldiers fallen in combat, what reason was there to harm the more sensible people with the news of the voluntary death of some alcohol-thirsty blacks? If they died, let them die.”<sup>95</sup> And instead of feeling any trace of sympathy or remorse for the victims, the Portuguese lament the financial impact of losing the hotel and restaurant staff, encouraging the army to inflict an even harsher punishment upon the rebellious tribes.

When she discovers a bottle of methyl alcohol with a glued wine label, left in a bag on the beach, Eva notices that the poison smell coincides with that of the whiskey bottles that she had spotted in an abandoned house that used to belong to white settlers. By denouncing the disguised use of poison to kill the Africans, she revolts against the atrocities that the Portuguese committed in Mozambique and tries to have the truth publicly revealed in the newspapers. Eva’s indignation with the retelling of history in *Os Gafanhotos* makes her fight for exposing the truth and changing the reality through the power of speech: “I want to go to the top of a building and scream out. (...) ‘They’re quietly poisoning people here.’ The university gave me faith in a voice clamouring from the top of a building. A voice that clamours in the desert but clamour it does.”<sup>96</sup> While giving silenced women a voice to reveal the sufferings of domestic violence in the military families at the Stella Maris, Eva also denounces the cruel and unfair treatment of the Mozambicans spanning from a position of white supremacy during the African wars.

The same way as she reveals, one by one, the names and stories of the anonymous women at the wedding reception, Eva offers an elaborate depiction of the identities of the more notable black victims, thus offering uniqueness to the mass of unnamed, identical bodies mentioned in the short story. She starts with the example of Bernardo, the receptionist at the hotel, loved by everyone and seen “as symbolic a figure as the flag, or, more than a flag, an elaborate allegory.”<sup>97</sup> While a popular figure for the residents of Stella Maris, his story remains

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<sup>94</sup> Jorge, p. 58.

<sup>95</sup> Jorge, p. 58.

<sup>96</sup> Jorge, p. 127.

<sup>97</sup> Jorge, p. 84.

unmentioned in *Os Gafanhotos*, highlighting the insignificance of the black victims that would otherwise interfere with the harmonious atmosphere: “Had you met the receptionist, how he would have ruined the linearity of your creation, how he would have agitated, amidst the naked, drowned bodies, his own unique body dressed in white and blue!”<sup>98</sup> In Eva’s extensive two-page description, Bernardo becomes the very symbol of the Portuguese civilising mission in Africa, admired for his ability to memorise all the phone numbers by the second time he used them, an example of recollective intelligence proving “that Africa could have kept a memory of herself had she wanted and chosen to.”<sup>99</sup> The Portuguese are proud of welcoming the receptionist in their closed community, turning him into an emblem of integration thanks to his honesty, professionalism and enthusiasm, qualities that they looked for in every Mozambican, yet maintaining the primitivism of his origins to reinforce the gap between the two races and the white superiority: “It was important for him to explain, here in front of all the people vigorously fanning themselves in the lobby, so they could understand how a savage wildness beat drums in the interior of Africa, where the rebellion was coming from.”<sup>100</sup> Constantly looked down on by the whites, who considered themselves “naturally superior,” the only way for the Africans to gain any rights in the society, including that of having a profession, was to become assimilated, in order to receive even the smallest benefits of “equality by actually becoming ‘Portuguese,’”<sup>101</sup> as Mondlane notes. While the indigenous people were treated like slaves, devoid of political rights or access to education, the assimilated Africans became candidates to Portuguese citizenship, highlighting at the same time the Portuguese superiority over their conquered peoples. Thus, Bernardo’s death by methyl alcohol, like many of his peers perceived as uncivilised and barbaric, denounces the failure of the Portuguese civilising mission in Mozambique, shaking to the ground the myth of the empire.

In support of her pursuit to depict the realities of racial violence, Eva’s exposure of truth, fuelled by the way in which “the invisible muscles can have a special role in the organisation of historical facts,”<sup>102</sup> culminates with the death of the white pianist at the Grande Hotel Central, epitomising the tragedy that had initially only affected the Africans: “The dead man was carried away like any exceptional dead man. He was, indeed, too exceptional because within a few hours it was discovered that the old pianist, a white man, had, just like any other

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<sup>98</sup> Jorge, p. 84.

<sup>99</sup> Jorge, p. 85.

<sup>100</sup> Jorge, p. 85.

<sup>101</sup> Mondlane, p. 37.

<sup>102</sup> Jorge, p. 195.

black man, drunk methyl alcohol.”<sup>103</sup> Initially mentioned in *Os Gafanhotos*, the white casualty stirs indignation amongst the Portuguese, who are left in utter disbelief of the unexpected event signalling a cross-racial evolution: “But how could a white man have stupidly allowed himself to be poisoned with methanol and accept sleeping his final sleep among blacks, how could he choose the dump truck as the final means of transportation to his final resting place?”<sup>104</sup> The image of the white man behaving negatively like the indigenous Mozambicans illustrates the demonisation of the Africans in the Portuguese collective mentality, revealing a deeply rooted racism that barbarises and subjugates the locals.

However, in Eva’s account, the death of the old pianist, the first white man to have been poisoned with methyl alcohol, contributes to unmasking the truth behind the series of deaths believed to have been the result of the Africans’ ignorance. Furthermore, the exceptional death of a white man becomes a turning point not only in Eva’s narrative, but also in raising awareness for the Portuguese community at the Stella Maris, as “the dead man had more noise on the occasion of his death than he had ever had music in his entire life.”<sup>105</sup> While the Portuguese officers initially blamed the Africans’ mindlessness and ignorance for getting themselves killed, they later on claimed that the Mozambicans had stolen the poison and hidden it in alcohol bottles in bars to take revenge on the whites. However, Eva knows that the Mozambicans’ countless deaths could not be justified by such a simplistic hypothesis. Her entire definition of history and truth is based on the contribution of those unseen minor characters involved in tragic coincidences that form the intricate network of reality, even when they are left outside the official chronicles: “in my concept of History there is room for the influence of invisible muscles that lower and raise the anus.”<sup>106</sup> Reinterpreting history to give a voice to the colonised subaltern, the novel thus reveals not only the true economics of exploitation and cultural deprivation of the black Mozambicans, but also the blatant imperialist ignorance of Eurocentrism, in its false superiority and overt racism.

In *Os Gafanhotos*, the indigenous Mozambicans are portrayed by the Portuguese as weak and ignorant, blamed for their own frailty of character as the whites relinquish any responsibility. Eva’s story radically changes the understanding of the Africans, uncovering their suffering during the war, whether guerrilla fighters or innocent civilians, describing them as “frightened blacks with dirt under their fingernails, their teeth sharpened on stones, as if in

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<sup>103</sup> Jorge, p. 188.

<sup>104</sup> Jorge, p. 28.

<sup>105</sup> Jorge, p. 200.

<sup>106</sup> Jorge, p. 203.

an era prior to iron and the plough.”<sup>107</sup> Not only are the Mozambicans lacking the military weapons to fight a fair war, but they are also massacred in their cities and villages, as the Portuguese tear their communities apart, killing women and children. Thus, in her depiction of reality, Eva also includes the shameful horrors of the colonial wars with references to infamous and lesser known massacres perpetrated by the Portuguese in Mozambique, condemning the unjustified atrocities performed not only against the revolutionary forces, but on countless civilians: “That will be the smell that will rise from Wiriamu, Juwau, Mucumbura; that will be the smell rising from the murdered, from the burning victims, from those burned alive, those who have their scant memory preserved in a glass sculpture staked to the ground like a stick, with half a dozen bones inside it for show.”<sup>108</sup> As Helena uncovers the confidential photographs of her husband’s company in which Luís Alex was a lieutenant, the veil of ignorance is lifted off Eva’s eyes and the History pages are inscribed with the numerous war crimes committed by the Portuguese army, in missions disguised under atrocious fictional names such as Crazy Tiger, Poisonous Viper or Ferocious Wolf. Without singling out any of the cruel events in the development of the Colonial War, these missions recalled in Eva’s story, despite having fictional names, point towards real events occurred in places named throughout the novel, like Cabo Delgado, Namua, Nangololo, Miteda, Capoca, Nancatari, Mueda and Sagal.

The tensions between *Os Gafanhotos* and Eva’s account in the representation of the Africans prove how unknowledgeable the Portuguese really are in understanding their colony, which remains an impenetrable other, while the militaries demonstrate “a deep-seated anxiety,”<sup>109</sup> as Isabel Moutinho defines it, given by the fear that the roles in History are about to be reversed. Thus, *A Costa dos Murmúrios* offers a gradual and elaborate unmasking of the racism embedded at the very heart of the empire, highlighting the unjust treatment of the Africans not only during the war, but also throughout the colonial domination. Eva’s critique reveals centuries of physical, social and cultural violence, manifested through the animalisation of the Africans, seen as underdeveloped and irrational through the Eurocentric model of thinking.

### **The representation of blackness in *A Árvore das Palavras***

The description of race in *A Árvore das Palavras* comes from two main sources, often radically opposed in their views, namely Amélia’s attitude towards Africa, who maintains a

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<sup>107</sup> Jorge, p. 78.

<sup>108</sup> Jorge, p. 265.

<sup>109</sup> Moutinho, p. 80.

cautious distance representative of the Portuguese colonial ideology, and Gita's and Laureano's exploratory travels through the city of Lourenço Marques, whose eyes are attuned to observing not only the beauties of Mozambique, but also the oppression of its indigenous population. These two perspectives come together in a narrative that offers a complex understanding of the black experience under Portuguese rule in the twentieth century before and at the beginning of the African war of independence.

From the very beginning of the novel, Amélia's deep distrust and scepticism towards Africa become obvious as they turn into a paranoid fear of the black Mozambicans, which she believes capable of causing death through their magic ability to cast spells, purely motivated by hatred for the white invaders: "You can't trust the blacks," Amélia says. "Because they hate us and wish us ill. They put the evil eye on us and can bring us illness or even death. Yes, your friend, your own friend can cause you to die."<sup>110</sup> Alone in a world that she does not understand, the African way of life remains a mystery for Amélia, who prefers to isolate herself from any neighbours or acquaintances, refusing to adjust to her adoptive country. Her words seem to be voicing the whites' mistrust of the indigenous Mozambicans: "Oh, those blacks and their lies," says Amélia. "They say their name's José, João or Joaquim da Silva, then one day, for some reason, it turns out they're called Bulande, Panguene, Maimige, Comenhane or Chinguizo. We know nothing about them. Absolutely nothing."<sup>111</sup> Failing to understand the way the Africans live, adopting Portuguese names to converge with the colonisers, the woman fears the fatal influence of Africa: "We can't go looking for them [the Africans] because we don't know where they live, they have no address, they live in vague, unnamed places, in straw-thatched huts that all look the same, in shanty-towns."<sup>112</sup> Considering the Africans as hard to identify as "a needle in a haystack," Amélia believes the indigenous Mozambicans lack individualism, forming an undefined, uniform mass meant to confuse the Europeans, many of them oblivious to the local reality that the Mozambicans experienced.

For Amélia, Africa is a curse, a fatal illness that makes people lose their identity and buries everyone into a well of bottomless despair and mediocrity. The idea of the black race perceived as an infectious disease is frequently referred to in Amélia's behaviour towards the Mozambicans and her views on Africa. When she reluctantly hires a black local woman, Lóia, as a wet nurse to help raise her new-born daughter, she fears the effects of improper hygiene on the baby's health, remaining oblivious to the powerful influence that the African woman

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<sup>110</sup> Gersão, p. 19.

<sup>111</sup> Gersão, p. 40.

<sup>112</sup> Gersão, pp. 28–29.

would have on the baby: “But Lóia refuses to apply any disinfectant to her nipples, and Gita catches the very worst of all contagions: she becomes as black as Lóia.”<sup>113</sup> To Amélia, not only is Africa a source of life-threatening viruses and illness through what Europeans perceive as a poor standard of cleanliness, but it becomes a source of infection that taints the whiteness of the Portuguese.

Amélia’s concept of racial hierarchy places the Africans at the bottom of the pyramid, closely followed by the dark-skinned Portuguese, whereas the rich, fair-skinned Northern Europeans represent the image of social superiority that she aims to achieve through the artifice of lighter hair dye. She is fascinated with the Anglo-Saxon world and overcome with admiration for foreign western languages in general and the South African culture in particular. She never fulfils her dream of visiting the “splendid and modern”<sup>114</sup> Capetown, with its tall skyscrapers resembling New York, as she once heard someone on the boat to Mozambique saying, the comfortable holiday destination of the Portuguese elites in Lourenço Marques. Amélia’s idealised image of South Africa is contrasted with Gita’s commentary on racial segregation, in which the country loses the idyllic aura given by Amélia’s fascination with the Anglo-Saxon culture. On the contrary, Gita’s narrative condemns the strict segregation of Whites and “Non-Whites” in South Africa, the revolting absurd of stigmatising the dark colour of the skin as an illness that might become contagious: “Everything was separate, a line had been drawn between them, an invisible wall so obvious that you were constantly bumping up against it with body and eyes.”<sup>115</sup> Once again, the idea of race seen as a contagious disease that could pollute the purity of the whites is ironically condemned through the child’s innocent voice.

Lóia’s character is built in contrast with the image of the white Portuguese woman that remains a stranger to the land throughout her entire life. Warm, patient and cheerful, her eyes constantly shining with joy, the black woman reigns over her side of the house through perfect communion with the elements of nature, letting things follow their natural course and the body to “join earth to sky.”<sup>116</sup> Magically endowed with the power of life and death over the plants and animals in the garden, Lóia is seen by Gita as the centre of her universe, “immobile, fixed to one spot, with everything else revolving around her.”<sup>117</sup> Always laughing in her simple love

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<sup>113</sup> Gersão, p. 17.

<sup>114</sup> Gersão, p. 111.

<sup>115</sup> Gersão, p. 75.

<sup>116</sup> Gersão, p. 16.

<sup>117</sup> Gersão, p. 16.

for life, the woman's "infectious"<sup>118</sup> happiness is a totally different type of contagion, once again conflicting with Amélia's views of Africa. However, the simplicity, ingenuity and naturalness that characterise Lóia's depiction can also be interpreted as an unconsciously racist view of a white narrator who reduces the representation of the indigenous Mozambicans to a set of basic primitive traits lacking profundity. As Benita Parry notices, the exclusion of the black woman from feminist individualism was determined by her positioning "on the boundary between human and animal as the object of imperialism's social-mission or soul-making."<sup>119</sup> Thus, Lóia's frequent silence, marked by scarce contributions to the conversation, in often simple sentences and platitudes, supports an inferiorising depiction of the black woman subject, who is seen as infantile, ingénue and guided by instinct and superstition rather than mature judgement.

The narrative also juxtaposes Amélia's secret Sunday strolls in the rich neighbourhood of Sommershild and her bitterness of not being part of the Portuguese elites with Laureano's sadness as he witnesses the difficulties endured by the Africans. He understands the challenges of life in Mozambique, such as the many miles of walking that each can of water would cost and the struggles that the Africans have to endure every day: "He had once met a woman who had called her son Sofrimento – Suffering. A small black boy called Sofrimento Nassiaaca."<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, Laureano associates himself with the world of the poor, feeling closer to the Africans that lead a plain yet fulfilling life, rather than being governed by the ambition to overcome his condition: "He knew and he had seen how the Black people suffered, he knew it from the inside, he could put himself in their place, because he didn't feel (...) any distance from them."<sup>121</sup> Feeling at peace with his gentle and fair treatment of the indigenous Mozambicans, Laureano is happy to be one day buried in a tomb among the Africans without any fear of the final judgement that would punish those who had mistreated and caused their suffering, "the vampires who had sucked the blood from the Blacks."<sup>122</sup> While visiting the *caniço*, the slums where most locals lived, Laureano shows his daughter the cruel reality of the African life: "The desolate streets of the Black people... As if nothing mattered and everything that was going wrong would, inevitably, only get worse. Dead people walking about in the light of day."<sup>123</sup> Often lacking the basic means of subsistence, the indigenous community is forced

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<sup>118</sup> Gersão, p. 39.

<sup>119</sup> Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*, Postcolonial Literatures (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 21.

<sup>120</sup> Gersão, p. 121.

<sup>121</sup> Gersão, p. 125.

<sup>122</sup> Gersão, p. 126.

<sup>123</sup> Gersão, p. 167.

to live outside the city at the limit of starvation, at the margins of a civilisation that the Portuguese claimed to have built in their colony.

The racial division between the whites and the indigenous Africans influences the very geography of Lourenço Marques, creating an economically and socially determined separation between the city of the rich and that of the poor, in which even the elements of nature conspire in reinforcing the differences between the two communities:

*“Meanwhile, the rainy season arrived and, as usual, the city was divided in two, which was a blessing on one side and a curse on the other: in the city of the Whites, the rain washed the buildings and the streets clean, watered the gardens and caused flowers to bloom, but it opened deep wounds in the city of the Blacks, which was transformed into a swamp. The sand became mud, the ditches overflowed with excrement; filthy, stinking water and detritus invaded the houses.*

*Between the concrete city and the airport, the swamp filled everything and was everything – filth, flies, piles of rubbish, sewers, putrid smells, parasites, and mosquitos that would spread still further when the wind was in the wrong direction.”<sup>124</sup>*

Mild and purifying on the white city, while unforgiving and cruel on that of the Mozambicans, rain offers a reminder that poverty and misery always find a way of eroding the lives of the poor, burying them even deeper in a state of despair invisible to the European settlers who could continue to enjoy all the comfort that their adoptive country offered. The houses in which the Africans lived were barely fit to shelter them from the adversities of the outside world, made of scraps “that looked like children’s drawings or abandoned stage-sets, fading in the sun: a door, two windows, one on each side, and below them a band of colour in bright blue, yellow or pink.”<sup>125</sup> The “thin, rickety roof”<sup>126</sup> could hardly shield the numerous starving families from the rainy season, leaving them vulnerable to the aggressive elements of African nature.

While Gita’s childhood memories reflect her fondness of Africa’s rich nature and wholesome lifestyle, her stepping into adulthood brings a change in her perspective on the Mozambican society, highlighting not only the level of poverty, but also the treatment of

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<sup>124</sup> Gersão, p. 168.

<sup>125</sup> Gersão, p. 166.

<sup>126</sup> Gersão, p. 166.

gender in the traditional African families. Gita criticises the exploitation of women, who were left in charge of looking after the children, sourcing water and wood for fire, feeding the man who “walks beside her like a king, while she carries everything, like a donkey pulling a cart.”<sup>127</sup> Despite their continuous efforts to fulfil their traditional duties, black women also often suffer through the pain of domestic violence, while being forced to enter an arranged marriage for the sole benefit of their families, and lacking any rights in their households: “the best food is always kept for the husband; when he sits down at the table, she doesn’t sit down with him, she eats the leftovers.”<sup>128</sup> Moreover, women were sometimes abandoned by men who would move away in search of a better life, or sharing a home with other wives in polygamous marriages, which pushes them to resort to desperate measures: “That’s why sometimes women run away, go down to the river in search of crocodiles, hang themselves from trees or flee into the jungle until they drop from hunger, thirst or exhaustion.”<sup>129</sup>

Poverty and the oppression of women are two of the aspects that turn the emerging war into an opportunity of economic, political and racial liberation, offering the hope for radical changes that would improve life for people in Africa, while maintaining their strong connection to nature and the customs they had been following for generations. Guided by humility towards the vastness of the universe and respect for the untamed natural world, in Gita’s view, Africans are depicted as wise and rational in their way of living, forever “bound to the earth, to cultivating the fields, to the old customs, to their children,”<sup>130</sup> and carrying on “a long line of time that passes through them and of which they are the guardians, unaware of the importance of everything under their guardianship – the gestures of rocking a child to sleep, of sowing, harvesting, lighting a fire, grinding maize.”<sup>131</sup> The smallest and most seemingly insignificant of gestures become building blocks of centuries-old rituals that inform the Africans’ relation with the elements of nature, fully integrated into the passage of time.

The complex depiction of the Africans in *A Árvore das Palavras* combines the polarised views of the Portuguese settlers through Amélia’s and Laureano’s perspectives, showing, once again, the European lack of understanding in what concerns the African civilisation, and the point of view of the white girl born in Mozambique, fond of her country of birth and open to seeing both its beauty and its curses. While *A Costa dos Murmúrios* offers a critique of imperialist racism in Africa, Gersão’s novel shows the devastating effects that colonialism had

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<sup>127</sup> Gersão, p. 176.

<sup>128</sup> Gersão, p. 176.

<sup>129</sup> Gersão, p. 176.

<sup>130</sup> Gersão, p. 177.

<sup>131</sup> Gersão, p. 177.

on the indigenous society, perpetuating poverty, human rights abuses and the biased treatment of women, all signs of a decaying nation whose only hope was the fight for liberation.

### **The white experience of race in Africa**

Similarly to the representation of blackness in Mozambique, *A Árvore das Palavras* offers a bifocal depiction of the white experience in Africa based on the contrast between Gita's fond memories of the country of her birth, who fully identifies herself with the African culture yet also embraces her Portuguese heritage, and Amélia's struggle to start a new life away from her home, failing to adapt to the African reality. The narrative structure itself outlines the delimitation between the two races, reflected in the boundaries of space and perception of the two main female characters with a contrastive understanding of Africa.

From the very opening sequence, in which the family house is described, Gersão's novel sets out to determine the limits of the space shared by the white Portuguese and the Mozambicans, underlining the separation of the two worlds colliding and coexisting under the same roof, with the White House governed by Amélia and the Black House belonging to Lóia, creating two parallel, distinctive spaces. The physical border separating the two houses is the garden, which can be interpreted as a low-scale representation of the wider colonial world, given the divergent attitudes that the two women manifest towards this space. Amélia views the garden as a wild jungle that needs to be tamed through order and discipline, while Lóia leaves nature to follow its course, rejoicing at the constant movement and evolution of this wilderness and banishing any restrictions and limitations of the space: "It wasn't a garden, it was a wilderness, which you either loved or hated; there were no half measures, because you couldn't compete with it. It was there and it surrounded us, and you were either part of it or you weren't. Amélia wasn't."<sup>132</sup> Even as a child, Gita intuitively understands that her mother's rejection of Africa is materialised in her refusal to embrace the untameable wilderness of the garden, contrasting with her own daughter's strong sense of belonging to Mozambique.

The child spends her days in the wild garden and learns to enjoy the beauty of nature in motion, becoming part of this world and gaining a sense of empowerment through her communion with nature: "Yes, everything in the yard danced, the leaves, the earth, the spots of sunlight, the branches, the trees, the shadows. They danced and had no limits, nothing did, not even your own body, which grew in all directions and was as big as the world."<sup>133</sup> The careless and idyllic childhood, spent at the heart of a natural space untainted by civilisation and

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<sup>132</sup> Gersão, p. 10.

<sup>133</sup> Gersão, p. 14.

order, helps to shape the girl's identity and increases her sense of belonging to the Black House and, in a wider sense, to Africa. The Black House knows no thresholds or haste that would limit her existence, honouring Lóia's roots to a magical, ritualised land.

Gita is the character that bridges the Portuguese and the African worlds, illustrating an ideal balance between the two contrasts. Neither fully Portuguese, nor entirely African given the colour of her skin, Gita's non-identity offers her a vantage point in the analysis of race, endowing the character with a critical gaze able to notice both the distinctions and similarities between the two races. Born and raised in Mozambique, Gita's attachment to her black nurse encourages her deep connection to Africa, while the distant and almost mechanical mother pushes her away with the stiff dresses that constrict the little girl into feeling like a dead mannequin. Thus, the lines between black and white are blurred in Gita's innocent eyes, allowing her to understand that the colour of her skin is only the surface of what defines her as a human being, while also perceiving the racial distinction more clearly through her mixed identity. She enjoys the equalising power of the night that erases any differences and makes everyone the same, helping reveal her "black" face and soul: "it seemed to me that at night there were no real differences. I rediscovered my dark face and lived with Laureano and Lóia in the Black House."<sup>134</sup> Thus, Gita's pure young mind is not racially biased by the imperialist mentality, failing to understand the differences that skin colour creates for the adults around her, refusing to let herself influenced by the social constructs of race.

The fluidity between race, colour and identity is reiterated when Gita remembers Lóia's wise words that transpire a deep understanding of her old mistress, crossing racial and social boundaries: "'She has a heavy heart. (...) 'It beats lightly, but it's heavy. And cold as stone.'"<sup>135</sup> The black woman's endeavour to justify Amélia's radical and sometimes unfathomable behaviour, despite it being frequently directed against herself and the Africans, appears as an attempt to redeem Amélia's tainted, deeply troubled image: "'She has a *lot* of problems.' Lóia's white face making Amélia's black face white. Black and white are variable concepts, I always knew that. Lóia was white. Luminous. She talked about Amélia with something akin to pity, that close companion to understanding: 'She's dead. She's alive, but she's dead.'"<sup>136</sup> Once again, the fluctuating concepts of black and white are juxtaposed; Lóia's good nature, wisdom and mindfulness emanate a luminous and positive light, rendering her white in the eyes of the people around her, while Amélia's sadness and tormented life heavily darken her image,

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<sup>134</sup> Gersão, p. 41.

<sup>135</sup> Gersão, p. 24.

<sup>136</sup> Gersão, p. 189.

making Gita see her mother as a heavy, black soul during her entire childhood. The act of revisiting the past brings Amélia's dark image to light, and Lóia's compassionate judgement contributes to changing Gita's perception and finally offering forgiveness.

Amélia's experience of Africa is representative of the white immigration wave in the first decades of the twentieth century, encouraged as an essential requirement of Portugal's "colonising mission" in Africa. The woman belonged to the modest rural working class, unskilled, with a low level of education and poor prospects in Portugal, in search of a better economic and social position in the colonies. According to Malyn Newitt, "the fact that most of the emigrants were poor and illiterate peasants was moulded to fit the colonial ideology, for it was claimed that they would bring the traditional peasant virtues, such as thrift and industry, to the task of developing Africa."<sup>137</sup> Contrary to the expectations of the nationalist regime, the vast majority of white settlers such as Amélia failed to make any efforts towards the promotion of Portuguese values, striving to remain isolated, with reduced interracial contact with the indigenous populations. However, as Newitt notes, due to Portugal's multi-racial politics aimed at reaffirming its possession of the African colonies, the poor black and white communities occupied similar positions in the colonial society, with most of them doing similar jobs like domestic servants and labourers, with the effect of creating a racially inclusive environment "where the realities of class were frequently greater than the prejudice of colour."<sup>138</sup>

Coming back to Amélia's definition of racial hierarchy, which was loosely based on social status and thus favoured the white Anglo-Saxons over the Portuguese and the Mozambicans, the division between races gains a new dimension through her desire to be seen as a foreigner. In this way, she gradually creates a new persona for herself through the image of Patrícia Heart, a tall, blonde, "pretty, rich, much-admired woman"<sup>139</sup> which offers Amélia an escape from the life that had disappointed her, denying a reality in which she is closer to the bottom of her racial hierarchy than to the top she aspires to. Despite her ambitious goals, Amélia is no more than a servant in the luxurious houses of the white Portuguese elite, whose doors remain permanently closed, "utterly inaccessible, as if protected by a glass screen,"<sup>140</sup> making her face rejection from a world that she could only dream of belonging to: "But life decided to take you seriously and, having caught you making that first step, forced you to keep on walking. It wasn't right, but life was like that. Because of one small step, taken just for the

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<sup>137</sup> Newitt, p. 153.

<sup>138</sup> Newitt, p. 170.

<sup>139</sup> Gersão, p. 124.

<sup>140</sup> Gersão, p. 96.

hell of it, you could find yourself on the other side of the world, almost without knowing how.”<sup>141</sup> Working as a seamstress for a rich Portuguese family and eavesdropping on the phone conversations that the lady of the house, Dora Flávia, had with her wealthy friends, Amélia takes pleasure in hearing about the intrigues, rivalries and jealousies of the privileged ones, although their lack of discretion towards her highlights the degrading and disposable position that she occupied: “Dora felt free to say such things in front of her, just as she did in front of the cooks, the servants and the cleaners, because none of them existed: they were things, shadows, objects that passed through the house and would be thrown out tomorrow, as if they had never been there.”<sup>142</sup> As she remains invisible and easily replaceable in the eyes of the bourgeois families that she works for, Amélia herself feels that she is closer to the social status of her own servant Lóia. When the lady gives her a piece of unwanted ugly fabric, “as a more discreet way of throwing it in the rubbish,”<sup>143</sup> Amélia’s embarrassment makes her see herself as the Africans, “as if she were barefoot in the jungle and her white bosswoman had just given it to her as a tip.”<sup>144</sup> Her experience of Africa is a long series of humiliations and failed aspirations, deeply resenting the inferior position that she occupies in the colonial society, uncomfortably similar to her initial status in Portugal that she was trying to escape from by emigrating to Mozambique.

As opposed to Amélia, who tries to limit all racial interactions with the indigenous Mozambicans in an effort to distance herself from the social class that they represent, Laureano adopts a simple, modest and dignified way of life, taking inspiration from the Mozambicans’ attitude and beliefs: “You asked for a crumb, and God, if he chose, would give you food in abundance. That was what the Blacks did and so he did the same. He imitated them because they knew about these things. He asked life for a little happiness, the size of an ant’s leg, and life would give him happiness in abundance.”<sup>145</sup> He is portrayed as hardworking and open minded, willing to blend into the Mozambican society and fully aware of his condition on the social scale. Thus, the contrast between Laureano’s acceptance of his position, embracing the innate wisdom of Mozambicans, and Amélia’s refusal to conform to her status, aspiring to overcome her humble condition, shows the two extreme sides of the white experience of race in Gersão’s novel.

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<sup>141</sup> Gersão, p. 97.

<sup>142</sup> Gersão, p. 118.

<sup>143</sup> Gersão, p. 119.

<sup>144</sup> Gersão, p. 119.

<sup>145</sup> Gersão, p. 135.

Another defining episode in Gita's experience of Africa and a turning point in the girl's coming of age is her love story with Rodrigo, one of her schoolmates who comes from a rich Portuguese family in Lourenço Marques. The idyllic young love furiously ends when Gita lies to Rodrigo about being pregnant in order to test his reaction, and the boy accuses the girl of purposely planning to have a child to secure her own future. Gita had been forced to use the backdoor of Rodrigo's mansion to remain hidden from the young man's father, which makes her revolt against the condescending and deeply offensive attitude of the Portuguese rich. Thus, Gita ends up being rejected by the same elite that her mother had once envied and dreamt to be a part of, in a story that repeats itself for a second generation.

Following her mother's steps, she decides to flee Mozambique and start a new life, not in the exotic land of Australia, but in Salazar's Portugal, the country that her parents had abandoned a long time ago, that "very small rectangle on the map, on the other side of the world."<sup>146</sup> Her uncle offers her a room to share with his sister-in-law who helps around with the household chores, pointing towards her future status as a servant and similar to the life that Amélia had before leaving Portugal, in a bitter repetition of history. While fighting for the liberation of Mozambique, Gita dreams of gaining her own independence, far away from a home filled with the disappointment of first love, the abandonment of an estranged mother and an increasingly distant father. Gita's thoughts are, however, full of hope, as she imagines the future of Portugal changing under the explosion of an imminent revolution: "But it could be blown apart, be forced to rethink everything. The Old Man was on his throne, but surely we could knock him off."<sup>147</sup> The ending of the novel sees Gita's last day in Lourenço Marques, nostalgically thinking about the world she leaves behind, with "wide open spaces, broad horizons, and a tree that used to grow in my dreams and that reached up to the sky."<sup>148</sup>

Moving onto *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, the white experience of race is primarily depicted through the characters of Eva and the journalist, Álvaro Sabino, the first one being the observatory gaze reporting on the racial encounters, and the other one the medium through which Eva expands her gaze. As the woman maintains her objectivity towards the Africans by not engaging with the indigenous Mozambicans even when she exposes the whites' brutal exploitation of Africa, she remains nevertheless an outsider to life in Mozambique. Hence, the role of the journalist is that of providing the necessary insight for a more complete racial picture, especially given his mixed black and white identity. Moreover, the *mestiço* man

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<sup>146</sup> Gersão, p. 49.

<sup>147</sup> Gersão, p. 202.

<sup>148</sup> Gersão, pp. 203–4.

situated in between races was born and raised in Mozambique, but his intellectual profession marks a class distinction that places him on the side of the elites, the white Portuguese, while his work is put at the service of the Africans as he denounces the atrocities and injustices suffered by them, even though within the limits of strict fascist censorship. Additionally, the journalist has two illegitimate families, four children with his white girlfriend and another four with a black woman, which he equally supports from his modest salary as an employee of *The Hinterland* newspaper, ironically making a point of promoting racial equality through his sexual endeavours.

Álvaro Sabino's status as a mixed race person in the African society gives him certain privileges that only the Portuguese enjoyed, such as access to education and an intellectual profession, reminiscent of Mondlane's idea that "miscegenation is a means of cementing Portuguese domination over the indigenous culture."<sup>149</sup> While the mixed race persons benefitted from a position clearly superior to the indigenous Mozambicans, their progression within the Portuguese society was always limited within the boundaries defined by the Europeans, thus fuelling their support of the liberation movement that would free them from the chains of the restrictive colonial system.

Similar to Gita's complex racial distinctiveness, Álvaro Sabino's mixed ethnic, cultural and social structure creates a non-identity that places him at the limit between coloniser and colonised, between Africans and Europeans, in a position of his own choice over the fate of Mozambique. Benefitting from a high level of education, similar to that of middle-class white Portuguese, the journalist uses his political consciousness to proclaim his allegiance to the liberation movement, voicing his radical opposition to the European exploitation of Africa and condemning the brutality of white occupation, even if only through the use of poetic metaphors meant to disguise his political message from Salazar's censorship. In his "Involuntary Column," Álvaro Sabino praises Mozambique's fight for independence as his country rises against the Portuguese occupation that had it subjugated for centuries: "We pointed our lenses only at the outlines of our continents, and we saw. We saw, in the light of the flying emeralds, the outline of Africa shake itself off from under Europe, which, forever lying on top of it, had always possessed it. We saw Africa extend a leg over Europe and impale it, like a male impales, Europe's mouth, moaning, frail."<sup>150</sup> In his cryptic version of the events presented in *Os Gafanhotos*, the journalist refers to the swarm of insects as "flying emeralds," endowing them

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<sup>149</sup> Mondlane, p. 52.

<sup>150</sup> Jorge, p. 262.

with the allegorical meaning of harbingers of African freedom and evoking the fight that would end a long and devastating colonial rule.

Similar to the complex depiction of the African experience in colonial Mozambique, the representation of the Portuguese status combines a variety of perspectives that frame the multifaceted nature of race in Africa. The tensions between the two races forced to inhabit the same space in colonial society are illustrated through the positions of Amélia and Laureano in *A Árvore das Palavras*, both working class Portuguese immigrants with identical social and racial statuses yet radically different outlooks that break them apart. The European perspectives are complemented by Gita's point of view, the white Portuguese born in Africa, and the biracial journalist in *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, both sharing an intricate racial identity that offers them a vantage point in understanding the situation of Mozambique. Neither entirely Portuguese, nor fully African, the two characters embody the intricacy of the colonial society, showing the multilinear perception of race and challenging the imperialist multi-racial conviction according to which Portuguese immigration and miscegenation contributed to social equality through the European civilising mission.

Portugal's rich colonial history in Africa is marked by violence and racism, at the core of an unscrupulous empire that sought to validate its political and economic power at the expense of minorities. As seen in this chapter, the concepts of history, memory and truth are key to understanding not only the narratives, but also the racial tensions that the novels bring to light in colonial Mozambican society, challenging the myths of a maritime empire, multi-racialism and equality promoted by the Estado Novo propaganda. Contrasting fragmented accounts of a reality unaccounted by history, the novels help to shape an alternative representation of the subaltern within the Portuguese colonial and social system. The framing of the African experience of race in Mozambique reveals the Portuguese deep lack of knowledge and genuine interest in what concerns the situation of the indigenous Mozambicans in the colonial society, highlighting the inequalities and cruelty embedded in the empire. Thus, after having brought to light the social and gender inequalities of the patriarchal Estado Novo, the novels reveal the way in which the white European ruling of Africa perpetuated a corrupt system of violence and injustice against the black Mozambicans. Moreover, by giving women a voice through the strong and complex main female characters of Eva, Helena, Gita and Amélia, Lídia Jorge and Teolinda Gersão offer a multifaceted critique of the Portuguese society whose oppression of the minor is manifested in all of its structures.

## *Chapter Four: Memory and Archive in the Works of Joana Craveiro, Margarida Cardoso and Filipa César*

### **Introduction: defining the archive**

Postcolonialism marks the emergence of a new, different voice. While literature embodies the voice of the writer as witness who uses memory to bring back to life and offer a critique of the recent traumatic, unresolved past, as seen in the first part of this dissertation through the novels of Lúcia Jorge and Teolinda Gersão, contemporary visual artists and performers like Joana Craveiro, Margarida Cardoso and Filipa César, on the other hand, resort to uncovering the archives in order to bring together a plurality of voices. In doing so, they create mediations for the postcolonial subject and retrieve other voices as they become detached from themselves and motivated by a broader political rather than a strictly gender-oriented or national agenda.

While for the female writers, history was very close, an intimate and unmediated memory of events and traumas they experienced not long ago, for the next generation of artists history becomes the archive, in an attempt to retrieve the memories of the survivors and save the collective ability to remember. Thus, the generation of heirs takes over the post-historical duty of handling the public memory of the Portuguese empire, in the way it is remembered and forgotten, and of questioning the incompleteness and partiality of the national account. The artists take ownership of the responsibility and even urge to question a history that, sooner or later, will no longer have living witnesses, thus making it more susceptible to a canonised and unilateral interpretation. Moreover, the oversimplified perception that unmediated memory, in the form of testimony, is the most relevant and truthful form of memory, becomes a highly questionable topic for contemporary artists, thus bringing to light the problematic of collective memory.

As the female writers once did in the '80s and '90s, by giving a voice to those that have been silenced, contemporary artists reject the singular vision of history and explore the possibility of representation of a multiplicity of voices that were once unknown, forgotten or ignored. Thus, their focus on memory and trauma entails a rejection of linearity and unilaterality, no longer concerned with the veracity of the narrative, but with the performance

of memory. Between the extremes of conservation and destruction, opposing forces operating within the archive, lies a fertile ground of transgenerational (self-)discovery.

The preservation and reactivation of memory is often the main driver behind the works analysed in this dissertation, with a focus developing from personal and family history. Joana Craveiro looks back at her own and her parents' experience of the Revolution to uncover the role that her family played; Margarida Cardoso's works revisit Mozambique, the country of her childhood whose memory she is trying to restore and rediscover, closely connected to her father's involvement in the Colonial War; and Filipa César focuses on Guinea-Bissau, the country where her father did his military service during the war. More than just evocations of a lost past in need for rediscovery, their works are motivated by personal memory and the contribution of individual memory to understanding and disseminating collective history.

Unlike classic historical films, documentaries or plays, whose use of the archive constitutes a means of acknowledging and evoking historical truth and confirming the veracity of facts, the artists analysed in this thesis use these materials in a different manner by recreating the archive using original footage, photographs, objects or testimonials, and turning it into a subject rather than simply a source. The artists no longer see the archive as a mere anchor point for attesting the veracity of official history, but as a means of producing narratives that critically assess the relations of power at play in the making of historical documents and thus generate new meanings by deconstructing existing discourses of power. In her essay, *Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance*, Ann Laura Stoler comments on the transition from extraction to ethnography in contemporary postcolonial studies, thus from archive-as-source to archive-as-subject, making the case for archives to be seen "not as sites of knowledge retrieval but of knowledge production"<sup>1</sup> and prompting a "rethinking of the materiality and imaginary of collections and what kinds of truth-claims lie in documentation."<sup>2</sup> In her argument, Stoler invokes Jacques Derrida's statement that "there is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory,"<sup>3</sup> as well as Michel Foucault's view that the archive is "the law of what can be said, (...) the general system of the formation and transformation of statements."<sup>4</sup> Forces of power and control that are exerted over the colonial archives turn these into "both sites of the imaginary *and* institutions that fashioned histories as they concealed, revealed, and

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, 'Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance', *Archival Science*, 2 (2002), 87–109 (p. 90).

<sup>2</sup> Stoler, p. 94.

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression', trans. by Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics*, 25.2 (1995), 9–63 (p. 11).

<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Routledge Classics (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 145–46.

reproduced the power of the state.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, understanding the mechanisms of knowledge production that contributed to the recording of the archives is a paramount step in tracing the political charge that these carry in reconstituting and defining history.

Moreover, as discussed by Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook, archives are social constructs: their very existence is “about maintaining power, about the power of the present to control what is, and will be, known about the past, about the power of remembering over forgetting.”<sup>6</sup> Created through cultural frameworks and carrying the imprint of power, archives play a crucial role in constructing the official history and thus influencing memory and identity, making them “not passive storehouses of old stuff, but active sites where social power is negotiated, contested, confirmed.”<sup>7</sup> Using the works of three different Portuguese female visual artists/performers, whose careers have been centred on interpreting the archive, this chapter looks at the way in which the artists’ usage and manipulation of colonial archival images, footage, recordings and documents challenge the truth claims associated with these materials and create alternative narratives to official history by adding the element of individual memory.

One of the central themes in the three artists’ body of work is the relation between visual and historical narratives, challenging historical consciousness by displaying the archive from different angles where the question becomes not only what the official archive reveals but also what it fails to tell. This chapter looks at the ways in which these works dispute the veracity and reliability of the archive and its visual material in particular, challenging the assumption that this medium is unequivocal and transparent, and exposing the contradiction between lived experience and the edited, controlled version of history as transmitted through the archive. The materiality and malleability of the image come to surface especially when looking through the lens of propaganda and the relationships of power behind the recording of history, while the reactivation of the archive through performance and dialogue generates new memories across generations.

The first case discussed, Joana Craveiro’s theatrical performance, *A Live/Living Museum of Small, Forgotten and Unwanted Memories*, focuses on the tensions between public and personal archive, with the latter embodying forms of political resistance and trauma of a still unresolved past. Her work demonstrates the contribution of the personal archive to uncovering a silenced traumatic reality in a context defined by the state archive of dictatorship,

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<sup>5</sup> Stoler, p. 97.

<sup>6</sup> Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, ‘Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory’, *Archival Science*, 2 (2002), 1–19 (p. 3).

<sup>7</sup> Schwartz and Cook, p. 1.

violence and repression. The second case looks at Margarida Cardoso's documentaries and films, which explore the relations of power operating within the archive, while exposing the role and intention of propaganda and its imagery. From militant cinema to feature film, Cardoso's works examine the place of the archive between truth and constructed history, critically breaking down the plasticity of the image to convey the hidden tensions behind it. Finally, the third case looks at Filipa César's works centred on the recovered archive of Guinea-Bissau as part of the *Luta Ca Caba Inda* project, which uses audio-visual footage documenting the country's liberation movement. Her films challenge the notion of archives as institutions of the past and turns them into dialogues engaging past, present and future temporalities.

### **The role of the archive in Joana Craveiro's work**

In *A Live/Living Museum of Small, Forgotten and Unwanted Memories*, Joana Craveiro addresses the public politics of memory in the Portuguese society following the dictatorship and Revolution, highlighting the confrontational relationship that official and personal memories have had in defining history. The running theme of the thesis and the performance emerging from her PhD-based practice is the lack of inscription of the individual and unofficial experience in the writing of history, questioning the responsibility of state politics in preserving memory in the public space. Similar to other forms of documentary theatre, Craveiro's play does not intend to impose a universally accepted version of truth, but is more concerned with "emphasising its own discursive limitations, with interrogating the reification of material evidence in performance, as it is with the real-life story or event it is exploring,"<sup>8</sup> as Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson discuss in their critique of this form of theatre.

Craveiro's public performances, encompassing seven performance-lectures and a prologue, followed by an open discussion with the audiences, are based on a collection of personal memories, either belonging to the author or shared by others, from close family members to strangers that she encountered through common references, through interviews, confessions and private archives comprising photographs, documents, books, newspaper articles, political pamphlets and posters, all contributing to recreating a picture of the past experiences that most members of the audience identified themselves with. The narrative persona of the play is the Archivist, acted by Craveiro herself, whose role is that of curating, interpreting and performing the archive, turning it into a constantly evolving repertoire by "following a sequence from behaviour to archived records of behaviour to the restoration of

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<sup>8</sup> Alison Forsyth and Christopher Megson, *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 3.

behaviour as public performance”<sup>9</sup> and “strategically deploying the appearance of truth while inventing its own particular truth,”<sup>10</sup> as proposed by Carol Martin in her analysis of the theatre of the real. In this way, the archive and the repertoire continue to expand with each staging of the play as it furthers the dialogue with the audiences and between the audiences and their own memories. Throughout the performance, the script is staged by the Archivist and complemented by the display of archival elements like images, written text and objects, projected onto a central screen above the stage, which reinforces the factual accuracy and the research value of the private archive.

By focusing on personal experiences, especially those that are absent from the public space, the performance aims to facilitate the reconciliation of the individuals with their own memories, often forgotten and rejected for being incompatible with the official depiction of historical events. The mission of the performance, thus, is to find an alternative manner of bridging the differences between the individual and the collective through the re-enactment and inscription of memories:

*“A Living Museum interrogates this idea of rhetoric reconciliation based upon oblivion and erasure, proposing instead a new approach to reconciliation based upon the communal act of remembering through performance – as opposed to silencing the memories. Through the display and performance of archives and testimonies, the performance stimulates, first of all, memory, which is accompanied by discussion and dialogue, where audience members play the key role of both witnesses and participants.”*<sup>11</sup>

Craveiro reverses the notion of the archive as a repository of history, sanctioned by the political authorities as an official chronicle of power, by conferring it a deeply personal quality through the use of private objects, images and testimonials which “would otherwise remain hidden or stored in some inaccessible place in people’s houses,” turning it into “a conscious act of rendering the invisible visible.”<sup>12</sup> Additionally, by using the notion of *museum*, generally understood as a formal, restrictive space of official historical representation, and juxtaposing it with the contrasting terms of *live* and *living*, the title of Craveiro’s work alludes to the way in

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<sup>9</sup> Carol Martin, *Dramaturgy of the Real on the World Stage*, Studies in International Performance (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010), p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> Martin, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> Joana Craveiro, ‘A Live/Living Museum of Small, Forgotten and Unwanted Memories: Performing Narratives, Testimonies and Archives of the Portuguese Dictatorship and Revolution’ (unpublished Thesis (Ph.D.), University of Roehampton, 2017), p. 37.

<sup>12</sup> Craveiro, ‘Doctoral Thesis’, p. 105.

which the archive, a record of the past, can become a herald of the future, prompting the postmemory generation to continue to challenge and question history:

*“The idea of an archive and a museum that speaks to the future rather than to the past, through the now and the here of the performance, inscribed as it remains in the bodies of performer and spectators. Transmission, inscription and reconciliation of the spectators with their own memories and the historical past of the country are the key ways in which this performance remains.”<sup>13</sup>*

As Craveiro mentions, the title is also a nod to Carl Becker’s definition of “living history” as “the history that influences the course of history, (...) that pattern of remembered events, whether true or false, that enlarges and enriches the collective specious present.”<sup>14</sup> Performing the archive helps to restore those memories that are forgotten and repressed, either by the individuals or by historical discourse. Backed by the tradition of storytelling and oral transmission of historical events, the performance contributes to recreating a living history that unites the individual and the collective through experience and memory. The act of performing against oblivion plays an important role in creating an alternative reconciliatory version of history, inclusive of the personal experience and of the minor, turning former witnesses into active participants by voicing their once silenced memories to gain recognition in the public sphere, but also by including those who, like Craveiro, did not experience the events first hand yet carry the burden and memory of their parents.

One of the crucial historical moments that Craveiro discusses is the Colonial War, to which the limited space of the performance tackling 80 years of recent history is only able to allow a “parenthesis”<sup>15</sup> in the first act, which she turns into a memorial that criticises the general silence surrounding this theme in the Portuguese society. The scene pays tribute to those that fought in the war by going back to the archive and quoting their correspondence to the loved ones, uncovering the anxiety and sadness behind their aerograms, often written in long bursts of sentences that reminisce spoken word and intonation. She gives the example of caporal Amaral’s letters from Mozambique, in which the handwriting appears to be different every time, leading to the conclusion that he was illiterate and dictated his messages to various people. Not only in their letters, but even more so after returning to Portugal, the soldiers never

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<sup>13</sup> Craveiro, ‘Doctoral Thesis’, p. 171.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Craveiro, ‘Doctoral Thesis’, p. 93.

<sup>15</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 18.

speak about the war, perpetuating the societal silence that, instead of bringing healing, only masks the wounds of the past.

The play's efforts to spark the conversation around the Colonial War prompts former soldiers like Carlos to make their stories heard for the first time after returning. Stationed for a second time in Guinea-Bissau, he is made a captain in charge of a battalion of 150 soldiers, making it his mission to bring them all home alive by protecting them from "the stupid orders"<sup>16</sup> of their own hierarchies, more dangerous even than the enemies themselves. While the intention of the war is to dehumanise the opponent through derogatory and impersonal labels, Carlos's candid account reveals the respect that a lot of Portuguese soldiers carried for the Africans and their ideals of freedom. A war fought by men who disagreed with its primary objective but were nevertheless forced to serve in it contrasts with the political class in charge of giving the orders, leaving those trapped in the combat vulnerable to the "dirty logic of the war"<sup>17</sup> in which only the losses count. On his return from Guinea-Bissau, the captain brings back a bag which he leaves unopened in his basement for sixteen years before handing it to Craveiro on the day of the show's premiere in Lisbon, now forming part of the archive that the performance heavily relies on. As mentioned in the play, its contents were:

*"A bullet from a 3-Gun rifle, a scrap from an enemy weapon, and one of those identification plaques, that the soldiers used around their necks, so that when they got killed they would tear it in two, place one half inside the mouth and when the dead body arrived the family could recognize it."*<sup>18</sup>

The cruel reality of war becomes poignant in these objects that equally evoke the fear of killing and of being killed, and the continuous anxiety that marked the experience of Africa for the Portuguese soldiers. While to the outsiders the stories that decidedly represent the war are those of excesses, like the massacres and extreme atrocities that more and more people slowly become desensitised to, the reality of combat for most soldiers is this constant apprehension that makes war evil. Carlos's story is followed in the performance by excerpts from José Ribeiro's book, *Massacres in the Colonial War*, forbidden during the dictatorship and offering a savage insight into the other side of war as experienced by the enemy, the brutal slaughtering of men, women and children in the villages of Wiriyamu and Juway that shocked the entire world. These facts strongly contradict the exceptionality self-attributed to the

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<sup>16</sup> Craveiro, 'Performance Script', p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> Craveiro, 'Performance Script', p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> Craveiro, 'Performance Script', p. 21.

Portuguese fascism and the colonial regime, the alleged “better colonialism, despite its colonialism,”<sup>19</sup> which ultimately contributed to maintaining one of the longest dictatorships and colonial empires.

In the second act of the play, called *Invisible Archives of the Portuguese Dictatorship and Revolution*, Craveiro introduces the idea of the clandestine archive as a means of resistance against the violence used by the regime to maintain its control. The employment of the PIDE (International Police of State Defence), an elusive institution whose functioning relied on secrecy and silent repression, was crucial in neutralising subversive political behaviour, yet its lack of historical inscription was necessary for perpetuating the illusion of a fair and humble regime. Craveiro challenges the state’s efforts to conceal its brutal actions by removing all incriminatory evidence, recreating the archive of an institution that made all possible efforts to have its traces erased. Using objects, photographs and books to mark the physical traces of this illicit archive, she reconstitutes the missing pieces that bring the past signs of violence to light. From the photographs of the PIDE headquarters in Lisbon and Porto to the numerous memoirs written by those who experienced the brutality of the political police, Craveiro inventories the objects that evidence the gruesome testimonials of former detainees. Additionally, the accounts of their memories also mention a series of objects that anchor their experiences into reality, giving a physical expression to their ordeals. Among these, a woman remembers the shopping bag that her brother had knitted for her while detained in political prison for three years, and Aida Paula, a clandestine militant of the communist party, talks about the small fishbone she used to write messages of hope on the walls of her cell during her first imprisonment for future detainees. She continues to keep it the second time she is detained, even though unable to inscribe texts on the walls, using it instead to trace poems of resistance in the air, in a gesture aimed at restoring her hope of freedom. Craveiro also talks about Aurora Rodrigues, a former member of the extreme left-wing party MRPP (Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado), who mentions the lighter she was shown during a brutal interrogation to help her recognise an image of her partner’s disfigured face, in order to manipulate her into confessing her political acts.

These small, seemingly trivial objects, alongside photographs and memoirs, are traces of a past that is in danger of being rewritten and misunderstood, while the true legacy of a brutal regime that reigned through fear, misinformation and omission is gradually forgotten. The censorship of newspapers led to facts being drastically redacted without any way of

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<sup>19</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 34.

disclosing the truth, leaving behind an unreliable state archive, hence the need to recreate the past through personal experience and recover the lost facts before they are forever erased. While some of the objects have been lost along the years, there are still physical traces that defy the passage of time, like the marks of bruises that Aurora Rodrigues still carries after more than thirty-eight years from her arrest, “defying invisibility”<sup>20</sup> to perpetuate the memory of a past rendered untraceable by the authorities. Craveiro also mentions the murals of Ribeiro Santos, the 26-year old student and communist militant shot by the police in 1972 who became a symbol of the struggle against repression and inspired his contemporaries to rise up against the police, his enduring image immortalising the memory of authoritarianism across generations. Born years after his death, the director remembers seeing the now gone murals across the walls of Lisbon during her childhood, an image preserved by being passed on from person to person and painted on public walls, but whose trace is only commemorated by the authorities through an obscure plaque on the street that carries his name.

The challenges of recording and remembering the legacy of the Estado Novo are exacerbated by the apparent intention of current authorities to erase the marks of a past often perceived as shameful, making gradual steps towards removing its visible traces from collective memory. In the epilogue to the second act, Craveiro talks about the public outcry of turning the former Lisbon PIDE headquarters into a luxury condo, only leaving behind a plaque commemorating the four people killed by the police on the day of the Revolution, which had been moved multiple times, painted over to the point of illegibility and ultimately mysteriously stolen prior to the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Revolution. The artist highlights the need for public inscription when there is no official archive remaining:

*“I was worried. During those thirty days of absence of this small plaque I was thinking: If you pass by this building just now, you may never know what really happened there for forty-eight years. The screams cannot be heard anymore. The files are gone. The devices used to torture are gone. The cells are gone. (...) But Portugal is not a country specialized in memory sites or memory altogether.”<sup>21</sup>*

This lack of inscription and censorship generating unreliability in the official state archives underlines the importance of publicising the element of personal experience, which

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<sup>20</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 46.

<sup>21</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 52.

can complete the lacunae within the historical narrative. Throughout the performance, the private archive is used to complement the official records, which results in either contradicting or filling in the gaps of history. In the sixth act discussing the end of the Revolution and the PREC (Ongoing Revolutionary Process), the scene on the occupation of the Torre Bela estate in 1975 introduces an epistolary exchange between a couple, E. and J. living in Germany that had decided to volunteer for the commune, yet only one of them succeeded in reaching Portugal on time. Quotes from their letters expose the confusion and lack of information in the international press, with Portugal nearly cut off from the external world and a lack of clarity on the political evolution of the leftist movement, while J.'s response, based on his experience at Torre Bela, confirms the uncertainty and dangers of the class struggle, as "the liberation of the exploited and the oppressed is not easy, for the enemy is numberless and powerful."<sup>22</sup> The message of the letters is further endorsed by an excerpt from Phil Mailer's memoir regarding his involvement in the Revolutionary Process, recounting his animated, yet ultimately purely hypothetical conversations with the people in the street on the night of the 25th of November 1975, with the general conclusion that the "revolution and counter-revolution were jobs for specialists."<sup>23</sup> These elements of personal archive help to bring the performance closer to answering the burning questions that it set out to address, such as, among others, when did the Revolution end and what constitutes a true revolution?

Discussing films made by 'artists-filmmakers' who simultaneously take on the roles of 'artists-and-researchers' and historians, Teresa Castro notes that the use of personal photographs and albums in contemporary works becomes a way to "negotiate the progressive relocation of the materials from the domestic sphere where they originate to the public, collective domain where they resonate today," while also achieving the "transformation of what were once personal souvenirs into potential archives for the future: places where the writing of history can begin, places where historical materials are produced."<sup>24</sup> Joana Craveiro's performance is in line with this direction emphasising the power of the personal archive as a starting point of history, a legitimate source complementary to official records.

The performance also addresses the issue of the one-dimensional truth claims of the public archive, proving how inaccurate assumptions once made continue to survive the test of

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<sup>22</sup> Craveiro, 'Performance Script', p. 100.

<sup>23</sup> Craveiro, 'Performance Script', p. 101.

<sup>24</sup> Teresa Castro, 'In-Between Memory and History: Artists' Films and the Portuguese Colonial Archive', in *(Re)Imagining African Independence: Film, Visual Arts and the Fall of the Portuguese Empire*, ed. by Maria do Carmo Piçarra and Teresa Castro, *Reconfiguring Identities in the Portuguese-Speaking World*, 8 (Oxford ; Bern ; New York: Peter Lang, 2017), pp. 205–23 (p. 220-1).

time through history. The Archivist introduces one of Henri Bureau's famous photographs, winner of the Spot News category of World Press Photo 1975, whose caption describes a PIDE member cornered by soldiers after an altercation with the crowd, two days after the 25<sup>th</sup> of April coup d'état. As Craveiro reveals, the bleeding man escorted by the police was, in fact, suffering from a mental disorder and was unrelated to the political police, yet the erroneous caption endures even today, as it was originally recorded. This proves that the archive, even when publicly inscribed, is not a unilateral, unequivocal repository of facts and that its veracity needs to be questioned and carefully dissected rather than blindly followed.

The sound element of the performance represents an important part of the archive that the play is based on; more than a simple aesthetic feature that anchors the audience in the narrative time, the excerpts of songs, anthems, discourses and poems add another level of authenticity and offer an additional cultural insight into the reality of Salazar's Portugal. Craveiro quotes historian Rui Bebiano's statement that "music was very important, because it was an expression of culture and, as such, an act against obscurantism and fascism – for example, the importance in general terms of rock as an expression of liberation."<sup>25</sup> For him, the songs of Led Zeppelin were also a symbol of freedom and an act of resistance, even though he believed they were seen as a sign of bourgeois degeneracy by the socialist political groups that many young people were part of at the time.

The performance debuts with the Anthem of the Portuguese Youth and the prologue ends with Alexandre O'Neill's poem and excerpts of Salazar's speech in the overhead projector. To the director, the music of the Estado Novo appeared to be in perfect harmony with the idea of balance and happiness publicly imposed by the regime, yet another piece of state archive that manipulates the reality by projecting a fake ideal, which she also confirms by projecting a series of images on the screen to denounce the truth behind the idyllic songs:

*"Poor and illiterate, happy people, who walked barefoot, because they couldn't afford to buy shoes. (...) who had nothing to eat other than a slice of bread and 1 sardine for 3 people. Happy people who relied upon Salazar's trilogy – God, Homeland, Family. Happy people, who saw their children, leave to wage an absurd war."*<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Craveiro, 'Performance Script', p. 29.

<sup>26</sup> Craveiro, 'Performance Script', p. 7.

The first act opens with *Nouvelle Vague* by the Samy Cates orchestra played at the Archivist's turntable, which she chooses for the paradoxes that it represents; it is a record inherited from her great-uncle's collection who, despite being an avid Salazar supporter, collected a series of albums of Russian music and selected speeches by Lenin. As part of the Colonial War scene in the same act, she also plays excerpts from the 1969 and 1973 vinyl records distributed by the Movimento Nacional Feminino to offer moral support to the troops in Africa. This Christmas tradition, promoted by the institution as part of its mission to bring comfort and reward the military for their sacrifices, is an ironic reminiscence of a regime out of touch with its people, and will also be discussed in relation to Margarida Cardoso's work. The second act concludes with Ermelinda Duarte's 1974 song, *Somos Livres*, which celebrates the end of dictatorship and censorship, as the Archivist encourages the audience to join in and distributes carnations to symbolise the Revolution, a fitting ending to an act heavily charged with the memory of political torture and the fight for freedom. The third act, which recounts the events that made the Carnation Revolution take place, is interspersed with the music of Zeca Afonso, a forbidden artist during the dictatorship, and the song *Grândola Vila Morena*, which was played as one of the signals on the radio on the night of the coup and later on became a symbol of democracy. The segment on the Revolutionary Process finishes with *A Cantiga é uma arma* (Song is a Weapon) and the performance concludes with *Eu vi este povo a lutar* (I Saw This People Fight), both by GAC (Grupo de Acção Cultural), whose music was created by politically involved artists to encourage the Portuguese people to continue their fight for democracy. More than just illustrative cues, these songs were an active part in the everyday of the Revolution, played on the radio and in demonstrations. All these examples are part of a complex repertoire that accompanies Craveiro's performance, using musical fragments and sounds from the archive that are often embedded in the collective memory of the Revolution.

Craveiro's exploration of an unapologetically personal, fragmentary and subjective archive supports the collective act of remembering that brings together witnesses and postmemory generation, through a journey that often questions the reliability and truthfulness of what is officially known as the history of the Salazarist dictatorship, the Revolution that ended it and the highly contested revolutionary process that followed after. Merging together elements of an unofficial archive and fragments of popular culture with testimonials, questions and feedback from the audience, the archive continues to evolve and advance the debate around the often-disputed events of history, forging its place within the struggles of the present and the promise of the future.

## The role of the archive in Margarida Cardoso's filmography

Margarida Cardoso's cinematography uses the archive not only as a starting point for its narrative, but also as a way to retrieve historical memory. She debuted her film career as a director for commercial television productions whose exclusive entertainment purpose meant sacrificing historical accuracy, devoid of a personal element. When she started working on her own projects, the move towards the archive stemmed from the desire to explore her own past and better understand the blurring childhood memories of Mozambique, her father and the war.<sup>27</sup> Her employment of archival footage displays a clear awareness of the materiality of images and a determination to decode the intentionality behind them.

Cardoso's first experience of working with the archive was for *Natal 71*, which revisited the memory of the Colonial War starting with the annual Christmas record given to Portuguese soldiers by the state propaganda apparatus, and contrasting this with the anti-Estado Novo response of the *Cancioneiro do Niassa*, in which the soldiers ironically rewrote popular song lyrics in an act of political defiance. The production process of the documentary was based on finding propagandistic images and footage that would complement the vinyl record created by the *Movimento Nacional Feminino*, and uncovering the archive of the Estado Novo revealed scripted newsreels of soldiers asked to recite encouraging speeches or war scenes filmed outside of the actual combats, recreated and rewritten for the audiences at home. In an attempt to uncover the reality behind a generational silence around the experience of an absurd war, Cardoso uses the vinyl record received by her own father in 1971 not only as a starting point for her storytelling, but also as a *fil rouge* of the narrative, a repository that "reflects the ambiguities of that era."<sup>28</sup> One of these ambivalences is the record itself, an absurd symbol of a regime that was entirely disconnected from its people; even its creator, Cecília Supico Pinto, popularly known as *Cilinha*, the head of the *Movimento Nacional Feminino*, admits the futility of gifting the soldiers a record that they could not listen to for lack of proper equipment and a safe setting during a dangerous guerrilla war. In the documentary, Cardoso interviews Luís Alcobia, a technician who worked on the record, revisiting the derelict building where it was produced and discussing the challenges involved in offering all soldiers the same object simultaneously. He justifies the choice of a record for being transportable and durable in itself, while also able to transmit a strong message, meant as a memory that they would keep for life. Actors Florbela Queiróz and Franciso Nicholson also discuss their contribution to the record,

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Margarida Cardoso, Lisbon, 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Margarida Cardoso, *Natal 71*, 1999.

neither of them feeling that they were compromised for supporting a propagandistic work created by a movement as influential as the PIDE and other institutions of the state apparatus, while admitting the absurdity of supporting the soldiers through a vinyl.

The documentary begins by overlapping quotes from António Lobo Antunes' *Os Cus de Judas* illustrating the experience of being a young Portuguese soldier in the African war, with footage of the Portuguese Youth during processions, in organised ranks of athletic boys representing the fascist image of health and strength. They confidently stare at the camera as they walk past in slow motion, the promise of youth and a hopeful future brightening up their faces with wide smiles. Yet the once cheerful boys of the Portuguese Youth turn into men in the Portuguese army, shown in archival footage reciting rehearsed Christmas greetings meant to reassure their families of their wellbeing. Prompted to present themselves in the microphone, they each state their names and walk off quickly and uncomfortably, awkwardly avoiding eye contact with the camera; the montage of the documentary highlights the stark contrast between the soldiers and their younger counterparts from the Portuguese Youth to illustrate the effects of war over the human spirit, in mechanical gestures that the archive staged to be preserved for posterity.

The film montage juxtaposes archival footage of the Salazarist era and personal photographs with interviews reminiscing individual experiences of war. One of the main interviewees is the director's own father, Adelino Cardoso, who fulfilled three missions in Mozambique as a pilot. As he finally breaks the silence of those "sad, oppressed years,"<sup>29</sup> still carrying the melancholy of a harsh past in his eyes, he comments on the family photographs projected onto the screen to recreate his experience of Mozambique for the daughter whose memories had already faded. The importance of the private archive in retracing silenced memories is also evidenced through the photo album of another one of the interviewees, Manuel Carlos Pinto, which he names *Graças e desgraças da vida militar* (The Joys and Sorrows of Military Life). As he reminisces an experience that was mostly pain and sacrifice, forced to take part in a long, brutal war, his photographs are interspersed with footage of a traditional fado song eulogising the pride of being a Portuguese soldier. Cardoso's montage ironically highlights the tension between the manipulated history of the propaganda footage and the true human experience beyond the carefully edited archive of the Estado Novo.

While the role of the archive in *Natal 71* is that of unmasking the disingenuousness of the fascist propaganda in its efforts to conceal the reality of war, its function in *Kuxa Kanema*

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<sup>29</sup> Cardoso, *Natal 71*.

is essential in recreating the past to better understand the truth behind the historical events. Centred on the image of Samora Machel, the first president of the newly formed Republic of Mozambique, having gained its independence on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 1975, the documentary depicts the birth of Mozambican cinema simultaneously with that of the new socialist nation, using footage from the weekly newsreel that became the only testimony of the first 10 years of independence. The militant images that Cardoso rescues from destruction in the nearly derelict Mozambican National Institute of Cinema (INC) were commissioned by Machel, who was highly aware of the power of cinema in disseminating the decolonisation message and building a common national consciousness. Therefore, the purpose of the films created by the INC was that of “capturing the image of people on film and delivering it back to the people,”<sup>30</sup> a relentless work that continued its course despite external pressures, such as the rising tensions with neighbouring South Africa and Rhodesia. The ten-minute weekly newsreels were distributed across the country’s cinemas and through mobile units, advertised using vans equipped with megaphones, gifted by the Soviet Union, encouraging the rural communities to attend the broadcasts.

The archive shows how crucial Machel’s image was for creating a national identity for the newly born republic. Excerpts from his speeches illustrate the oratorical quality of the central political figure of the president, in the way he managed to instil enthusiasm, and the inspired rhetoric mechanisms he used to engage the vast crowds, seeking approval and engagement through direct questions: “The most beautiful thing in the life of a man is to live free! To live in independence, is that not true? He might not have food, he might not have clothes but he is free! Is that true or not?”<sup>31</sup> In one of his speeches in Mueda, one of the areas that witnessed multiple episodes of war with the Portuguese, Machel reminds his people that their efforts towards independence are still not finished: “The struggle continues,” he says multiple times, as the crowd repeats his last word, “Independence or death, we will overcome.”<sup>32</sup> His moving speech in front of the exhilarated crowd finds its way to the rest of the country through the footages that circulated via the mobile cinema and undoubtedly contributed to the solidification of a nation. The speeches are evocatively intertwined with images of the crowds watching themselves after the independence, in an exercise that deliberately tries to remind the Mozambicans about the struggles for freedom and build a newly found national spirit.

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<sup>30</sup> Margarida Cardoso, *Kuxa Kanema: O Nascimento do Cinema*, 2003.

<sup>31</sup> Cardoso, *Kuxa Kanema*.

<sup>32</sup> Cardoso, *Kuxa Kanema*.

In her recent work, *Cinemas of the Mozambican revolution*, Ros Gray comments on Machel's choice of conducting his speeches in Mozambican Portuguese rather than standard Portuguese, an oral form with a simplified grammar and restricted vocabulary, unlike the European language that was only spoken by those with access to formal education. This deliberate, politically charged choice of language was made to better communicate to the wide African audiences, "suggesting a language shared between people in conditions of equality committed to a radically egalitarian politics."<sup>33</sup> As Gray notes, Machel's highly expressive and theatrical use of language is done "to interpellate his audiences as a new collective subject – that of patriotic Mozambicans mobilised to overthrow colonialism and together build a new society."<sup>34</sup>

When Camilo de Sousa, one of the filmmakers behind the historical newsreels, is interviewed in *Kuxa Kanema* about the making of the footages, he modestly admits that the directorial element was insignificant, placing emphasis on the political engagement and the historical value of the films that documented the crowd's involvement: "It was he [Machel] who taught people, through cinema, step by step, what it was to be living in an independent country, what it was to have your own country, to be a nation. And all of this was done through cinema."<sup>35</sup> The educational value of the footage, widely distributed across the country, demonstrates how the young Mozambican nation, fascinated with its charismatic leader, absorbed his message that encouraged unity across the different ethnic groups, brought together by the promise of freedom.

Ros Gray explores the political role that cinema played for the newly independent African state, detailing Frelimo's efforts to create a national cinema that "could function as an agent of social transformation and nation-building," and that could "teach 'the people' the meaning of independence, what it meant to be Mozambican and could show how the needs and energies of the peasants and workers would dictate the revolution."<sup>36</sup> As Gray notes, Frelimo was the only Southern African liberation movement to train its own photographers, and was carefully and intensely involved in controlling the images and films that were produced with the aim to create a "revolutionary reorganisation of everyday life in the context of the armed struggle."<sup>37</sup> The unifying and mobilising role of cinema was at the heart of Frelimo's project,

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<sup>33</sup> Ros Gray, *Cinemas of the Mozambican Revolution: Anti-Colonialism, Independence and Internationalism in Filmmaking, 1968-1991*, 2020.

<sup>34</sup> Gray, *Cinemas of the Mozambican Revolution*.

<sup>35</sup> Cardoso, *Kuxa Kanema*.

<sup>36</sup> Gray, *Cinemas of the Mozambican Revolution*.

<sup>37</sup> Gray, *Cinemas of the Mozambican Revolution*.

who used the filmic image to fuel the process of decolonisation by bringing it to the masses to inspire and educate them: “The birth of the revolutionary state coincided with an attempt to build a national cinema that would reach a new mass audience with no prior experience of a moving image,” creating a “new political constituency [that] faced an image of itself for the first time and formed an identity as a people through their own cinematic image.”<sup>38</sup> Gray also talks about the way in which Maputo became a destination for revolutionary filmmakers from around the world, attracted by the ambitious project of “decolonising the field of the moving image across the African continent,”<sup>39</sup> which, unlike other local cinemas, benefitted from the strong financial and political support of the Mozambican state.

Discussing the post-colonial order, Cardoso’s film is centred on resuscitating the memory of resistance to colonialism and its legacy for the present and future of Mozambique. Antônio M. da Silva believes that “*Kuxa Kanema* is in fact a metacinematic production that constitutes memory itself while dealing with cinematic memory, (...) a metamemory film that deals with cinema’s very construction of a memory archive.”<sup>40</sup> The exploration of the relationship between cinema and memory in this film is built on a transparent use of the archive, challenging the myth of archival neutrality, and introducing voices of colonial resistance that contest official Portuguese history, while helping to build a new archive of the history of filmmaking in Mozambique.

Through the use of the archive, Cardoso’s *Natal 71* and *Kuxa Kanema* both display the tensions between propaganda and historical truth. When discussing the role that the archive plays in recreating collective memory, which can be easily distorted over time, Cardoso acknowledges her part in guiding the viewer around the world of image, whose plasticity is so similar to that of memory itself. She remarks: “I don’t believe in image as a document but a point of view, which is why it is so important to know who produced it. I think the only thing that is true is the profilmic, the moment that the image was recorded; the image only exists as a document of that very moment.”<sup>41</sup> The intention behind the creation of a particular image, which can be later on easily manipulated and decontextualised to match a different purpose, becomes obvious in the archive of propaganda. Cardoso works with both images that hide authoritarianism and images that are supposed to show freedom, whose political nature is the exact opposite of each other. After all, what is the difference between the deliberate propaganda

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<sup>38</sup> Gray, *Cinemas of the Mozambican Revolution*.

<sup>39</sup> Gray, *Cinemas of the Mozambican Revolution*.

<sup>40</sup> Antônio M. da Silva, ‘Archives, Memory and Colonial Resistance in the Work of Cardoso and César’, *Journal of Romance Studies*, 16.2 (2016), 96–111 (p. 103).

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Margarida Cardoso, 2019.

exposed in *Natal 71*, showing the attempts of a failing empire to hold onto its colonial power, and the constructed images of *Kuxa Kanema*, built with the clear intention to disseminate the socialist political message of the first president of Mozambique? Going back to Camilo de Sousa's interview, his contemplation of the role played by the discourse, ideological nonetheless, reveals the filmmaker's idealistic intention:

*"The cinema was born with these people, with people who wanted to make beautiful things, to help the country grow fundamentally, to pass on this great message of independence, of what we wanted to create essentially, the fine things that independence would bring. And I can really say that we managed to do it. Today people don't consider it as anything more than ideological work. But we indeed succeeded in passing on this message of independence, of nation, of unity."*<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps what is more important to understand is the role of propaganda in building a nation, in the case of Mozambique, or trying to prevent its downfall, in the case of the fascist Estado Novo, which is ultimately the deciding factor behind Cardoso's own intention in playing with the malleable nature of image, even when sourced from archival footage. The politics of creating a narrative around the interpretation of the archive is a defining element, as the new image manifests the same powerful traits of intentionality, this time belonging to the contemporary director who is just as invested in recreating her version of historical truth.

Margarida Cardoso's latest project, *Yvone Kane*, adds a new dimension to the use of historical archive by employing it to construct an entirely fictional character that problematises the role of women in the African independence movement and, most importantly, their lack of representation in a white, gendered archive. Through a blurring of filmic categories, situated between the appearance of a documentary and fiction, the film brings the archive to life through re-enactment, reconstructing fictional past events loosely inspired by the history of African states, with clear links to Mozambique, which helps articulate the past and its legacy in the present. The image of the female revolutionary is constructed using a mix of elements from a fictional archive, re-enacted to resemble that of an unnamed African state during its fight for independence, including a series of photographs, letters, newspaper articles, documentaries and recorded materials, a combination of real historical footage and fictive materials created by the director for the purposes of this film. Cardoso mentioned that she introduced Yvone's character

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<sup>42</sup> Cardoso, *Kuxa Kanema*.

only after compiling the archival images, placing her in a context that already existed,<sup>43</sup> which resulted in creating the impression of verisimilitude yet without the intention of deceiving the audience. As the director discusses in one of her interviews, the character herself is inspired by real personalities that Cardoso had come across in her research for previous projects, with the goal to portray women as “fighters rather than as wives,”<sup>44</sup> as they are more often than not known throughout history, and in this way claim her “right to make another history.”<sup>45</sup>

The starting point of Rita’s investigation into Yvone Kane’s past is the folder handed to her by Alex, the operative that she meets before embarking on her journey to Africa. His suggestion that the past, even though unamendable and irrevocable, hides an alternative reality regarding Yvone’s death, is what prompts the investigation that represents the premise of the entire narrative. The camera focuses on some of the elements that constitute the archival material in this folder, like excerpts from local and international newspaper articles about Yvone Kane’s death offering conflicting explanations regarding her assassination, from various theories stating that she was shot for withholding arms trafficking secrets to being cowardly assassinated by South African racists after having requested protection from the British authorities.

Rita’s visit to the national museum offers an interesting insight into the political role of the archive and the way in which it contributes to inscribing facts of the past into official history. As the camera briefly shows the museum guide taking a nap in the background, Rita is escorted by a young, inexperienced apprentice, who monotonously and mechanically recites the historical description of each photograph from a script. A large portrait of the president (an actual photograph of Samora Machel) taken on the day of the independence towers over the smaller photographs of other historical figures, including Yvone Kane, whose name is mentioned twice – a possible indication that Rita had already announced the purpose of her visit. When enquiring about the section on the Women’s Detachment, the boy’s visibly confused expression gives the viewer a glimpse into what the forgotten backroom will look like. Poorly lit by a flickering lightbulb, the walls are covered in photographs and banners in a poor state, peeling off and disorganised. Continuing to read mechanically from his dry, unengaging script, the young guide mentions the contribution of the Women’s Detachment in securing the victory during the Funtó Battle “known for its importance in terms of guerrilla

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<sup>43</sup> Margarida Cardoso, *Entrevista a Margarida Cardoso, a partir de Yvone Kane*, 2015, BUALA.

<sup>44</sup> Margarida Cardoso, ‘Discussion with Mariana Liz and Sally Faulkner’, *Conference Portuguese Film: Colony, Postcolony, Memory*, 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Cardoso, 2016.

strategy,”<sup>46</sup> yet the setting of the badly kept room, that does not seem to spark much interest from visitors, visibly contrasts with the boy’s words. Through Rita’s eyes, the camera focuses on a photograph of the women’s guerrilla group baring their weapons and smiling victoriously, with Yvone Kane’s figure proudly standing in the centre. Within the tightly packed rows counting around twenty women, there is a notable gap where the upper body of one of the fighters was edited out, with only her legs and armed hand visible.

As the re-enacted archive is completed with oral narratives in the form of interviews with Yvone’s old acquaintances who were involved in the liberation movement, Rita’s meeting with archive worker, Andrea, offers a hint into the mystery of the erased figure. Talking about her two years of guerrilla fighting next to Yvone, Andrea reveals the fact that her photograph had been removed from the museum section commemorating the members of the Women’s Detachment simply because she was too white. Her image would have, therefore, contradicted the narrative that the party intended to convey, that of an all African force that fought to secure the nation’s independence, which made it easier to simplify the racial struggle by identifying the white Portuguese as the enemy. This episode reiterates the idea that the archive is an expression and an instrument of power, with a role to reinforce a constructed historical narrative rather than to illustrate the truth, while also pointing towards the plastic quality of image that leaves it vulnerable to manipulation.

The archival footage entitled “5 days with the Women’s Detachment,” constructed to resemble a foreign documentary, shows the fighter training of the female guerrilla group at the Matasi camp. Narrated in English by a male voice, the film’s focus is to highlight the role played by women in the fight for independence, portraying Yvone as the image of “cunning courage and determination”<sup>47</sup> that defines the entire movement. The reporter mentions the surprising path that Yvone had chosen to fight for her country by engaging with the masses rather than taking the route of diplomacy, despite her bachelor’s degree in Political Science from the London School of Economics. Yvone’s explanation justifies the party’s intention to portray her as the revolutionary figure that forwards the socialist agenda by reinforcing the message to the masses: “My goal was always to stand side by side with the people, to understand their difficulties and their needs. Our party doesn’t want to neglect this kind of understanding and attachment as it brings about a true popular revolution. Our aim is to create a new man and to give rise to a new socialist nation.”<sup>48</sup> Yvone’s speech in front of the crowd

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<sup>46</sup> Margarida Cardoso, *Yvone Kane* (Midas Filmes, 2014).

<sup>47</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

<sup>48</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

is visibly reminiscent of Samora Machel's and the footage that Cardoso uses in *Kuxa Kanema*, a fictional re-enactment of history that takes a feminist stance by replacing the central male figure of the revolutionary with that of an equally powerful woman. Not only are Yvone's words a re-enactment of Machel's discourse ("The struggle continues. Independence or death, we will overcome"<sup>49</sup>), but she also replicates his engaging smile and even the signature hand gestures. The placement of the camera, with close angles that frame the head of the speaker in the centre of the screen, reflects the archival footage of Machel during his speeches, while the montage mirrors that of *Kuxa Kanema* by interspersing the discourse with archival footage of the Mozambican crowds during the struggle for independence. The visible difference in image quality between Yvone's speech and that of the responding crowds highlights the juxtaposition between the re-enacted archive and the genuine historical footage, and, instead of creating an effect of verisimilitude, it purposely highlights the contrast between truth and history. This overlapping of fiction with archival footage is deliberately left visible, reflecting the director's clear intention of writing an alternative history without pretending, in any way, to resemble reality or make a truth claim.

The easily exploitable character of image is further on explored when Rita visits the archive for a second time. Watching the footage of the inauguration of the first government, Rita focuses her attention on Yvone's facial expression as she is congratulated by the president of the republic. Displaying the way in which she manipulates the image on the Steenbeck editor by slowing down the motion to capture every detail, the camera proves Cardoso's theory on image manipulation and the manner in which this can be achieved by controlling the number of frames per second. What initially seemed to be a film created to honour Yvone's contribution to the Revolution and the formation of the first government, turns into a testament of her precarious position in the party, as the slow motion brings to light the character's uncomfortable look when she is greeted by the president. As Yvone's smile turns into uncomfortable apprehension, with only the sound of the slow motion in the background, Cardoso's re-enactment of the archive supports the tension between historical facts and the truth behind them.

The manipulation of the archive through slow motion is a technique that Cardoso had previously used in *Natal 71* to reinterpret the meaning of the original fascist archival footage. In the opening of the film, the recordings of Portuguese Youth during one of their ceremonious marches and those of infinite rows of girls and boys during a physical education class, all

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<sup>49</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

merging into one in their pristine white attires, are displayed in slow motion with the voice of actor Rogério Samora in the background, reciting an excerpt from *Os Cus de Judas*. With the frames slowed down and the pace of the marches decelerated, the images of the youth reflect the words uttered in the background: “We were fish. We are fish, we’ve always been fish, balanced between two waters, searching the impossible compromise, between revolt and resignation.”<sup>50</sup> The ending scene uses the same slow-motion technique, displaying archival footage of a group of soldiers helping to transport an injured man for medical care. The urgency of their movements and the mechanical sound of the helicopter where the body is placed reinforce the message of the words from the same novel: “We’ve spent 27 months together in Judas’ arse. 27 months of anguish and death in these stinking holes (...). We’ve been homesick together, eaten the same shit, shared the same fear, and we parted in five minutes flat with a handshake, a slap on the back, and a vague hug.”<sup>51</sup> The scene recreates the image of comradery between the soldiers who faced death together and shared every human emotion, yet are unable to find a farewell gesture that encompasses this connection, which will forever remain impossible to define.

Rita’s exploration of the archive as part of her investigation concerning Yvone’s suspicious death is, at least in theory, intended as a means to help elucidate the mysteries of the past and uncover the truth that would help her make amendments. But the glimpses of film footage, the old photographs and documents that she analyses are entirely inconclusive, just as the final result of the investigation that is never communicated by the end of the film. As viewers, we know and are able to see as much as Rita does, and the lack of resolution, the constant feeling of incompleteness throughout the narrative, is reflected in the way the archive is depicted. Rita’s investigative process concluding with tracing down Yvone’s former student and lover leads to uncovering the documents that were meant to prove the human trafficking accusations and indict members of the party. The 18-year old boy’s efforts at the time to safeguard the compromising documents, having crossed the Guinú Valley by foot for three days, had proven pointless in clearing Yvone’s name as they remained hidden over the years, buried in the ground by the border. The files that he shows to Rita comprise a series of documents, photographs and partial film reels, but the camera only shows a very brief close-up that offers but a glimpse into the material, insufficient to convey any relevant information. The lack of resolution of the investigation, alongside the characters’ personal failures in their

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<sup>50</sup> Cardoso, *Natal* 71.

<sup>51</sup> Cardoso, *Natal* 71.

family lives, relationships and political involvement, is mirrored in the portrayal of the archive that, instead of revealing a much sought-after truth, ends up adding a new layer of incompleteness to the story.

Cardoso repeatedly discusses her aim to expose the vulnerability of the image, and therefore of the archive, by deciphering the intentionality behind it and playing with the fake certitude that is instinctively attributed to it. With the initial cinematographic project evolving from Yvone's story to Rita's investigation, Cardoso admits that "the film is much more about the absence of memory, than about memory itself,"<sup>52</sup> and the inclusion of the re-enacted archive helps reinstate "the sensation of exploring something that has already happened."<sup>53</sup> The manipulation of the archival footage and its use in the creation of a fictional character denounce the unreliability of image and the tension between historical truth and postmemory.

Archival images of war photography represent a crucial archival element in Cardoso's works, a topic explored by scholars such as Paulo de Medeiros and Afonso Ramos. In the essay *War Pics: Photographic Representations of the Colonial War*, Paulo de Medeiros looks at the seemingly forgotten photographs of the Portuguese Colonial War as images rather than symbols, while maintaining the impossibility to separate ethics from aesthetics. According to his analysis, the few surviving photographs depict a pre-modern war, with antiquated and inadequate technology, lacking high-performance heavy equipment, while the images of soldiers embarking on their journey to Africa fail to humanise the conflict and make it look like "a kind of agricultural endeavour in some remote and infertile plantation."<sup>54</sup> They also show the liberation fighters as civilised and disciplined, contradictory to their image of savage terrorists propagated by the Portuguese. As Medeiros observes, the banal images of soldiers performing mundane activities, such as reading letters from home, provoke an emotional response because of their association with the context of war. In his review of the surviving photographs, Medeiros compares the depictions of the two sides of the combat, noticing the near absence of Portuguese casualties that intensely contrasts those of dead Africans, as if "the truth were still too harsh to be confronted in the images to be published"<sup>55</sup> even decades after the end of war. Turning death into a banal occurrence and human lives easily disposable, the published images reflect the cruelty of those referenced in *A Costa dos Murmúrios* and in Margarida Cardoso's filmic adaptation. The most memorable of all images in Cardoso's film,

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<sup>52</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

<sup>53</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

<sup>54</sup> Paulo de Medeiros, 'War Pics: Photographic Representations of the Colonial War', *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 39.2 (2002), 91–106 (p. 96).

<sup>55</sup> Medeiros, p. 102.

that of the groom holding the severed head of an African fighter, is a recurrent trope in the published photographs: “Silent yet eloquent witnesses to the monstrous brutality of the colonial war, the cut-off heads of the killed black men function as fetichized objects of the soldiers’ desire to control the African people, to dehumanize it, and to display their assumed superiority,”<sup>56</sup> as Medeiros concludes.

Afonso Ramos also explores war photography in one of its most extreme expressions, that of atrocity photography, writing about the images of the massacre conducted by the National Liberation Front of Angola against the Portuguese settlers in 1961. The Portuguese government used the shocking photographs of mutilated bodies to justify labelling the attackers as terrorists and to question the legitimacy of their fight for independence: “The sensationalism and emotional blackmail of the strategy to exhibit the morbid spectacle of the dead proved to be politically efficacious, having imposed itself on the rational debate, blocking the analysis, paralysing those present.”<sup>57</sup> The psychological campaign centred on the monstrosity of these photographs “channelled and capitalised on the dictatorial efficacy of atrocity images as a conditioning mechanism for public perception (...) to provoke shock and suppress the context,”<sup>58</sup> which served as an easy justification for the abrupt and violent start of the war in Angola a month after the attacks depicted by these images, as well as for the brutal revenge against the African people. The shockingly fascinating nature of these images for the Portuguese public was proven by the success of the book in which they were published, which became an all-time bestseller, and while their reproduction in foreign print was always accompanied by a disclaimer to draw attention to their distressing nature, in Portugal they were widely and freely published despite the display of nudity and excessive violence. Even though their authenticity was later on contested, the indubitable influence of these photographs turned them into much more than sources of information, becoming historical events in their own right<sup>59</sup> and serving as an excuse for many massacres that followed against the African nations during the Colonial Wars.

Margarida Cardoso’s use of the archive might take on different forms throughout her work, yet it always intensely questions and discredits the relations of power at play in the making of the archive. Her critique of the archive as a representation of patriarchal power

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<sup>56</sup> Medeiros, p. 105.

<sup>57</sup> Afonso Ramos, ‘Angola 1961, o Horror Has Imagens’, in *O Império Da Visão: Fotografia No Contexto Colonial Português (1860-1960)*, ed. by Filipa Lowndes Vicente (Lisboa, Portugal: Edições 70, 2014), pp. 399–434 (p. 406). [my translation]

<sup>58</sup> Ramos, p. 407. [my translation]

<sup>59</sup> Ramos, p. 429.

tackles the exclusion of subaltern versions and, in this way, questions its ability to reflect the truth. Collective memory is stored through the archive and, therefore, enabled through the legitimization of power that helped generate it in the first place. By exploring the marginalised versions of those excluded from official history, like the voices of Portuguese soldiers forced to years of silence following their return from the war in *Natal 71*, the acts of African resistance in *Kuxa Kanema*, or the political contribution of women to the African liberation movement in *Yvone Kane*, Cardoso's exploitation of the archive reflects an attempt to restore collective memory and reconcile official history with that of the subaltern subject.

### **The role of the archive in Filipa César's filmography**

Filipa César's body of work concentrates on the colonial power relations between Europe and Africa, and the exploration of the archive that carries this colonial legacy. In her documentaries and installations, she employs the archive not only to retrieve history, but also to reinterpret the past and find new meanings and forms of resistance. For her, the role of the archive is not solely that of creating a cross-generational mediation of the past, but also of embodying a responsibility towards the future through the meanings that it carries across time. As the artist herself states, exploring the archive "is not about giving it another meaning, it is about understanding what accessing elements of the past can actually bring instruments to reflect on the present."<sup>60</sup> As Derrida suggests, the layered temporalities of the archive carry the mark of colonial power that will keep manifesting in the future:

*"The question of the archive is not, we repeat, a question of the past. This is not the question of a concept dealing with the past which might already be at our disposal or not at our disposal, an archivable concept of the archive. It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what this will have meant, we will only know in the times to come. Perhaps. Not tomorrow but in the times to come, later on or perhaps never."*<sup>61</sup>

Commenting on Derrida's "spectral messianicity" in regards to the concept of the archive and its connection to colonial compilation film, Laura Mulvey discusses the relations of power present in the archival footage. While film carries the "impression of empire like a

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<sup>60</sup> Filipa César 'Luta Ca Caba Inda' for the Exhibition Satellite 5 at Jeu de Paume (Paris, 2013).

<sup>61</sup> Derrida, p. 27.

stamp,” the ability of the camera to record beyond the authorising source creates an additional impression “derived from imperialism’s blind spot,” namely the unfair relation between the coloniser and the colonised which comes to the surface through the help of the archive.<sup>62</sup> Mulvey remarks that colonial compilation films, given the nature of the archive “as a doubly ‘fossilised’ record of imperial power and oppression,”<sup>63</sup> embody a dislocation between the raw material and its present interpretation. She relates this to Filipa César’s 2011 unfinished project, *Black Balance*, which uses archive material from the Imperial War Museum and the British Film Institute, rearranged on a Steenbeck editing table, to create her own interpretation of African colonisation. Through dislocation of the archival footage produced by the British colonial agents, she points out the inequality, exploitation and violence at the heart of colonisation, contrasting with the original purpose of the archive of celebrating the achievements of the colonial project.

César’s ongoing project, *Luta Ca Caba Inda*, based on the archival footage of the National Film Institute of Guinea-Bissau, has been focusing on exploring new ways of presenting and performing the recently digitised Guinean archive, a “militant cinema of emancipation, born from the struggle as a praxis for liberation,”<sup>64</sup> as César describes it, continuing to grow the legacy of this archive. The process of uncovering the cinematic archive, comprising over 40 hours of mostly unedited visual footage and 200 hours of sound, in a constantly deteriorating state imparted by harsh atmospheric conditions, also reflected the political instability of Guinea-Bissau over the decades since the independence. Her intention of saving this derelict archive was met with scepticism from the archival experts at the Portuguese Cinematheque, who deemed it as an “unofficial, unregulated, undisciplined, irreverent assemblage of images and sounds, sentenced as irrelevant and the object of multiple attempts to be expelled,”<sup>65</sup> as César concludes. Her notion of “ciné-archaeology” refers to the value of excavating the ruins of the archive to give relevance to a past that continues to manifest its influence on the present. It draws upon Kodwo Eshun and Ros Gray’s idea of “ciné-geography” of the militant image, produced in support of the liberation movements of the second half of the twentieth century, transnationally connected through a revolutionary intention. Ciné-geography, in their view, “refers to the medial circuits of dissemination through

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<sup>62</sup> Laura Mulvey, ‘Dislocations: Some Reflections on the Colonial Compilation Film’, in *Film and the End of the Empire*, ed. by Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 251–61 (p. 254).

<sup>63</sup> Mulvey, p. 254.

<sup>64</sup> Filipa César, ‘A Grin Without Marker’, *L’Internationale Online*, Decolonising Archives, 2016, 58–72 (p. 63).

<sup>65</sup> Filipa César. *The Solid Image: A Ciné-Archaeology at the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art* (Moscow, 2015).

which these texts and films travelled and were (mis)translated in order to multiply the ways and places in which cinema could be ‘instrumentalised’ (...) as a tool of radical social change in processes of decolonisation and revolution.”<sup>66</sup> As cinema becomes the preferred instrument for propagating the message of independence, the role of the moving image in the building of modern nations gains a political quality that confers its militancy.

The origin of the militant image that César excavates lies in Amílcar Cabral’s own awareness of the immense potential of cinema in supporting the liberation struggle and creating a collective memory. In 1967, the leader of PAIGC (The African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde) sent four young Guineans to Cuba to be trained in the practices of filmmaking by Santiago Álvarez at the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos. Their work in documenting the liberation movement marked the birth of Guinean cinema, whose decolonising message helped create the first memories of the newly formed African nation. Interviewed in *Spell Reel*, Sana N’Hada, one of the four filmmakers, talks about their aim of contributing to “imagining a national space”<sup>67</sup> that would help bridge the diverse ethnic groups on the Guinean territory, through one common Creole language. The erosion of this archive, abandoned in the 1980s, nearly destroyed in the 1998 civil war and forgotten until recently, attests to the country’s tumultuous post-independence years, yet, as César confesses, its rediscovery offers a transformational experience for those who participated in this collective project.<sup>68</sup>

Documenting the itinerant cinema that disseminates the now digitised archive, *Spell Reel* follows its journey from the excavation of the decaying footage to its projection in isolated Guinean villages and European capitals alike, accompanied by live commentary from the original filmmakers, and generating debates on the role of the archive in supporting and inspiring ongoing efforts towards decolonisation. The live commentary during these community screenings supports the film’s work towards reactivating the archival image in the present, and “the images gain new urgency by being reinserted into a public discourse,”<sup>69</sup> as Ella Bittencourt notes in her review.

Fragments of archival black and white footage are overlaid on contemporary colour film resembling a collage, capturing echoes of the lost past across glimpses of the present; the juxtaposition of past and present through moving images helps create a nonlinear depiction of

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<sup>66</sup> Kodwo Eshun and Ros Gray, ‘The Militant Image: A Ciné-Geography Editors’ Introduction’, *Third Text*, 25.1 (2011), 1–12 (p. 2).

<sup>67</sup> Filipa César, *Spell Reel* (Spectre Productions, 2017).

<sup>68</sup> *Lecture-Film Discussion: Spell Reel with Director Filipa César*, at *Harvard Art Museums*, 2018.

<sup>69</sup> Ella Bittencourt, ‘Reactivating the Lost Revolutionary Films of Guinea-Bissau’, *Hyperallergic*, 27 June 2017.

time and history. In one of these scenes, the first president of the republic, Luís Cabral, Amílcar Cabral's brother, is shown walking along the Saltinho bridge during an official visit from 1976, travelling from Bissau to Cacine on a mission "to better understand the conditions and needs for the reconstruction of the land,"<sup>70</sup> as N'Hada recollects. Images of his journey are screened to the audiences of Buba in Guinea-Bissau in 2014, with commentary from the filmmaker who joined the president on his official trip to the south, followed by current-day footage of the bridge with its picturesque waterfalls surrounded by green forests. The layering of different temporalities displayed through this technique of assemblage helps the viewer travel through the historical times of past and present, while making it a "question of the future," reminiscing Derrida's view of the archive as a carrier of meaning across time. This constant moving through different temporalities, manipulating the scale of the archival footage in relation to the contemporary digital images, helps create proximity by bringing the past closer to the present, but also works as a reminder of the process of decolonisation that is still under development.

The film shows both the archival footage and its manipulation in the present day, capturing the journey from its filming in the 1970s to its digitisation in 2011 and dissemination through mobile cinemas in 2014, involving the viewer in witnessing the challenges of working with this decaying footage. It documents the state of the archive as it is being discovered and indexed, the mouldy film cans being opened and film reels running through the fingers of those who worked on the project. The layered archival footage is projected in its raw state and various degrees of decay, often starting from a small square on the left or right side of the screen and sometimes taking over the entire view, amplifying its scale to expose the finest details of decomposition. As the archival image loses its clarity and gradually degrades under the markers of what is known as the vinegar syndrome, a deterioration of the cellulose triacetate film support, the screen is filled with an almost poetic asymmetry that, far from being a representation of the past, anchors the archive even deeper in the present as the image falls apart before the viewers' eyes. This transparent depiction of the archive and refusal to cosmeticise the past that it embodies become even more obvious when juxtaposed with modern day footage, exacerbating the irreversible loss of some of these fragments and pointing towards the ephemeral nature of the decaying archive. Rather than restoring and preserving the original footage, César takes a deliberate political stance in displaying the archival images in their raw state. As Jesse Cumming notes, César "forces a disassociation between the archive

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<sup>70</sup> César, *Spell Reel*.

and the presumed goal of preservation”<sup>71</sup> by simply documenting the film’s journey through the materiality of the archive rather than assuming the role of the archive as a historiographic instrument.

Another noticeable element that characterises the depiction of the archive in the film is the reversed perspective, with images occasionally displayed upside down on the screen, including the opening scene that shows African freedom fighters behind kapok trees. The contrast between the upturned image of the archive and the contemporary footage becomes even more poignant when overlaid with the close-up of Julio Djaló, interviewed in the film, exacerbated by the black-and-white versus colour juxtaposition. This is, foremost, a reflection of the way in which the footage was digitised, with several fragments on one reel, in a rush to save as much as possible of the decaying archive with the threat of another coup d’état looming in Guinea-Bissau. César describes how the footage was watched this way during montage, while the inverted image also suggests “new subjectivities, other modes of seeing,” thus announcing “a complication of these systems of seeing”<sup>72</sup> from the very beginning of the film. This adds yet another layer to the transparency with which the archive is treated as part of the project, while also signalling the clear intention to introduce a new perspective that brings this rediscovered archive even closer to the present.

Furthermore, when the Guinean archive was digitised as part of the Arsenal Institute-funded project, the visual film material, a lot of it still work in progress, and the magnetic sound tapes were processed separately six months apart from each other, with the original labelling on the tapes severely deteriorated and impossible to match the image with the sound it was intended for. The artistic team’s approach to dealing with this asynchronous archive involved not only accepting the impossibility of reconciling sound and image, but equally embracing its materiality without attempting to “synch, complete or correct anything as if it were wrong” and turning it into a means of “producing a floating knowledge.”<sup>73</sup> These “images in want of sound, sounds evoking images,”<sup>74</sup> as Tobias Hering describes them, were not rescued in order to be recreated into what they were initially intended for, but they continued to evolve each time they were shown to the public, each reactivation adding new dimensions to the original archive. This reactivation relied on N’Hada’s and Gomes’s voices to bring the visual fragments back to

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<sup>71</sup> Jesse Cumming, ‘A Passage Through: Filipa César’s Spell Reel’, *Cinema Scope*, 19.71 (2017), 26–28 (p. 28).

<sup>72</sup> Ala Younis, ‘Interview with Filipa César about Spell Reel for the Berlinale Forum Catalog’, 6 January 2017, p. 107.

<sup>73</sup> Younis, pp. 107–8.

<sup>74</sup> Filipa César, Tobias Hering, and Carolina Rito, *Luta ca Caba Inda: Time Place Matter Voice, 1967-2017*, Archive Books, 2017, p. 11.

the present, through a live commentary that would change with the audiences who were “invited to add a soundtrack in the form of questions,”<sup>75</sup> in cities across Europe and Guinea-Bissau.

The decayed conditions of the archival footage that César works with can also be read through Susan Schuppli’s operative concept of ‘material witness,’ which the artist-researcher defines as “nonhuman entities and machinic ecologies that archive their complex interactions with the world, producing ontological transformations and informatic dispositions that can be forensically decoded and reassembled back into history.”<sup>76</sup> In her recent work, Schuppli demonstrates how nonhuman matter, including media and environmental elements, can bear witness to events and be used to dispute truth claims as technical witnesses in a court of justice, challenging the assumption that testimony is an inherently human act: “The significance accorded to the affective dimensions of testimony as fundamentally human is a central provocation that the concept of the material witness challenges. I assert that technical objects can account for and express their historical conditions; that artefacts can induce the affective register of testimony; and that materials can, in short, bear witness.”<sup>77</sup> Schuppli also mentions Filipa César’s *Spell Reel* when discussing the aesthetic value offered by material impurities, highlighting the way in which the filmmaker draws the viewers’ attention towards these defects as “the source of our visual mediation.”<sup>78</sup> While the original images are a testimony of the event of decolonisation, the filmic decay that affects these images functions as a ‘material witness’ to the passage of time, becoming an event in itself. The imperfections in the way the archival footage was filmed, preserved and digitised carry political meaning; as Schuppli suggests, “defects, disturbances, and disorder provide a valuable source of knowledge about events.”<sup>79</sup> These characteristics of the material witness mirror the failings of human testimony in the face of historical trauma, as Felman and Laub explained, in which confusions, lacunae, incoherence and even errors are forms of inscription of trauma.

Complementary to Schuppli’s material witness is also the concept of ‘forensic aesthetics,’ upon which the work of the London-based research agency Forensic Architecture is based, whose intention is that of investigating human rights abuses and questioning factual reality through the use of architectural evidence as ‘object witnesses’ in the absence of reliable

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<sup>75</sup> César, Hering, and Rito, p. 25.

<sup>76</sup> Susan Schuppli, *Material Witness: Media, Forensics, Evidence*, Leonardo (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2020), p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> Schuppli, p. 13-4.

<sup>78</sup> Schuppli, p. 68.

<sup>79</sup> Schuppli, p. 185.

human testimony, as Shela Sheikh explains.<sup>80</sup> César's deliberate use of decayed film footage turns the rediscovered Guinean archive into a material witness validating the process of decolonisation that it was intended to document, while also testifying to the unstable political circumstances that led to its damaged condition. While originally created to illustrate the first years of independence and disseminate the decolonising message to the Guinean people, the films become a living, evolving archive that moves through time as a silent witness to history, enveloping all the material changes into a form that testifies to the sudden and unfavourable changes in political regime.

Despite the directors' very different artistic approaches, ranging from factual documentary in Cardoso's case to César's lyrical video-art, there are clear parallels between *Kuxa Kanema* and *Spell Reel*, not just in the more obvious terms of their subject matter – the birth of cinema supporting the liberation struggles of the two African nations – but also in the treatment of the archive. Two archives on the verge of complete destruction, in desperate need to be saved from the unforgiving decay of time, are rediscovered by the Portuguese directors whose close links to Africa give them the impetus to excavate the forgotten images. The main element that links the archives is the intention that led to their initial creation, namely the need to assemble the first national imaginary of two former Portuguese colonies embarking upon a journey of nation building. The challenges of unifying the ethnic plurality of Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau and of decolonising the national space that had been previously under full European control become common denominators of the militant images brought back to life in the two films.

The exploration of the concept of itinerant cinema, whose didactic and political nature was fundamental in creating a national memory, while also reminiscing the African tradition of storytelling, takes different approaches in the two films. *Kuxa Kanema* focuses on the role of the mobile units disseminating the weekly newsreels to the farthest corners of Mozambique during the first years after the independence, showing extensive footage of the crowds watching the images intended to create solidarity. Like a frame within a frame, the film even shows the post-independence crowds watching the audiences in Samora Machel's speeches during the war, underlining the importance of the collective element in the itinerant cinema that aimed to bring communities together and create agency. *Spell Reel*, on the other hand, is constructed on the basis of a modern reinstatement of the mobile cinema, inspired by the unrealised plan of

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<sup>80</sup> Shela Sheikh, 'The Future of the Witness: Nature, Race and More-than-Human Environmental Publics', *Kronos*, 44. Missing and Missed Subject Politics Memorialisation (2018), 145–62 (p. 150).

the Guinean National Film Institute from the late 1970s, very similar to what its Mozambican counterpart had managed to accomplish at the time. The nearly lost archival footage, largely meant for the unfinished project “Guinea-Bissau: Six Years After,” is finally shown to the audience it was intended for, projected onto walls, improvised screens in outdoor spaces and even on foliage, generating poetically charged images of crowds gathering, the air filled with their anticipatory murmurs. The live commentary from the filmmakers adds an element of oral history and initiates an intergenerational dialogue sedimenting the collective memory that the archive had aspired to create, bringing awareness to a past on the verge of ruin that had been kept away from those who lived or inherited it, helping them become “acquainted with what kind of discourse is being produced as a result of their struggle.”<sup>81</sup> Reflecting on the African oral tradition, Guinean writer and director Carlos Vaz talks about the lack of separation between audience and performer, which continued to remain relevant despite the colonial influence that introduced the “Italian theatre” to Africa, placing the audience and the actors on opposite sides.<sup>82</sup> This is mirrored in the way in which the mobile cinema screenings were performed as part of the project, with a continuous dialogue that involved audiences in merging with the images and the speakers in front of them.

Furthermore, going back to the first part of this chapter, Joana Craveiro’s public lectures and performances echo this need to create a dialogue between the actor and the audiences to inscribe personal experience into collective memory. Her theatrical performances across different locations in Portugal are reminiscent of the itinerant cinema that César tried to recreate in Guinea-Bissau when publicising the archive for the first time. Through her performances, Craveiro displays fragments of archive to engage the audiences with the history that they embody. The artists’ intention is thus similar, using an old archive with a common goal of creating new knowledge and, in this way, generating a new mode of writing history.

Similarly to *Kuxa Kanema*, *Spell Reel* also examines the role of propaganda inherent in the militant images, exploring the intention behind this archive and the relations of power that helped create it. Just as the young filmmakers had once done in Mozambique, N’Hada and his colleagues embarked upon a journey of documenting the struggle for liberation and the birth of a segmented nation learning to understand independence, by fulfilling the mission assigned to them by Cabral to “join the ranks of the freedom fighters and create propaganda about life

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<sup>81</sup> César, Hering, and Rito, p. 13.

<sup>82</sup> *Between the First and Second Shots*, ed. by Filipa César, Valerie Smith, and Sigrun Angermann, Labor Berlin, 5 (presented at the Ausstellung Filipa César, Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2011), p. 6.

in the areas that had been liberated.”<sup>83</sup> As Flora Gomes remembers, Cabral refused to accept “cheap propaganda” and to endorse foreign films that were not truthful to the situation in his country, asking his filmmakers to depict Portuguese colonialism “faithfully and true to the facts”<sup>84</sup> as part of his vision to set Guinea-Bissau’s path towards independence. As Bedatri D. Choudhury suggests, “the film complicates the uni-dimensional idea of propaganda cinema that we often dismiss outright; it stresses on the importance of the creation and preservation of a body of cinematic art that disseminates a sense of truth that helps a nation create its own histories.”<sup>85</sup> César reverses the idea of propaganda, traditionally understood as biased and misleading, serving the interests of a political cause to the detriment of the people, by invoking the importance of agency that the footage had intended to forge. By documenting the intricacies of the liberation struggle, the filmmakers’ intention was to share the truth they witnessed with the masses through a future itinerant cinema, empowering the Guinean people to participate in the process of collective memory forming.

In her 2016 collaboration with the artist Louis Henderson, César created the short film *Compost Archive*, that bridges artistic practice with academic research. The name of the short video itself is justified in Henderson’s paper for the conference, *Compost in the Créole Garden*, which stems from Edouard Glissant’s definition of créolisation as a tight relationship of proximity that “allows for a constant state of becoming not prompted solely by the defining of our identities but by their relation to everything possible as well — the mutual mutations generated by this interplay of relations.”<sup>86</sup> Just like the creole language contained within the archive, the image itself is subject to a process of créolisation in which the coexistence of beings and the forces of affinity that hold them together contribute to generating new meanings and new forms of being. Using ideas from environmental humanities in a nod to Amílcar Cabral’s agronomic background, Henderson associates the rawness of the Guinean archive with the affinities that keep together the ‘jardin créole’ to create new species, and its richness and fertility with the notion of compost, as an “assemblage of different beings that combine together through their gradual breakdown as individuals into a mass that exudes and generates life.”<sup>87</sup> Consequently, through assemblage, the materiality of the archival footage in the short

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<sup>83</sup> César, Smith, and Angermann, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> César, Smith, and Angermann, p. 4.

<sup>85</sup> Bedatri D. Choudhury, ‘The Archaeology of Film: Close-Up on Filipa César’s “Spell Reel”’, *MUBI Notebooks Close-Up*, 21 October 2017.

<sup>86</sup> Louis Henderson, ‘Compost in the Créole Garden: The Archive as a Multispecies Assemblage’, in *Cahiers du Post-Diplôme Document et Art Contemporain*, 2015, pp. 40–49 (p. 42).

<sup>87</sup> Henderson, p. 48.

video offers a fertile ground for generating new meanings outside of the original context in which the archive was created.

The video opens with footage on the announcement of Cabral's death and the immortality of the struggle that he had led, followed by César's statement on her focus on the materiality of the archive and the importance to "think about the matter and not only the representation of it,"<sup>88</sup> which offers the key for understanding the role of the archive in the body of her work through the value that it offers to a present tormented by postcolonial questions. Fragments of the unfinished films from the archive include images of everyday life in Guinea-Bissau and portraits of the working-class revealing traditions like dances and costumes, repeatedly overlaid with visual elements that carry the colonial imprint, such as the Belém Tower in Lisbon or the map of Africa showing the evolution of liberation movements across the African nations. Footage of Cabral's funeral procession, with his coffin being carried under the flag of the Armed Forces, is accompanied by text, independent from the sound recording in the background and reinforcing the idea of the archive as compost: "You are leaving a part of your homeland for another part of your homeland where the presence of your mortal remains will fertilise the radicalisation of the revolution."<sup>89</sup> Just like Cabral's political contribution continues to influence the Revolution even after his death, the materiality of the archive lends its fecundity to furthering the struggle for independence as the new African nation continues to forge its identity.

The acoustic element that accompanies the montage of these images complements the revival of the material archive with wider questions on what the intention behind them is and how they can influence the present: "What can or what shall we do with the picture of fragments that reveal the violence in which the Guinean nation is found, as well as the visual empty holes of this traumatic history?"<sup>90</sup> The images that were originally created with a propagandistic agenda by the Guinean filmmakers trained in Cuba, with the intention to support the revolutionary movement, "producing material to investigate the present, the future past,"<sup>91</sup> have evolved through time to gain a meaning independent of their original message. As N'Hada confesses about the material he produced, "the image gives herself a new life, a new destiny, with or without us. She is freed from our control."<sup>92</sup> Removed from the forces of power that operate within the creation of the archive in its original historical context, the image evolves in

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<sup>88</sup> Filipa César and Louis Henderson, *Compost Archive*, 2016.

<sup>89</sup> César and Henderson.

<sup>90</sup> César and Henderson.

<sup>91</sup> César, Hering, and Rito, p. 106.

<sup>92</sup> Henderson, p. 40.

relation to its environment, echoing the continuous struggle that César's archival research project was named after, and continuing to impart meaning across generations. In *Luta Ca Caba Inda: Time Place Matter Voice, 1967-2017*, César included an interview with a young N'Hada talking about his guerrilla experience and his filmmaking beginnings, which the author curates similarly to a piece of archive by reproducing the photocopy of the printed article. In it, the Guinean filmmaker confesses his intention of working for posterity and the political duty that his films carry in supporting the decolonisation process and inspiring future generations:

*“I want to create films that show the world what has happened in our country – how we lived under colonialism and how we managed to regain our freedom and dignity. Those of us who fought in the struggle already know this, but there are many people in our country who are still not clear on what it all means. And we want to teach our children, too.”*<sup>93</sup>

N'Hada's voice can also be heard in the background of *Compost Archive*, which uses a large proportion of his original archival footage. As he talks about filming for future generations, “he who will see the film tomorrow,” it becomes clear that, while the intention behind his work at the time was focused on documenting and furthering the fight for independence, the uncovering of the archive in the present changes its initial purpose as it informs the decolonisation and nation-building process, continuing to remain as relevant as ever: “Now I find myself organising what is left of these images I shot a long time ago. So, in a way, I am happy that the images still exist even if they are not being used in my optic.”<sup>94</sup> And as Teresa Castro notes, the indexical images of the archive are saturated with both history and memory reflecting their past existence: “They seem to bring the past to the present, but what they make possible instead is for the present to reach the past. In other words, what these images make visible and the way they resonate in the present changes over time.”<sup>95</sup> This change of optics, the variation of visibility and invisibility in relation to the present temporality, is what fuels César's exploration of the often forgotten, fragmentary and deteriorated archive, in an effort to bring it back to life and instrumentalise it in order to generate new meanings for present and future generations as part of the decolonising process.

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<sup>93</sup> César, Hering, and Rito, p. 55.

<sup>94</sup> César and Henderson.

<sup>95</sup> Teresa Castro, ‘In-Between Memory and History: Artists’ Films and the Portuguese Colonial Archive’, in *(Re)Imagining African Independence: Film, Visual Arts and the Fall of the Portuguese Empire*, ed. by Maria do Carmo Piçarra and Teresa Castro, *Reconfiguring Identities in the Portuguese-Speaking World*, 8 (Oxford ; Bern ; New York: Peter Lang, 2017), pp. 205–23 (p. 218).

While the archive itself is an essential repository of national identity, its activation in the present is what continues to add new layers to the collective memory, as it becomes a “time capsule that has been travelling for decades, centuries, and we have taken the chance to join its journey,”<sup>96</sup> as César points out. This passage through past and present temporalities continues to prove the relevance of the archive in the present, provoking a collective remembering of the violence at the heart of the continuous struggle. As the caption on a black screen states in *Spell Reel*, with the foregrounded archival footage on a smaller screen, “the archive is inhabited by processes of montage like the reel shown here assembling armed resistance and reconstruction,”<sup>97</sup> pointing towards the role of the film in perpetuating the need for resistance and bringing back to life the forgotten, decaying footage. *Spell Reel* and the wider Luta Ca Caba Inda project assume the form of a ciné-geography in creating a cross-generational dialogue that translates the overlay between past and present, engaging spectators with the archive as a repository of the past and, equally, a herald of the future. For César, the archive becomes a visionary lens through which the struggles of the past continue to influence the present by perpetuating the decolonising mission:

*“We stopped calling it an archive and instead a collective milieu, an assemblage of shrapnel. To deal with the shrapnel of colonialism means to deal with all the violence that comes through it; it means embracing the conflicts related with a permanent “decolonisation of thinking” as a condition and as a never-accomplishable task.”*<sup>98</sup>

The contemporaneity of the colonial archive and its collaborative mission is also recognised by José Manuel Costa, director of the Cinemateca Portuguesa - Museum of Cinema, who discusses the challenges of categorising the colonial archive, namely the blurred lines of what constitutes colonial film. Generally, this colonial archive was sourced through “cinematic missions taken by the regime with the explicit purpose to create moving images of the Portuguese colonies for future propaganda material,”<sup>99</sup> as well as images created by the SPN – Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional [National Propaganda Secretariat] or during scientific missions undertaken by governmental institutions, like the famous anthropological mission led

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<sup>96</sup> César, Hering, and Rito, p. 7.

<sup>97</sup> César, *Spell Reel*.

<sup>98</sup> César, ‘A Grin Without Marker’, p. 68.

<sup>99</sup> José Manuel Costa, ‘Colonial Collection of the Portuguese Film Archive: Shot, Reverse Shot, Off-Screen’, in *(Re)Imagining African Independence: Film, Visual Arts and the Fall of the Portuguese Empire*, ed. by Maria do Carmo Piçarra and Teresa Castro, *Reconfiguring Identities in the Portuguese-Speaking World*, 8 (Oxford ; Bern ; New York: Peter Lang, 2017), pp. 173–83 (p. 178-9).

by Margot and Jorge Dias to study the Makonde people in North Mozambique. In order to maintain the relevance of this archive to the present, Costa points out the need for a dialogue with its counterpart in the former colonies, invoking the ‘common heritage’ principle at the heart of the collaboration that acknowledges the fact that “all colonial images belong to both countries involved”<sup>100</sup> while steering clear of assigning direct ownership. The institute’s initiatives are centred around collaboration between researchers, aiming to “invite a community inside so as to further open the archive to the outside”<sup>101</sup> and thus reposition the archive as an increasingly relevant source of dialogue that can reconcile those on the opposite sides of history.

Departing from official Portuguese history, Joana Craveiro, Margarida Cardoso and Filipa César reinterpret the archive by turning it from a repository of the past into a contemporary dialogue, no longer a monolithic, unilateral instrument of recording history, but a site of memory retrieval and a conversation that engages a plurality of voices and activates memories. The relevance of the archive has never been more obvious at a time when the voices of those previously denied agency are finally starting to emerge, as “images of the past commonly legitimate the present social order through shared memory,”<sup>102</sup> as Cheryl McEwan notes. The artists’ exploration of the archive exposes the imperative need to resolve and revendicate the legacy of the past, to break the silence around the Colonial War and dictatorial oppression, restore women’s place in the revolutionary movements, articulate suppressed traumatic experiences, further the process of decolonisation and find hope in past acts of resistance. Their body of work demonstrates the need to question the “constructedness”<sup>103</sup> of a white, male colonial archive and resuscitate the silenced subaltern memories in order to inform the present and carve a new way for future generations.

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<sup>100</sup> Costa, p. 182.

<sup>101</sup> Costa, p. 183.

<sup>102</sup> Cheryl McEwan, ‘Building a Postcolonial Archive? Gender, Collective Memory and Citizenship in Post-Apartheid South Africa’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29.3 (2003), 739–57 (p. 743).

<sup>103</sup> Schwartz and Cook, p. 9.

## ***Chapter Five: Memory and Power in the Works of Joana Craveiro, Margarida Cardoso and Filipa César***

### **Introduction: memory struggles and collective memory**

Memory is not just a mere representation of the past, but a social construction that reflects the language of power in which legitimacy and recognition belong to the dominant group who can impose its narrative over the others. It thus becomes a place of contestation between opposing forces of power who struggle to gain positions of authority in writing the official version of history. This does not only affect those who witnessed the past, whose memories are denied, contested or forgotten by official records, but also the second generation who moves further away from personal experience and relies on the mediation of the past. The dual nature of memory, which is both individual and social, makes it a complex topic of analysis that needs to consider those personal yet collective experiences that are mediated through language and power to become official cultural discourses.

Elizabeth Jelin coins the term “memory struggles” in her 2003 work, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, referring to the process in which alternative versions of history belonging to opposing groups compete to become the dominant narrative and thus create hegemonic memories accepted as normative and official. National identity itself relies on the production of an official memory at the core of national history, a master narrative that selectively puts ‘heroes’ on a pedestal and silences the defeated. During the dictatorship in Portugal, the official discourse, in politics, press and schools, had a major role in establishing a negative memory of the Republic and anti-communism, oppressing the experiences and memories of the defectors, which only survived as acts of resistance. With every distinct interpretation of history comes contestation from rival factions of society, ultimately determining an “opposition of memory against memory” in an “active political struggle not only over the meaning of what took place in the past but over the meaning of memory itself.”<sup>1</sup> The dichotomy between contestation and dominance contributes to defining the truth about the past and how this influences the present, thus opening the door for the postmemory generations to better understand their role in creating future historical meaning.

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, Contradictions, 18 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. xviii.

The notion of collective or cultural memory is instrumental in this context of analysis. In line with Maurice Halbwachs' theory, cultural memory is "a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behaviour and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation."<sup>2</sup> Additionally, "it belongs to particular groups, takes lived experience as its object, is part of that group's identity, and cannot be transferred from one group to another."<sup>3</sup> Cultural memory is maintained through cultural formation, institutional communication and social practices as "figures of memory," and works through reconstruction by relating its knowledge to a contemporary trope that gives it relevance. Opposing semantic and episodic memory, the separation between historical memory, as a factual, abstract knowledge of the past, and collective memory, as the reconstruction of past experience, lived or not, that helps build an identity,<sup>4</sup> becomes even more crucial for, as Halbwachs argued, "history is unitary, whereas there are as many collective memories as there are groups, each of which has its own sense of duration."<sup>5</sup> This framework accounts for the wide variety of cultural memories functioning in a society, each influenced by different groups who base their own identity on it and ultimately dictating the constitution of that society relying on the memories of the past that it chooses to retrieve as part of its heritage: "the memory claimed and proclaimed is not so much to do with transmission as with reconstruction of a forgotten and sometimes falsified past, a past that was never known,"<sup>6</sup> as François Hartog concludes. As personal identity is tied to collective memory, it is crucial to question who remembers and how this happens; as Patrick Geary argued, "the practices used by societies in preserving the past and their particular attitudes toward that past influence the content and nature of their collective memories."<sup>7</sup> As the politics of memory comes into play, the way events, facts and lived experiences are recorded or revoked directly impacts not just the passing on of history, but also of identity.

Discussing the tension between memory and history, Pierre Nora notices an acceleration of history prompted by the "brutal realisation of the difference between real memory—social and unviolated, exemplified in but also retained as the secret of so-called

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<sup>2</sup> Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique*, Cultural History/Cultural Studies, 65, 1995, 125–33 (p. 126).

<sup>3</sup> Nicolas Russell, 'Collective Memory before and after Halbwachs', *The French Review*, 79.4 (2006), 792–804 (p. 798).

<sup>4</sup> Russell, p. 797-800.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*, trans. by Saskia Brown, *European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 121.

<sup>6</sup> Hartog, pp. 144–45.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Russell, p. 800.

primitive or archaic societies—and history, which is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organise the past.”<sup>8</sup> The contrastive nature of memory, collective yet individual, spontaneous, affective and selective, constantly evolving and subject to the unforgiving cycle of remembering and forgetting, is in antithesis with the universal, timeless and generic nature of history. Nora sees memory as true to life and therefore a reflection of lived experience, while history is a mere reconstruction of the past whose “goal and ambition is not to exalt but to annihilate what has in reality taken place.”<sup>9</sup> Situated at the opposite ends of the science versus nature spectrum, history and memory lack the ability to coexist, yet the search for truth needs to consider whose voice is heard, whether it comes from memory or history.

Joana Craveiro, Filipa César and Margarida Cardoso, the three contemporary artists/performers analysed in the second part of this dissertation, have centred their works on exposing the power of marginalised, subaltern memories, challenging the legitimacy of knowledge production and denouncing the selective writing of history by deconstructing dominant narratives and discourses of power. This chapter aims to explore the means through which Craveiro, César and Cardoso address issues of representation, or lack thereof, as part of collective memory in Portugal, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, by engaging in a close analysis of their works. Joana Craveiro’s theatrical performance, *A Live/Living Museum of Small, Forgotten and Unwanted Memories*, challenges the narratives of the Estado Novo portraying Portugal as a stable, balanced and prospering nation by bringing to light memories of political resistance and denouncing institutionalised violence. In *Spell Reel* and short videos like *Mined Soil* and *Conakry*, Filipa César discusses historical representation, memory transmission and the political role of cinema by exploring the irrelevance of the forgotten Guinean archive through highly lyrical and conceptual artworks. Finally, in documentaries like *Kuxa Kanema* and *Natal 71* and the fictional film *Yvone Kane*, Margarida Cardoso centres her work on decomposing discourses of power in post-Independence Mozambique, exploring alternative narratives that address historical lacunae. By closely engaging with the directors’ plays, films and documentaries, this chapter will look at the way in which the tensions between history, memory and truth highlight the nonlinearity of historical narrative as traditionally portrayed during the dictatorship, exploring the way they are deconstructing existing stories by

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<sup>8</sup> Pierre Nora, ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire’, *Representations*, 26. Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (1989), 7–24 (p. 8).

<sup>9</sup> Nora, p. 9.

challenging the perception of historical facts as truth, and revealing the multiple facets of political resistance.

## **History, memory and truth in Joana Craveiro**

The relation between history, memory and truth already played a crucial role in the first part of this thesis, which exposed the tensions between the official recording of the past and the role of individual memory in tracing reality, highlighting the need for an alternative perspective of history to encompass the multilateral views of truth. This remains an essential point in the works of contemporary artists who revisit history to find a space for the postmemory generations to connect with the past. The quest for truth is the motor that powers Craveiro, César and Cardoso to explore the archives and piece together different experiences of the past. Echoing Lídia Jorge's and Teolinda Gersão's disputing of history as a transparent and straightforward representation of the real, the contemporary artists/performers are interested in collecting and creating alternative views of what is universally acknowledged as historical facts.

The need to address the history, memory and truth triad also stems from the directors' effort to counteract the revisionist tendencies of the post-Revolutionary Portuguese society, whose gradual rewriting of the past involved denying the fascist nature of the Estado Novo and any similarities to the German and Italian regimes. Manuel Loff notes the development of a neo-Salazarist discourse disregarding violence and repression, both in Portugal and in the colonies, seen even in the educational system that adopted a "benevolent thesis on the Estado Novo,"<sup>10</sup> the silence over the Colonial War or restricting access to the archives of the political police of the dictatorship. Similarly, Raquel da Silva and Ana Sofia Ferreira discuss the rise of post-dictatorship memory politics based on "a historical revisionism that sought to whitewash the memory of the dictatorship and deny the revolutionary genesis of democracy in Portugal,"<sup>11</sup> paired with a "devaluation of the memory of resistance to the dictatorship."<sup>12</sup> This culminated in 2007 with Salazar winning the TV contest *Grandes Portugueses*, following ardent public debates that showed how the revisionist politics had succeeded in painting the past in a different light that excluded the memory of repression and violence. On the other hand, this was also the

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<sup>10</sup> Manuel Loff, 'Dictatorship and Revolution: Socio-Political Reconstructions of Collective Memory in Post-Authoritarian Portugal', *Culture & History Digital Journal*, 3.2 (2014), 1–13 (p. 6).

<sup>11</sup> Raquel da Silva and Ana Sofia Ferreira, 'The Post-Dictatorship Memory Politics in Portugal Which Erased Political Violence from the Collective Memory', *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 53 (2019), 24–43 (p. 35).

<sup>12</sup> Silva and Ferreira, p. 36.

moment when a new historiography of the Estado Novo emerged, contributing to the clarification of the regime's fascist nature and exploring its repressive apparatus in more detail, generating a real struggle for memory. Despite this, the official history books and school curriculum are omissive of the colonised perspective, depicting a unilateral view of the past that deprives the black and mixed ethnicity Portuguese of their heritage.

The starting point of Joana Craveiro's performance and the question that the play keeps coming back to is "how could a dictatorship last for so long," which is as fundamental as "who am I, where do I come from – and, furthermore, what remains part of me from those times?"<sup>13</sup> The theatrical persona of the Archivist takes the spectators on a journey of rediscovery of the legacy of the fascist regime, dissecting and challenging the propagandistic depiction of Portugal and its "serene and 'sensible' people with 'gentle' manners."<sup>14</sup> Not only did the regime perpetuate a state of intense poverty across the entire country, but it also created widespread illiteracy and ambiguity, limiting people's access to education in order to maintain its stronghold.

Set in 1980 in Lisbon, the play begins in a photographer's studio in Benfica where schoolchildren are having their photos taken in front of the picture of a Swiss Alps landscape. The narrator opposes the background of an idealised country to Portugal's state of derision at the time, which she describes as "lacking in self-esteem, stumbling out of a revolutionary process and already in an economic crisis and a financial aid programme."<sup>15</sup> Evoking Eduardo Lourenço's ironic comment, "Fascism never existed," Craveiro uses the premonitory statement as a bitter denunciation of the country's fate after the Revolution. The Archivist equally challenges the opposing images of Portugal, that of a "small country near Spain, but still in Europe,"<sup>16</sup> as modestly seen from abroad, and its grandiose portrayal during the Estado Novo as a justification for its colonial past. The script evokes the 1934 postcard showing Portugal and its African territories contrastingly covering the map of Europe to point out the sheer size of the empire and create the image of a strong multiracial nation, accompanied by the slogan "Portugal is not a small country," which is ironically repeated throughout the performance.

Throughout the entire script, the narrator's personal memories of the 1980s are skilfully intertwined with the political events that make up the official history of the decade. Comparable to Lídia Jorge's use of the minor characters and episodes contributing to the formation of

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<sup>13</sup> Joana Craveiro, 'Appendices II: Performance Script' (unpublished Thesis (Ph.D.), University of Roehampton, 2017), p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Craveiro, 'Performance Script', p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Craveiro, 'Performance Script', p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Craveiro, 'Performance Script', p. 7.

history, Craveiro's work is centred on the seemingly trivial and forgotten memories and characters that play a role in unofficial history, contributing to rendering the invisible visible and thus to the inscription of personal memories in the public space. This space is inhabited by those for whom history is a traumatic past, alongside those who mourn it as a lost paradise, by revolutionaries and returnees, and Craveiro's play on this dichotomy between trauma and nostalgia reveals the complexity of historical representation. The resemblance to *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, which brings to light the unknown stories of peripheral female characters inhabiting the Stella Maris hotel by enunciating their names and experiences, can be seen through Craveiro's choice to make public the names of her interviewees: "I like saying these names, naming these people, whom we don't know where they are."<sup>17</sup> This deliberate gesture is what creates visibility for the minor and inscribes it in history. On the other hand, a common feature of the interviewees whose stories contributed to building the script is their own desire to make their names and experiences heard, as seen in the confession of Jorge, one of the participants who recounts his contribution to the revolutionary process in Cova da Piedade: "I am telling you all this because I want to get into your stories, so that you can maybe tell my story."<sup>18</sup> In fact, it is the experience of those politically involved during the dictatorship and closely after its fall, in their efforts to build a free, socialist society, that became the building blocks of Craveiro's work.

The role of the minor in Craveiro's play is not only that of challenging dominant master narratives, but also of questioning the entire interplay between history and memory by signalling to the imperfections of the language of memory transmission. Discussing her choice of title for the play as a whole and for each constitutive chapter in the performance, Craveiro addresses her linguistic use of the minor:

*"Words like 'small', 'invisible' and 'fragments' point to a history (or a series of histories) that is less interested in what is clearly visible, and more alert to looking beyond the surface of the grand historical narratives to discover the private, the individual, the anonymous, and the unknown."*<sup>19</sup>

This focus on what lies beneath the layers of official history contributes to unmasking the biased distinction of what constitutes the public and the private spheres, with their often

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<sup>17</sup> Craveiro, 'Performance Script', p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Craveiro, 'Performance Script', p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> Joana Craveiro, 'A Live/Living Museum of Small, Forgotten and Unwanted Memories: Performing Narratives, Testimonies and Archives of the Portuguese Dictatorship and Revolution' (Doctoral Thesis (Ph.D.), University of Roehampton, 2017), p. 17.

opposing rather than reconciled memories, highlighting tensions between history and truth through the use of memory. Unlike traditional historical narratives centred solely on the visible, and hence dominant experiences, Craveiro's play changes the language of history to address the fading voices that bring in fragmentary accounts of past realities. The fragmentary nature of reality is further enriched with past personal experiences accompanied by surprising coincidences that only emerge at later times, such as the kindergarten that she attended as a child belonging to Ana Maria Caetano, Marcello Caetano's daughter, the last prime minister of the Estado Novo, while the street where she lived with her family was named after Ana Maria Caetano's grandfather, João de Barros, a republican and known opponent of the regime.

In line with Carol Martin's definition of "theatre of the real" and its "obsession with framing and reframing what has really happened,"<sup>20</sup> Craveiro's work is driven by a reconstructive compulsion towards redefining the limits of history and reality through memory. Additionally, this is particularly prompted by the conflictive ways in which the experience of Portuguese dictatorship and Revolution have been remembered by individuals and depicted in the dominant narratives of the state. An underlining trait of the way in which these crucial episodes are portrayed in the national history is exclusion, by silencing personal experiences or by erasing entire events in order to cover societal guilt and trauma. Historical exclusion is what instigates the urge for reconstruction of personal experiences and memories, as Craveiro admits in her thesis:

*"This need to 'reconstruct' stems, indeed, from acknowledged absences: the silences and oblivions concerning certain aspects of the historical events, as well as the lack of information, the contradictory versions in circulation, and the dominant narratives disseminated by the media, political discourses and schoolbooks."*<sup>21</sup>

These undeniably crucial moments in Portuguese history, which to this day continue to play a formative role in the society, are unsatisfactorily inscribed in the public space, thus generating a struggle for memory and reconstruction.

Craveiro employs the term "embodied historiography," created at the intersection of history and memory by the subjective relation between individuals and historical events, in which "the body of the researcher becomes the repository of the voices and the memories of

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<sup>20</sup> Carol Martin, *Theatre of the Real* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Craveiro, 'Doctoral Thesis', pp. 27–28.

the interviewees and the authors quoted.”<sup>22</sup> The performance persona, the Archivist, has the role of conveying this embodied historiography in a monologue tracing the journey of discovering the past and transmission of memory. Her narrative function is to create a bridge between the performance and the audience, not by offering an unequivocal interpretation of history, but on the contrary, by provoking reflection through repeated questions, which resonate with the audience and their experience of the events, engaging and involving them in the performance. Even though the seven performance-lectures are built on the model of history lessons, the representation of historical truth is challenged through “constant doubts and interrogations that I [the Archivist] voice, which stem from the basic assumption that no one really knows exactly what happened.”<sup>23</sup> This is exacerbated by the questioning of official politics of memory in Portugal, and the lack of inscription of personal memories in the public sphere, denouncing the subjectivity of history. Traditionally, the opposition between history and memory is based on the idea that the former is “constituted by scientifically verifiable facts (...) and the latter is relegated to the sphere of uncritical belief, myth, and the ‘invention’ of the past, often with an idealised or romanticised version of that past,”<sup>24</sup> as Jelin wrote. Craveiro’s work challenges this perception centred on the dichotomy between proven fact and assumed belief by emphasising the role that the subjectivity of social actors plays in defining social identities. Just as Lídia Jorge and Teolinda Gersão demonstrated in *A Costa dos Murmúrios* and, respectively, *A Árvore das Palavras*, the role of memory in the interpretation of official discourse introduces a degree of subjectivity that helps to shape a more complex understanding of past reality.

The interpretation of memories in relation to power is reinstated in the sixth performance-lecture that discusses the ending of the Revolution. But the very understanding of Revolution reveals the tension between what it is traditionally defined as, the night of the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1974 when a military coup overthrew the fascist regime, and what it is experienced as by those who channelled their socialist energy and ideals to shape the newly reinstated democracy, namely the Ongoing Revolutionary Process. The two years of intense power disputes between the left and the right, marked by fundamental social and political changes, resulted in the legislative election of 1976 that cemented the foundations of a Portuguese Constitution. Craveiro brings the attention towards the way in which these divisive struggles for power influenced the perception of the Revolution and the revolutionary process:

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<sup>22</sup> Craveiro, ‘Doctoral Thesis’, pp. 93–94.

<sup>23</sup> Craveiro, ‘Doctoral Thesis’, p. 139.

<sup>24</sup> Jelin, p. 47.

*“This is a memory that still divides many people – some people say that this process was total chaos and it almost ruined the country. But also many who participated in it – either the agrarian reform, the occupations, popular assemblies – will tell you – even if timidly – that this was the true revolution.”*<sup>25</sup>

The discordant memory of the events is mediated through political affiliation, including Craveiro’s herself, who invokes the positive perspective of outsiders like foreign documentary directors, photographers and historians who distinguish the Portuguese example as “a unique period in the context of revolutions and revolutionary processes all over world”<sup>26</sup> for its idealist socialist agenda. The subjectivity of memory is illustrated by the contrastive perception of events that were experienced differently by those involved based on their relation to power at the time. People whose urge for political participation, motivated by their socialist ideals, heavily contrasted with those from financially challenged backgrounds with a more mundane priority to survive and maintain the ability to feed their families.

By bringing forward alternative memories to those socially accepted as official and dominant, Craveiro also questions the legitimacy of knowledge production and the transmission of memories across generations, thus challenging “the general assumption of a historiography exclusively made by historians together with the assumption that one must have experienced an event in order to produce a discourse on it.”<sup>27</sup> The artist condones the exclusion of personal experience from the writing of history, and advocates for the right of future generations to question a past that they inherited, which continues to influence the present and future of the Portuguese society. As stated in the initial pages of the performance script, all members of the audience are exposed to a series of facts and characters unknown to them:

*“During our visit to the special collection of 7 performance-lectures, you will be introduced to many names and events that either you don’t know or that you have not experienced directly. But don’t worry, neither have we – we were born after.”*<sup>28</sup>

Regardless of their age and experience, or lack thereof, the spectators are all equal in terms of their knowledge of the subject matter. The ones that are too young to have lived

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<sup>25</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 97.

<sup>26</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 97.

<sup>27</sup> Craveiro, ‘Doctoral Thesis’, p. 53.

<sup>28</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 7.

through the dictatorship and Revolution are on the same level as those who were old enough to have experienced these moments in history but are oblivious to these aspects, but since the facts and characters presented in the play are obscure, yet evocative representations of the minor, they resonate with every member in the audience, crossing the generational boundaries.

Representing the postmemory generation of those born after the Revolution, Craveiro makes a case for the importance of adopting the memories that shaped the entire society for those who only got to live them at a future time: “These memories belong to us, even if we were not there.”<sup>29</sup> The memories of the revolutionary songs, messages and events that carry the fervour of the time can be intuitively understood and adopted by the post-revolutionary generations as transmitted by those who experienced them first hand. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the future generation has a better grasp of the Revolution by being removed from the original trauma of the revolutionary movement and even preserving its meaning in a purer form, as Craveiro argues. The interviews with the first generation, including her own mother, reveal the scepticism of those who had been agents of the Revolution with regards to their own political mission in light of subsequent historical events that turned far left regimes into dictatorships. People like the historian M. even deny the cultural effects of the Revolution and its own existence: “when you leave a movement, you move to the other side of the barricade,”<sup>30</sup> making it difficult to restore the memory of the Revolution as it was experienced at the time, without it being shadowed by the influence of the present.

As Jelin notes, “human understanding embodies personally lived experiences; it also incorporates secondhand experiences – those that are conveyed by others.”<sup>31</sup> For those who did not experience the past themselves and thus lack first-hand experience, memory is “a representation of the past constructed as cultural knowledge shared by successive generations and by different others,”<sup>32</sup> thus transpiring into collective memory. Thus, there is a distinction perceived between personal recollection and social memory, mediated through the cultural language of social constructs and transmitted across generations. Yet second generation memories are an inherent part of the complex universe of human understanding, and the validity of this experience is key to interpreting the past and its legacy in the present. In the context of memory transmission across generations, Jelin quotes Yosef Yerushalmi who argues that the legacy of the past is even more strongly embedded in the future generations that carry

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<sup>29</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 90.

<sup>30</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 101.

<sup>31</sup> Jelin, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Jelin, p. 21.

their elders' past experiences as lessons for future expectations, and the biggest dangers of memory loss lie in its lack of transmission:

*“When we say that a people ‘remembers’ we are really saying that a past has been actively transmitted to the present generation and that this past has been accepted as meaningful. Conversely, a people ‘forgets’ when the generation that now possesses the past does not convey it to the next, or when the latter rejects what it receives and does not pass it onward, which is to say the same thing... A people can never ‘forget’ what it has never received in the first place.”*<sup>33</sup>

The process of conveying and interpreting the meaning of past memories is a highly subjective task, in which individual and collective memories are constructed and reconstructed in contact with the others, who experience the same past in different ways. As Reinhart Koselleck states, “experience is present past, whose events have been incorporated and can be remembered,”<sup>34</sup> as they “overlap and mutually impregnate one another.”<sup>35</sup> The purity and authenticity of memories are thus unattainable characteristics given the subjective nature of memory, which can only live at the intersection between past and present, and its perception depends not only on those experiencing the event but also on those interpreting them, especially when this spans across generations. This tension between past experiences and future expectations undergoes a historical process in which memories dynamically change meanings through the dialogue between generations.

It is through this intergenerational dialogue that the legacy of the Revolution and ongoing revolutionary process undergoes a radical transformation, from a point of scepticism and denial to an invaluable memory that is shaping the past, present and future of Portuguese society. Accidentally coming across John L. Hammond’s *Building Popular Power – Workers’ and Neighbourhood movements in the Portuguese Revolution* in the Senate House during her PhD research in London, Craveiro discovers her parents’ names acknowledged in the book for their contribution, reinstating their own self-worth in their involvement; even more than the forbidden books in their house or the remains of pamphlets handed to students, this public confirmation of her parents’ names restores the daughter’s appreciation. As Craveiro’s father’s

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<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Jelin, p. 94.

<sup>34</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 272.

<sup>35</sup> Koselleck, pp. 274–75.

friend remembers on his deathbed, “that which we lived, no one can imagine, and no one can take away from us,”<sup>36</sup> showing how the memory of the Revolution remains unperturbed and even becomes stronger for generations to come.

Additional to questioning the inscription and legitimacy of historiography, Craveiro’s act of staging the performance of the memory of dictatorship and Revolution contributes to creating the experience of remembrance as a collective act, in which individual memories are socially framed to reflect shared cultural codes. As Jelin observes, “memories are more reconstructions than recollections”<sup>37</sup> and the act of reminiscing the past in front of an audience who shares the same experience contributes to the reconstruction of collective memory. The engagement of the audience throughout the number of performances held across cities in Portugal proved the collective power of remembering and re-inscribing a traumatic, fragmentary and often contested past.

### **History, memory and truth in Filipa César**

Continuing the discussion on history and memory with Filipa César’s work, the director excavates the forgotten archives of Guinea-Bissau, turning a fragile and decaying video and audio matter of the past into an artistic visual material lens that opens towards the future, carrying the decolonising message of the 1970s African nation into the present of a troubled country. Through the lyrical visual footage of her works, she addresses issues of historical representation, memory transmission and the political role of cinema by exploring a decomposing Guinean archive, once deemed as “irrelevant” by the Portuguese archivists and the FIAF (International Federation of Film Archives).

Her initial inspiration came from Chris Marker’s 1982 film, *Sans Soleil*, a meditation on the nature of human memory, which employs borrowed footage shot by Sana na N’Hada in Guinea-Bissau, among other international filmmakers. In *Spell Reel*, N’Hada talks about the three months that the young filmmakers spent with Marker in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, learning montage from the French director, studying foreign films, and simultaneously being secretly evaluated to prove their ability to make cinema on their own, acknowledging that “the future of Guinean cinema was in the hands of Chris Marker.”<sup>38</sup> Marker’s commentary on the Portuguese-Guinean conflict, “History throws its empty bottles out the window,”<sup>39</sup> becomes

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<sup>36</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 107.

<sup>37</sup> Jelin, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Filipa César, *Spell Reel* (Spectre Productions, 2017).

<sup>39</sup> Filipa César, ‘A Grin Without Marker’, *L’Internationale Online*, Decolonising Archives, 2016, 58–72 (p. 62).

for César “a chance to look at European myopia through the lenses of colonial resistance,”<sup>40</sup> not by reinterpreting the archive to render it relevant, but by remaining outside the relevant-irrelevant binary and reading it as “an abdication of history.”<sup>41</sup> The archive’s relevance or lack thereof is only justified when interpreted in relation to the system whose purposes it must fulfil in order to justify its pertinence. This renouncement of historical factuality translates as a refusal to play by the rules of history altogether, defying its temporality.

César’s work with the Guinean archive, officially perceived as “irrelevant” by those in a position of power, reminisces Jorge’s previously discussed dichotomy between truth, which is explicitly unfragmented and unitary, and reality, which needs to be dispersed and irrelevant.<sup>42</sup> Instead of exploiting the decaying archive to generate an orderly, universally acknowledged form of truth, César’s intention is to bring to life the peripheral experiences whose unsanctioned place in history makes them a form of reality. She compares her work to the structure of the haiku poetry, in which “sentences are placed in relation to each other, but they don’t need to have a cause and effect link between them, they don’t have to be relevant to each other – and yet they affect each other, they co-exist in the possibilities of aimless relation.”<sup>43</sup> This echoes the “formidable simultaneities”<sup>44</sup> and the series of tragic coincidences that create the complex labyrinth of reality in *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, accounting for the role of the minor in the writing and remembering of history.

In one of her interviews, César talks about the motivation behind the exploration of the past in her work, highlighting the tensions between past and history: “I am interested in the subjective way of making a documentation of the past. I don’t want to collect history because I have a problem with the way it is instrumentalised.”<sup>45</sup> Her films work towards releasing the archival images from the constrictive rules of history, where they lie forgotten and hidden from the public eye, and re-inscribing them into the collective memory of both the colony and the coloniser. In this way, the reactivated images gain the ability to render the obscure past relevant again, and exert its influence over the future. Escaping the selectiveness of history, this fragmentary archive surprises through its contemporaneity, which, in many ways, contradicts the irrelevance officially attributed to it. While it might be insignificant to the colonial legacy and the writers of history, this archive is crucial for understanding the past and making further

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<sup>40</sup> César, ‘A Grin Without Marker’, p. 63.

<sup>41</sup> César, ‘A Grin Without Marker’, p. 66.

<sup>42</sup> Lídia Jorge, *The Murmuring Coast*, trans. by Natália Costa and Ronald W. Sousa, Emergent Literatures (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 83.

<sup>43</sup> César, ‘A Grin Without Marker’, p. 69.

<sup>44</sup> Jorge, p. 172.

<sup>45</sup> Filipa César *‘Luta Ca Caba Inda’ for the Exhibition Satellite 5 at Jeu de Paume* (Paris, 2013).

steps towards decolonisation for those forgotten by history, the Guinean people. The conflict at its heart continues to make its effects seen in the present, inscribed with colonial violence.

Additional to the images themselves, the montage of the film also speaks about César's approach to representing the past. One of the main techniques she uses is juxtaposition, bringing together archival footage and contemporary images shot during the staging of the itinerant cinema. This impression of simultaneity, artificially constructed through the framing of the images, erases temporalities and creates the visual effect of a nonlinear history that disobeys the artificial concept of time. The archive is not only removed from the past and given a voice to mark its inscription into the present, but it also creates a dialogue between generations. According to Bedatri D. Choudhury, the film "constantly juxtaposes and superimposes archival footage on the present, thereby making the present and its people not just viewers but extensions of the narrative. It documents that moment of rupture where people's histories are projected on people's lives for the first time in a form that moves, talks and, therefore, lives."<sup>46</sup> The filmic intention appears to relay a lived history embedded in subjectivity and the power of the individual, the opposite of textbook history, a contrast that echoes Pierre Nora's history-memory dichotomy. This is paired with the country's decolonisation process and newly gained independence that prompted an awakening from "ethnological slumbers by colonial violation" and exposing their access to "reserves of memory but little or no historical capital,"<sup>47</sup> as described by Nora in his definition of the *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory).

Talking about the archival footage being revealed to the public for the first time since its creation, Tobias Hering reflects on the prerequisite of an audience to legitimise the place of images in collective memory, questioning what gives meaning to these: "Is it an image at all, if nobody has ever seen it?"<sup>48</sup> This becomes a defining question not only for the newly emerged visual material digitised and publicised through the project, but especially for the countless fragments of footage that had disappeared under the unforgiving mark of the vinegar syndrome, whose forgetting reinforces the tragedy of the lost Guinean voices. Challenging his own assumptions of what the surviving images look like, smelling of vinegar instead of ashes, white, light blue, green and sepia instead of grey, Hering talks about the "aesthetics of ruination," based on a "tradition of aestheticizing – rather than politicising – the traces of anti-colonial

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<sup>46</sup> Bedatri D. Choudhury, 'The Archaeology of Film: Close-Up on Filipa César's "Spell Reel"', *MUBI Notebooks Close-Up*, 21 October 2017.

<sup>47</sup> Nora, p. 7.

<sup>48</sup> Filipa César, Tobias Hering, and Carolina Rito, *Luta ca Caba Inda: Time Place Matter Voice, 1967-2017*, Archive Books, 2017, p. 168.

struggle.”<sup>49</sup> But hope lies in the promise of re-inscription, where even the images damaged beyond repair can fulfil a powerful role in creating the decolonising imaginary that *Spell Reel* is centred on: “The archive is always erected on the soft ground between memory and amnesia. Just as an image can erase memory, an erased image can commemorate amnesia.”<sup>50</sup> Through the candour with which it treats the archive, in its refusal to restore, correct or enhance the footage displayed, *Spell Reel* treats all images equally, regardless of their condition, as places of knowledge creation whose meaning expands beyond aesthetics into the realm of historical meaningfulness. The fragility of the archive becomes a form of strength in its journey towards historical reclamation.

The irreversible damage that the archive was subjected to during the decades of political instability in Guinea-Bissau resonates with Manthia Diawara’s reflections on the lack of decolonisation narrative in post-independence African cinema and its relation to political propaganda: “In asking how people could have had such a short memory of colonialism in Africa that they would accept the demonization of those who fought for freedom and welcome the former colonizer as a saviour, I began to understand the power and the limits of propagandistic art.”<sup>51</sup> The risk of forgetting the short-lived memories of the colonial struggles is subject to the rapid changes in political power in the African countries, with long years of instability that led to an abandonment of Amílcar Cabral’s decolonising ideals. But Diawara’s argument in support of the propaganda is its role in creating the images of an envisaged future that once gave the country hope, as “gestures describing a space to be filled”<sup>52</sup> that would carry the memory of the struggle.

One of the works in which César directly confronts the issue of historical representation is the 2013 short film, *Conakry*, bringing together the voices of Grada Kilomba and Diana McCarty to interpret the Guinean footage shot during Amílcar Cabral’s international event, “The Week of Information.” The footage shows a series of objects that Cabral curated as part of his exhibition, from documents and books to photographs, as he welcomes his illustrious guests. The plethora of prominent figures captured in the footage, like Stokely Carmichael, leader of the Black Panther Party, and his wife, South-African singer Miriam Makeba, Sékou

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<sup>49</sup> Tobias Hering, ‘Before Six Years After. Notes on the Re-Emergence of a Film Archive Title: In Guinea-Bissau (Based on Conversations with Filipa César)’, *View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture*, 7 (2014), 1–21 (p. 2).

<sup>50</sup> César, Hering, and Rito, p. 168.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Hering, p. 13.

<sup>52</sup> Hering, p. 15.

Touré and his wife, the president and first lady of Guinea-Conakry, places Cabral as part of the global ranks of freedom and civil rights fighters, bringing international recognition to his cause.

Starting with the pretext of the fragmentary archive where image and sound are disjointed, Kilomba shares her reading of the historical relevance of the footage, accompanied by McCarty's radio-like narrative, reflecting on memory recovery, historical amnesia and the role of cinema in decolonisation. Abounding in political symbolism, the film is staged at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin in 2013 and brings to light footage shot in 1972 at the Palais du Peuple in Conakry, bringing together two institutions that embody their countries' political status and affiliation, the first a gift from the United States to West Berlin, and the second a gift from China to the Revolutionary Republic of Guinea. Superimposed over the image of Kilomba's body as she reads her commentary of the events in the form of an academic lecture, the visual language of the forgotten footage is complemented by her voice in a gesture that recovers the individual contribution as part of collective memory: "I am speaking because the sounds belonging to these images have not arrived yet. Maybe they never will. What I speak and have to say may never be what these reels want to tell."<sup>53</sup> Undeterred by the lack of sound, the rediscovery of these images continues to animate discussions and generate new voices in the ongoing decolonisation struggle.

One of the most crucial conversations is that around whose memories is history dependent on and how the subaltern's story battles with its exclusion from collective consciousness. Through the angle of her personal story, as a black Portuguese of West African descent growing up in Lisbon, and by assuming the role of the storyteller in a rhythmic voice, Kilomba questions the legitimacy of classical knowledge production that excludes the marginal experience:

*"But I tell you and I reassure you that the name Amílcar Cabral was never revealed to me in my history books, no mention in my classroom in Lisbon where other black children and I sat at the back. My memories are not sweet, though they could have been, they could have been memories of pride if these images had been shown to me earlier before. They do not come late, they come on time."*<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Filipa César, *Conakry*, 2013.

<sup>54</sup> César, *Conakry*.

The recovered images of the Guinean archive recreate the alternative narrative that history has kept hidden, restoring pride in their exposure of the decolonising act and activating their power to give a voice to silenced memories, “eroding film, eroding time and eroding space”<sup>55</sup> to breakdown historical distances. The layers of colonial violence perpetuated through the writing and dissemination of history are challenged by bringing together the silent, yet powerfully evocative archival footage with the voice of a black female artist and academic whose work is centred around questioning the power structures inherent in the writing of history. While *Conakry* precedes *Spell Reel* by nearly four years, the revision of post-colonial narratives continues to evolve in César’s work as it challenges the means of knowledge production.

Flora Gomes also talks about the powerful, yet unacknowledged role Cabral played in writing history, not only of his own country, but also of Portugal. The vast majority of the generals who overthrew the fascist regime had served in the Guinea-Bissau war, and Cabral’s political stance had an indubitably heavy influence as it promoted the fight against the ideology of the colonial system rather than Portugal as a country; as an announcement on PAIGC’s radio station mentioned: “We are fighting colonialism and fascism, and you, the Portuguese, must also fight it at home, in your own country.”<sup>56</sup> Cabral’s visionary tactic of gaining the Portuguese military as an ally resonated with the discontentment and frustration of the army that was already feeling trapped in a war it no longer believed in. In *Conakry*, Kilomba reads Cabral’s 1966 Christmas letter to the Portuguese army, in which he reinforces the message of solidarity: “We are the same family because we face together the same problems.”<sup>57</sup> In his messages, the comradeship of the two opposing forces strengthens their faith in fighting towards the same cause, and radically contrasts with the tone-deaf vinyl record that the Portuguese soldiers would receive at Christmas from their own government, an absurd reminder of a regime disconnected from its own men.

## **History, memory and truth in Margarida Cardoso**

The forces between history, memory and truth play an essential role throughout Cardoso’s body of work, who focuses on the relations of power operating behind the image in an effort to expose and understand the construct of truth. As the director confesses, her own memories of Mozambique and the war benefit from the clarity of knowing the difference

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<sup>55</sup> César, *Conakry*.

<sup>56</sup> César, Hering, and Rito, p. 233.

<sup>57</sup> César, *Conakry*.

between the imperial propaganda of Portugal and its stark contrast with the reality of poverty and racism: “After the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, the whole imperial identity disappeared and there was nothing left, we didn’t yet have an identity to replace the fake one, but we were so used to this difference between what we were told and what we could see.”<sup>58</sup> Her work carries the legacy of a past trying to rediscover its own truth, beyond propaganda and steeped in a present that has made the rewriting of history more common than not. Cardoso remembers Lúcia Jorge once saying, during a forum on reconciliation and the end of conflict in Colombia, that she had never thought she would be able to write about the trauma experienced in Africa, but the legacy of the war started being devalued in the popular opinion in the 1980s and the presence of racism was gradually being denied: “When she saw the memories being redacted and disappearing, she knew she had to write because the truth would otherwise die.”<sup>59</sup> A similar motivation lies behind Cardoso’s work with memory and history, the apprehension that the current political movement will rewrite the colonial past and distort the truth that her parents’ generation had once experienced.

One of the dilemmas of historical truth lies within the veracity of memory and its fluid nature. As Cardoso reminds us through the way in which she re-contextualises archival footage, the manifestation of power is the prevalent code for deciphering the message that any image conveys. Working with memory is similar to working with image, not only because of its plasticity, but also its intentionality, as the director argues: “The memory only exists because someone or you individually had tried to construct a narrative.”<sup>60</sup> The fluidity and nonlinearity of memory, so inherently personal and therefore easily influenced by nostalgia, trauma and grief, contribute to its overall fragility that turns it into a volatile material to work with. Moreover, as Enzo Traverso noted, memory is a “construction permanently filtered by subsequently acquired knowledge, the reflections produced in the aftermath of an event, and the experiences overlapping the original one and modifying its recollection.”<sup>61</sup> Considering the influence of the external and internal experiences and its constantly evolving nature makes memory an often-illusory object of analysis.

For Cardoso, the construction of the past, as seen through images of the archive, heavily relies on understanding the forces at play in recording history; as she confesses, she is most interested in “the desire and intention of capturing a particular image, who is behind the camera,

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<sup>58</sup> Interview with Margarida Cardoso, Lisbon, 2019.

<sup>59</sup> Cardoso, 2019.

<sup>60</sup> Cardoso, 2019.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Sónia Vespeira de Almeida and Sónia Ferreira, ‘Dictatorships and Revolutions in Portugal and Chile: Ethnography, Memory and Invisibilities’, *History and Anthropology*, 26.5 (2015), 597–618 (p. 598).

and what kind of forces of power are behind this image.”<sup>62</sup> In *Natal 71*, the director exposes the way in which history is rewritten through propaganda and how the reality of the war in Africa was manipulated by the regime. Propaganda footage shows sailors in Guinea playing sport, happily enjoying life as the voice of a presenter confidently affirms: “Hardly have they returned to the barracks before they’re hard at it. Sport is one of their first priorities.”<sup>63</sup> A young officer turns towards the camera to send greetings to families and friends at home in the name of the marines, but forgets his visibly rehearsed lines and the person behind the camera attempts to discreetly whisper the missing words: “As you can see, morale is very high and we’re bursting with health.”<sup>64</sup> The intention of the propaganda footage becomes obvious in the small, easy or sometimes impossible to miss gestures that fail to follow the regimented script, the split seconds showing the soldier’s gaze that fails to focus on the camera and the voice that unveils a strict speech excluding any personal touch.

The simulated image of a nonchalant setting, in which soldiers seemed rather to be enjoying a year abroad in Africa instead of taking part in a war, is reinforced by archival footage claiming that Portugal was not actually at war, but merely policing its overseas territories to prevent any subversive actions by the local guerrilla groups under the influence of the Eastern communist threat. As already seen in Craveiro’s performance discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the intention of the regime to maintain a general level of ignorance and a lack of political awareness was carried out through constant surveillance and careful manoeuvring of the public opinion. Interviewed in Cardoso’s documentary, actor João Maria Pinto remembers coming home from the war over Christmas and being asked by his grocer if he had been on holiday in Mozambique, during a time when *Newsweek* magazine, which also covered the Vietnam war, reported that the triangle between Mueda, Dieca and Sagal in Mozambique was the most mined area in the world.<sup>65</sup> Adelino Cardoso, the director’s father, also remembers an instance of manipulation in the news reporting of soldiers said to have died in traffic accidents when they actually ran over a landmine, all pointing towards a progressive rewriting of history.

In fact, this tension between truth and propaganda remains constant across the two generations of artists. Lídia Jorge had also addressed it in *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, when Luís Alex, having come back to the hotel from his last mission, contests the facts reported to the press by the armed forces and the regime, denouncing them all as lies: “now he thought they

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<sup>62</sup> Cardoso, 2019.

<sup>63</sup> Margarida Cardoso, *Natal 71*, 1999.

<sup>64</sup> Cardoso, *Natal 71*.

<sup>65</sup> Cardoso, *Natal 71*.

were all obscene, the old men who were bad commanders, who made the enemy flee instead of surprising them, the old men who didn't put an end to the war or move it along and then came to tell their lies at press conferences. They were simply pretending.”<sup>66</sup> The said press conference had the title “Portugal within and beyond its borders is eternal” and took place in the Stella Maris ballroom decorated with paintings of the Invincible Spanish Armada prior to its defeat, an ironic detail that Eva makes sure to highlight. Headed by a blind lieutenant-captain who had devoted himself to history ever since losing his sight from a grenade explosion, this quasi-comical instance of irony reflects the problematic writing of history in the hands of old, white men in positions of power within a fascist state that ruled through coercion, repression and censorship. During his speech, the lieutenant-captain remained unaware of the rain of locusts that had just started outside, furthering the symbolism of a regime that remained ignorant to the power of the African struggle, as he reached the pinnacle of his theory: “The Planet is eternal, Portugal is part of the Planet, the Overseas is as Portuguese as the soil of the fatherland within our borders; we are treading on overseas soil; we are standing on eternal Portugal!”<sup>67</sup> Denouncing the obsolete, colour-blind ideology of the regime that the speaker represents, Jorge's ironical criticism of propaganda is in line with Cardoso's deployment of archival footage to uncover what was manipulated by the dictatorship.

The notion of power plays a defining part in Cardoso's work, as she confesses: “I'm always very interested in what the story told by the power is, and this is very present in everything I do.”<sup>68</sup> This becomes a central aspect in *Yvone Kane*, in which she creates a fictional character that exposes the tensions between official history and ‘truth.’ Without any intention to deceive the audience about the true existence of Yvone Kane, the character is inspired by real African heroines that the director had researched for previous films to create the impression not of veracity but of verisimilitude. In this way, the director intended to make it easy for viewers without any connection or knowledge of Mozambique to understand what the character represents, namely the idea of national salvation and hope.<sup>69</sup>

Even though it bears the name of the fictitious heroine, the film is mostly about Rita's investigation into the truth behind Yvone's death, whose lack of resolution at the end of the narrative is supported throughout the story with a series of aesthetic devices or, as Sally Faulkner puts it, “aesthetics of the interstices: wide-angle and often split-screen framing;

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<sup>66</sup> Jorge, p. 260.

<sup>67</sup> Jorge, p. 222.

<sup>68</sup> Cardoso, 2019.

<sup>69</sup> Margarida Cardoso, ‘Discussion with Mariana Liz and Sally Faulkner’, Conference Portuguese Film: Colony, Postcolony, Memory, 2016.

layering of reflections; ellipses and deferred explanations.”<sup>70</sup> Among these, Cardoso includes elements such as extreme close-ups, where the first glimpse of Rita is a close-up of her eye as she awakens from the nightmare that replays her daughter’s death, and exaggerated sounds, such as the clicking of the wind dial in the drowning scene, Rita’s heavy breathing on the hospital bed, Sara’s inhaling as the doctor is listening to her lungs, the sound of the underground as Rita rides the metro or the loud sound of the flying plane when Sara waits for Rita at the airport, and so on. All these elements create an often uncomfortable, unnerving atmosphere, intensified by visual methods that add even more distance and emptiness, like the filming of characters from behind with the off-centre camera, and numerous mirrored reflections that create interrupted and segmented images. For instance, in the first minutes of the film, the characters are introduced through their reflections rather than a direct shot: in João’s and Rita’s first scene together in the hospital room, the couple only confront each other through their reflections in the window, and afterwards Sara’s mirrored reflection is the first glimpse of the character, shown as she reads her lung X-ray in the doctor’s cabinet. Cardoso admits the influence that her background in photography studies had on the choice of aesthetic devices, deliberately trying to create the visual premises to enhance the layers of ambiguity through mirrors and a line constantly dividing the frame, turning these into barriers that increase the sense of ‘ghostness’ of the film.<sup>71</sup>

The starting point in Rita’s investigation, her Lisbon encounter with ‘Alex,’ the former operative in Africa after the independence, is prompted by the disconnection between truth and history, as he implies that the truth behind Yvone Kane’s death was not accurately recorded in history. The envelope that he hands her to prevent the evidence from getting lost, a mix of photos, documents and snippets of newspaper articles, is what he believes can get Rita a step closer to the truth so the past can be mended. This intriguing proposition of investigating a past that was not what it seemed gives Rita the pretext of revisiting the history of Yvone Kane and reconciling the contradictory versions to reach the truth. Whether she was a victim of South African racism, involved in arms traffic or turned into an enemy of her own party, as various hypotheses claim, the mystery surrounding Yvone’s death intensifies as new evidence suggests that she was not actually alone during her last few days as previously believed.

When Rita meets university professor Elias, Yvone’s former lover, his reaction to her quest and to the unsanctioned versions of the past that did not make it into official history

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<sup>70</sup> Sally Faulkner, ‘Women’s Cinema, World Cinema: Margarida Cardoso’s Yvone Kane’, in *Women’s Cinema in Contemporary Portugal*, ed. by Mariana Liz and Hilary Owen (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), p. 191.

<sup>71</sup> Cardoso, 2016.

confirms the futility of her investigation: “Yvone’s story has already been written. It’s the story that everyone here is taught. Killed by the South Africans in defence of the party ideals and of our revolution. And it is a truth that serves us well, for the time being... and it’s a beautiful story.”<sup>72</sup> His notion of truth as a utilitarian concept subservient to history exposes the pointlessness of Rita’s investigation at an early stage, which is later on confirmed through the inconclusive ending of the film that fails to reveal much more than what was already known about Yvone. All of her leads, starting with ‘Alex’ in Lisbon, continuing with Elias, archive worker Andrea, Natural History Museum guard Amélia Zuri, cleaner Djalma, and ending with Yvone’s former lover Sérgio, share their fragmentary memories and versions of the truth, yet fail to resolve the ambiguity that prompted Rita’s investigation.

When Rita meets Eduardo Malange, Sérgio’s brother, he vehemently discourages her from disturbing the past, even when unresolved, as the traumatic memories that she is attempting to bring back to the present can only disrupt its fragile peace: “Yvone Kane is not coming back to life. If your intention is to see that justice is done about whatever it is, give up. Keep it to yourself... Let life move on... In peace.”<sup>73</sup> A traumatic history that took years for people to accept and learn to live with risks coming back to haunt the precarious peace of the present. But for Rita this fragile peace is “not the same as silence,”<sup>74</sup> even when she is forced to admit that rewriting Yvone’s story is entirely for herself, and living with a past impossible to reconcile with is more tormenting than confronting it. Her investigation into the unresolved historical past is only a pretext for facing her own wounds, through a journey that constantly reminds her of the power of past over the present.

The hotel on the border where Rita stays waiting for Sérgio’s contact is a powerful metaphor for the traumatic past that continues to haunt the present. As Susan, the English-speaking South African owner, tells her, the hotel used to be a landmark during the country’s colonial period, but had been taken over by the rebel groups during the independence war, who used the now derelict swimming pool as a killing ground or more fittingly a slaughter pit: “People were shot and burnt here, tortured and hanged. They say the spirits of those people wander around here, looking for peace. I don’t know if I can help those spirits. We can’t sell the hotel, we’re stuck here with them.”<sup>75</sup> The disquieting memory of the tormented spirits continues to haunt the living, even those who had no experience of this past, making it a rich

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<sup>72</sup> Margarida Cardoso, *Yvone Kane* (Midas Filmes, 2014).

<sup>73</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

<sup>74</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

<sup>75</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

metaphor for the postmemory generations that carry the burden of the past. The hotel is also reminiscent of the Stella Maris in *A Costa dos Murmúrios* in its colonial significance, two *lieux de mémoire*, in Nora's terms, that carry the imprint of traumatic history and the ghostly voices of an unresolved past.

The eerily empty swimming pool attracts hordes of leery, drunk men during the night, waking Rita up from her sleep with their shouting and throwing empty bottles against the walls of the pool. As it continues to bring out the worst in people, the pool endures through time as a reminder of the violence of colonialism and of a failed revolution that was unsuccessful in reconciling the spectres of the traumatic past. The final scene of the film shows the pool, seen for the first time in daylight, being covered and buried in sand, as Susan waves goodbye to Rita across the pool. While this symbolic burial of the past and its failures might not be able to cover the wounds that it leaves behind, the gesture highlights the impossibility of moving forward without confronting this trauma and without breaking the silence that continues to deepen the scars. As Margarida Cardoso and Beatriz Batarda, the actor playing both Rita Moureira and Eva Lopo in the cinematographic adaptation of Jorge's novel, discuss in a joint interview, true closure comes not from pretending that the past never existed, but from accepting its legacy and reinventing the problematic gaps that it leaves behind:

*"The end of the film is much more redeeming for being so honest. In life we cover, we hide our shots. The shots from the pool wall, our holes, wounds. And we live with that. Or we reinvent that space to be something else. (...) It is not to pretend that nothing happened. It is the other way around. It is to recognise that that place cannot go back to what it was."*<sup>76</sup>

Truth, as remembered through memory, and history, as recorded through archive, are both subject to power, yet they entirely depend on perspective. What *Yvone Kane* shows is that neither truth, nor history is unilinear and straightforward, but complicated by the existence of multiple antithetical versions, including Rita's own version as shaped by the testimonies of those she meets. The notion of truth that Cardoso introduces in this film adds a layer of ambiguity and complexity to that previously shown in *Kuxa Kanema* or *Natal 71*, whose reflection of the past pieced together nearly lost fragments of memory and decaying archive to create a version of history that was incomplete in official records. *Yvone Kane* emphasises the

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<sup>76</sup> Anabela Mota Ribeiro, 'Beatriz Batarda e Margarida Cardoso: Falar de um filme para falar da vida', *Público Cultura-Ípsilon*, 15 February 2015 [my translation].

need for closure, for breaking the silence and confronting the demons of the past that might not have found their place in official history, but continue to haunt the memory of those who lived or inherited the trauma.

## **The facets of political resistance**

The directors' deconstruction of dominant narratives exposes the incompleteness and partiality of the national and colonial account by introducing a multitude of voices that stood up for political resistance during an authoritarian regime whose state apparatus was powered by the suppression of political involvement. Expanding the public debate with a multiplicity of voices and experiences has a crucial significance for the construction of cultural memory, as Loff argues:

*“The nature of the visibility of each memory discourse creates a specific balance between the forces operating in this battle over memory. Memorial policies play a central role in the struggle for ideological and symbolical hegemony, in the construction of the terms of perception and organization of social reality: people either remember to preserve or they remember to change.”<sup>77</sup>*

One of the ways in which Craveiro recognises the minor is by celebrating forms of resistance, from the broadcasting of clandestine radio stations steeped in mythology – “the inhabitants of the village of Couço say that if we put a glass of water on top of the radio, one could tune in easily Radio Moscow”<sup>78</sup> – to the widely spread practice of purchasing, reading and disseminating literature censored by the regime. Focusing on examples of individuals that were never previously mentioned in history books, the play honours those whose small acts of defiance continued to spread hope despite the threats of incarceration that these involved. These are the “several generations of people who simply followed a marginal path to the regime, but who never really confronted it directly in the political plane, even if they might have had an episodic participation in the resistance to the regime,”<sup>79</sup> as described by one of the interviewees, the historian named R., director of a 25<sup>th</sup> of April archive. Some of the obscure names that took part in this form of subversion are Anibal Paula, history, English and French teacher and headmaster of A Velhinha association, library and group of Esperantists who was arrested by

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<sup>77</sup> Loff, p. 9.

<sup>78</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 8.

<sup>79</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 11.

the PIDE (International Police of State Defence) for promoting a language whose speakers were also persecuted by regimes like Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union.

Resistance through culture was achieved via organised associations, libraries and groups who fought against censorship, like the newspaper *The Voice of the Worker* who wrote openly about the harsh labour conditions, cooperatives like Livrelco, Livrop, Árvore, Pragma, Unicepe or Húmus, with links to militant leftist groups, cinema clubs that screened forbidden foreign films and even private homes, like that of Zé João, where people freely read books and discussed cultural matters routinely silenced by the political police. One of the legendary sites of resistance was the old bookshop Ulmeiro, where underground meetings were held and whose owner José Ribeiro stocked with forbidden books by bribing a post office employee and most likely police informer. He was arrested and interrogated multiple times by the PIDE and sued for releasing subversive books like *Portugal Without Salazar* and Amaro's *Massacres in the Colonial War*, which denounced the brutality of the Portuguese army led by general Kaúlza de Arriaga in the village of Tête, in Mozambique, sparking angry protests during Marcello Caetano's official visit to London. All these created spaces where "one could breathe" during a suffocating time of imposed silence, disrupting the "grey austerity of the wonderful medieval country,"<sup>80</sup> as described at the time by Simone de Beauvoire's sister, Helene.

As she reveals the *List of Forbidden Books*, dated June 1974 and found at the Senate House Library, Craveiro remarks in this list the "sense of urgency in bringing to light the actions of the Fascist regime that had remained invisible for forty-eight years,"<sup>81</sup> including details like the misspellings made by censors that perpetrated the cultural crimes of the regime. Craveiro reveals the irony in some of the forbidden titles, like the *Manual de Betão Armado* (Manual of Reinforced Concrete) – because in Portuguese "reinforced" reads as "armed" – or the *Petit Larousse* – mistakenly thought to be an encrypted form of the French word for Russia,<sup>82</sup> pointing towards the crass lack of research and education of those making the rules during the Estado Novo – and thus writing its official history. As a tribute to the deliberately subversive act of purchasing, reading and disseminating the books on the list, the Archivist distributes some of these titles to the audience during the performance, celebrating the democratic privilege to freely access these books in the present.

One of the major issues that Craveiro is vocal about is the way in which those in power after the fall of the dictatorship are trying to rewrite the past, erasing the signs of oppression

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<sup>80</sup> Craveiro, 'Performance Script', p. 13.

<sup>81</sup> Craveiro, 'Performance Script', p. 27.

<sup>82</sup> Craveiro, 'Performance Script', p. 27.

and hiding the legacy of the dictatorship to make it appear softer and even less fascist. The second lecture, *Invisible Archives of the Portuguese Dictatorship and Revolution*, traces the history of the secret police and its role in controlling the population against any form of militancy or opposition. Their brutality and torturous interrogation techniques, coached by the CIA and the Gestapo, heavily contrasted with “much of the construct of Portuguese identity [that] is based upon this idea of gentle manners, of kindness, neutrality and passivity.”<sup>83</sup> The death of 26-year old student, Ribeiro Santos, at the hands of the PIDE in 1972, ignited the Lisbon university students’ protests and was what prompted Craveiro’s mother to get politically involved by purchasing forbidden books and lending her flat to clandestine meetings of dissident political groups.

Despite having suffered through physical and emotional torture, the accounts mentioned in the performance prove that resistance was still possible, especially as confession would have meant “the destruction of the political and personal identity”<sup>84</sup> of those who succumbed to the extreme torture. All these stories were omitted from the public space at the time, through the tight censorship of the media, thus creating an unrealistic and disingenuous image of the dictatorship that made repression invisible and its dissidents depersonalised. But the recently published testimonies that Craveiro mentions defy invisibility and the performance takes a further step in inscribing them into collective memory, fighting against the general impunity of the political police after the Revolution and retracing the repressive past of a brutal regime. Apart from the lack of punishment of the former PIDE agents, informers and collaborators, Craveiro mentions the recent privatisation of its former Lisbon headquarters, turned into luxury condos, making clear the intention to erase the marks of a shameful past. The removal of the commemorative plaque, which was painted over numerous times and suspiciously stolen until further replaced by the municipality, also points towards the deliberate attempts of the current politics of memory to eradicate the past. As Craveiro denounces, “Portugal is not a country specialized in memory sites or memory altogether,”<sup>85</sup> which further encourages her fight to render the invisible visible and expose the failings of power and history.

Discussing the reconstruction of collective memory in post-revolutionary Portugal, Loff talks about the imposition of a memory screen that controlled public debates on the legacy of the dictatorship, which also goes back to Craveiro’s initial question around the duration of

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<sup>83</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 36.

<sup>84</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 43.

<sup>85</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 52.

the fascist regime, discussing how the traumas of recent history became pretexts for the control of cultural memory:

*“Memory of recent political confrontation (revolution and decolonisation in the Portuguese case) gained precedence over the memory of events that had occurred 15 (Colonial War and massive emigration), 30 (massive disillusionment at the fraud against Delgado in the 1958 presidential election) or 50 years earlier (severe repression in the early years of Salazar’s rule). This whole picture gave Portuguese conservatives the opportunity to impose a politically-motivated discussion on the negative legacy of the 19-month Revolution, rather than discussing the 48 years of the Estado Novo, (...) Salazar, Caetano, political police, repression, corporatism or war in Africa.”*<sup>86</sup>

The third lecture of the performance, *Broken Portuguese*, recounts the series of events that led to the coup organised by the Movement of the Armed Forces, involving not only militaries but also journalists and radio presenters, whose role was crucial in the communication that fuelled the Revolution. Coded messages and symbolic songs were used as a means of disseminating hidden communication between the actors of the Revolution, who staged the whole process like an elaborate play, while facing the constant fear of failure that could have had dire consequences. The month preceding the Revolution had seen a failed coup of the armed forces, but the intricate network of people involved in the resistance turned the April coup into a success fuelled by the urge to restore the country’s freedom after a long period of silence and oppression. This act is an ode to those who risked their lives and freedom for the coup to succeed, the seemingly insignificant players whose names the history books do not record, but without whom the Revolution would not have been a triumph. As “revolutions happen at dawn,”<sup>87</sup> Craveiro sees her generation as the “children of the dawn,”<sup>88</sup> born from resistance and carrying the responsibility of continuing its mission. Recreating the atmosphere of the coup, in its excitement and anxiety, the ending of the lecture is marked by a revolutionary knocking on the door urging the audience to take to the streets, “as they have been sitting for 48 years,”<sup>89</sup> in a nod to the march for freedom on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April.

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<sup>86</sup> Loff, p. 5.

<sup>87</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 54.

<sup>88</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 55.

<sup>89</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 63.

In the fourth lecture, the excitement of the Revolution is followed by the enthusiasm of the revolutionary process, during which the newly gained sense of empowerment fuels a general mobilisation and social and political involvement. Gathering the confessions of those involved in this process that fought for providing housing and land to the workers and the poor, installing popular assemblies, starting the agrarian reform and conducting wide population surveys to understand the true state of the society, the stories reveal the passion and energy for change that they would fondly carry in their memories till the present day: “this memory is engraved, inscribed, in me – it won’t disappear,”<sup>90</sup> as one of the interviewees candidly confesses. Portuguese from all over the country and abroad, fighting in Angola or working in Germany or France, recount their own memory of the anticipation of change brought by the Revolution, accompanied by tourists whose romanticised view of the “Cuba of Europe” brings them to Lisbon where they can experience the revolutionary socialist dream, from the “desire to be a part of the great movement already under way.”<sup>91</sup>

Filipa César’s work also focuses on political resistance, and one of the central themes explored through archival footage in the *Luta Ca Caba Inda* project is Amílcar Cabral’s legacy to the struggle for independence. Despite being killed before witnessing the end of the war, Cabral’s contribution was crucial to the fight for freedom, from founding the PAIGC (The African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde), writing the future constitution and national anthem, to creating the country’s first generation of filmmakers to document the liberation movement. The importance of cinema in supporting the militant movement was especially well understood by the party leader, as Flora Gomes discusses: “In a country that was not just backward but around 90% illiterate, Amílcar understood the main role of the moving image.”<sup>92</sup> His choice of prioritising resistance through education, image and culture was a defining element of the Guinean movement. He thus becomes the central figure of their first films, culminating with *O Regresso de Amilcar Cabral* in 1976, one of the few finalised Guinean documentaries recording the leader’s funeral after his unresolved assassination, an event that intensified the liberation movement and gained the country increased international support and attention. The return in the film’s title, that of Cabral’s remains from Conakry to Bissau and of other Guinean heroes who died in the neighbouring countries, gains a dual meaning through the symbolism that the president embodied. Documenting the Proclamation

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<sup>90</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 70.

<sup>91</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 74.

<sup>92</sup> *Between the First and Second Shots*, ed. by Filipa César, Valerie Smith, and Sigrun Angermann, Labor Berlin, 5 (presented at the Ausstellung Filipa César, Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2011), p. 2.

of Independence, the film sees Cabral's dream finally materialised and his legacy sedimented in the new country's history, while also aiming to address the Guinean diaspora and prompt their return.

Going beyond interpreting archival footage, César expands her artistic practice by looking at Cabral's agronomic writings in relation to his political theories, creating the connection between his definitions of soil erosion and the decolonising policies that fuelled the liberation movement. In her article *Meteorisations: Reading Amílcar Cabral's agronomy of liberation*, César uses as a departure point Cabral's 1971 lecture in London discussing the conditions of the armed struggle in Guinea-Bissau. Referencing Che Guevara's theory about the advantage of a mountainous topography in complementing a guerrilla fight in Cuba, Cabral contrasts this to the flatness of his country's geography, which against all odds, is not a deterrent in the fight for freedom: "As for the mountains, we decided that our people had to take their place, since it would be impossible to develop our struggle otherwise. So our people are our mountains."<sup>93</sup> Outside of the natural protection of a mountainous range, Guinea-Bissau's anti-colonial resistance needed to adapt its tactic to overcome the geographical limitations, and turned people into its biggest strength. Cabral's politics of resistance included the education of communities as a "radical way to share information"<sup>94</sup> and even artistic activism through cinema, enriching the fertile militant movement with the power of human agency. As Ala Younis highlights, literacy was a crucial militant element for national reconstruction,<sup>95</sup> furthering the notion of radical education as a facet of political militancy, and Sonia Vaz Borges describes PAIGC's term of 'militant education' as an ongoing practice informed by concepts of political freedom, consciousness engaged and grounded in anti-colonial and decolonial principles, combining political teaching, technical training and the shaping of individual and collective development.<sup>96</sup> In Cabral's own words, the purpose of education and decolonising the curriculum is less prompted by immediacy, but rather with the future in mind: "To liberate our people from fear, we must liberate them from ignorance. (...) This is why the teacher's work is the frontline of our struggle."<sup>97</sup>

Cabral's agronomic background had a strong influence on his involvement in the liberation struggle. As César argues, "his reports on colonial land exploitation and the trade economy, along with his research on soil and erosion, reveal his double agency as a state soil

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<sup>93</sup> Filipa César, 'Meteorisations: Reading Amílcar Cabral's Agronomy of Liberation', *BUALA*, 2019.

<sup>94</sup> César, Hering, and Rito, p. 63.

<sup>95</sup> Quoted in César, Hering, and Rito, p. 64.

<sup>96</sup> Sonia Vaz Borges, *Militant Education* with Sonia Vaz Borges at The People's Forum NYC, 2019.

<sup>97</sup> César, Hering, and Rito, p. 236.

scientist and as a ‘sower’ of African liberation.”<sup>98</sup> Denouncing the damaging effects that the colonial rule had on the African soil, he associates these with the exploitation of the human resources by referring to the concept of edaphology, the science of the influence of soil on living beings. This echoes Marx’s critique of capitalist agriculture as a destroying force that robs the soil of its fertility, pointing out this unsustainable treatment of the land. Cabral thus builds the reclamation and reconstruction of soil in his political agenda, in an attempt to counteract the erosion to natural and human resources inflicted by the Portuguese colonial rule.

Having been trained in agronomical studies in Portugal, Cabral begins his research by looking at the colony’s own agrarian practices at home, which gives him the ideal experience to operate as a state agronomist in Guinea-Bissau on behalf of the Portuguese Overseas Ministry. Travelling between colonies and metropolis, he also gained a crucial understanding of Portugal’s economic dependence on the exploitation of African territories, which he shared with the leaders of anti-colonial movements in Mozambique and Angola. He thus used his privileged position to subversively advance the liberation struggle from the inside of the colonial system, under the activist nom de guerre Abel Djassi, in an act of resistance that supported the return of the soil to the African people, whose agricultural practices and knowledge of the land would prevent any further catastrophic and potentially irreversible erosion. Furthermore, just like the archival footage that César uncovers, the soil itself can be “understood as a palimpsest, a ‘silent witness’ bearing traces, stubborn remainders that await the careful gaze necessary for reactivation,”<sup>99</sup> functioning as a trope that prompts the remembrance of resistance.

In her 2014 short-film, *Mined Soil*, César visually explores Cabral’s theories on soil erosion seen through the lens of his political and military struggle by revisiting the region of Alentejo that he had once studied. Paired with readings from Cabral’s work conducted in 1949, the film documents the prospection works for an experimental gold mining project conducted by a Canadian company in Portugal’s south, in Boa Fé, exposing the same aggressive tactics that the Guinean agronomist once condoned. While Colt Resources talks about Portugal’s long mining heritage since Antiquity as a justification for its project, Cabral’s research of historical events to find the causes of soil erosion places the blame on the Roman imperial expansion that

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<sup>98</sup> César, *Meteorisations*.

<sup>99</sup> Ros Gray, Shela Sheikh, and Nicole Wolf, ‘Fugitive Remains: Soil, Celluloid and Resistant Collectivities. Introduction: Cooking Sections’, in *The Empire Remains Shop* (New York: Columbia Books on Architecture and the City, 2018), pp. 209–12 (p. 210).

was later on perpetuated by the Portuguese empire, pursuing the richness of the colonies to the detriment of local agriculture and soil health.

Sitting at a table in front of the screen, with images projected across her body, César's voiceover dialogue excavates the reading of soil as a living body and a repository of memory and the past. The camera moving slowly across samples of soil, minerals and rocks creates highly tactile images that expose the various geological layers, while pages from Cabral's agronomic analysis book, with photographs highlighting the erosion, are placed on the sandy, barren, neglected soil, with close-ups of the texture expanding into the horizon. A hand retraces Cabral's description of the destroyed soil by scratching the surface with a wooden stick: "Open wound on the earth's body, on the social body, the economic structure that produced this rupture."<sup>100</sup> The director reads, in a fading, whispering voice, dictionary entries from a tablet, with only the light of the device on the screen, defining and deconstructing words such as denigrate, subversion, erosion, underground.

Archive images from the 1980 film, *Guinea-Bissau: 6 Years After*, also make an appearance, documenting the abandoned ammunition and remains of the military equipment after the war, paired with sounds of different guns firing, introduced by a man's voice describing each type of firearm. These are used to contextualise César's voiceover reading from Cabral's London speech that documents his "centrifugal" military strategy from the centre towards the periphery, justified by his redefinition of the Guinean geography, with the land cut by numerous rivers that are actually arms of the sea with mostly salty water, with the exception of Corubal, creating space for multiple ports and points of entry that make the independence wars more difficult. With archival photographs of soldiers and military sketches projected on the screen, César narrates how the guerrillas used the soil as a blackboard to document their elusive tactical plans, turning it into ammunition to support their struggle. Gauthier Lesturgie describes the material used in the film as a "metaphor for a stratified conception of history: volatile, superimposed layers marked by countless scars in a kind of palimpsest,"<sup>101</sup> bringing together the past of the archive with the present of the soil to speak to the future.

The silent memory of the soil trying to convey its past is recreated through long shots moving slowly between samples of sediment and endless shelves storing soil for analysis. The camera focuses on the microphone hanging in the centre of the room, rotating to display the vastness of the samples, and symbolically giving a voice to the soil by "articulating the past to

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<sup>100</sup> Filipa César, *Mined Soil* (Spectre Productions, 2014).

<sup>101</sup> Gauthier Lesturgie, "The Soil Was the Blackboard of the Guerilla...": A Review on the Work of Filipa César', *Contemporary And*, 2 October 2014.

take control of a memory as it flashes in a moment of danger,”<sup>102</sup> paraphrasing a highly influential passage from Walter Benjamin’s *Theses on the Philosophy of History* in Thesis VI, which supports the idea of history as a self-standing experience and rejects the view of the past as a continuum of progress.<sup>103</sup> Yet “bringing back to surface the sediments of the past”<sup>104</sup> does more than reminisce the memories of struggles and resistance. Decades later, Cabral’s stance appears as a premonitory vision of a future that is more and more present in the current day image of economically challenged European countries, such as former colonial Portugal. Reading from the *Público* newspaper about the influx of billionaires in a country plagued by crisis and unemployment, César associates the 2011 economic crisis with Kwame Nkrumah’s 1965 definition of neo-colonialism, where “foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than the development of the less developed parts of the world.”<sup>105</sup> The fate that Guinea-Bissau was fighting to challenge through its decolonisation struggle risks to turn into a bitter cautionary tale, coming back to haunt the former coloniser with a vengeance, for the short lived financial effects of gold mining can only result in the destruction of traditional local cork production, irreparable damage to the land and contamination of the waterbed, ending in the erosion of the soil. As Cabral’s writings expose the blindness of the colonial machine, the former metropolis is now at a crossroads between permanent damage and hope for the future by learning from the “opaque science”<sup>106</sup> of the soil, mined with the memory to translate into today’s reality.

In her essay that makes a case for expanding our definition of the witness beyond the human, Shela Sheikh notes: “In the context of contemporary environmental violence, with its roots in colonialism and the plantation system, there is increasing awareness that practices of more-than-human ‘world-making’ that entail more-than-human planetary subjects, are needed.”<sup>107</sup> Building on this idea of more-than-human witnessing, Susan Schuppli’s *Material Witness* continues to be relevant to the way in which César’s work turns soil and environment into entities that bear witness to violent colonial practices and historical trauma. According to Schuppli, “environments convey changes in ways that are fundamentally comparable to how analog media – photography and film – disclose perturbances as visible aesthetic effects.”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> César, *Mined Soil*.

<sup>103</sup> Walter Benjamin, *On The Concept of History* (New York: Classic Books America, 2009).

<sup>104</sup> César, *Mined Soil*.

<sup>105</sup> César, *Mined Soil*.

<sup>106</sup> César, *Mined Soil*.

<sup>107</sup> Shela Sheikh, ‘The Future of the Witness: Nature, Race and More-than-Human Environmental Publics’, *Kronos*, 44. Missing and Missed Subject Politics Memorialisation (2018), 145–62 (p. 154).

<sup>108</sup> Susan Schuppli, *Material Witness: Media, Forensics, Evidence*, Leonardo (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2020), p. 286.

Her art series and sub-chapter *Nature Represents Itself* relies on the expressivity of environments in offering testimony against the exploitative and destructive tactics of colonial capitalism. Using the example of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2010 in the Gulf of Mexico, Schuppli argues that the “aesthetic agency of such damaged ecologies,”<sup>109</sup> in this case the dramatic films generated by the oil slick with a surprising cinematic capacity, is fully capable on its own of reflecting the event of the catastrophic accident and its impact on the environment, without the need for a human intermediary to linguistically articulate this event. In César’s short film, the soil in its dry, barren state reflects the extent of the erosion resulted from decades of exploitation, as the footage allows the environment to speak for itself.

This is also reminiscent of the concept of “material aesthetics” as used by Forensic Architecture, namely “the modes and means by which material objects – bones, ruins, and landscapes – function as sensors and register changes in the environment.”<sup>110</sup> The soil, as a material object, reflects in its current state the layers upon layers of history that it witnessed and the practices that it has been subjected to. The erosion of the soil that originates from the wider control of the environment, subjected to what Gray and Sheikh call “the vampiric logic of capitalism towards nature,”<sup>111</sup> is closely linked to climate change, both in its colonial beginnings in the late eighteenth century and in its current disastrous effects. A once “beneficial form of control over nature and man” and a “possible tool in the arsenal of colonisation,”<sup>112</sup> climate change used the radical transformation of landscapes, from monocrop cultivation to deforestation, generating dramatic and irrevocable changes to the environment.

The long history of human exploitation of the environment is what has shaped nature as we know it today; as Paulo Tavares points out, “different regimes of power will produce different natures, for nature is not natural; it is the product of cultivation, and more frequently, of conflict.”<sup>113</sup> Making the case for nature to be granted legal rights that had previously only been attributed to humans, Tavares highlights the way in which the current legal system legitimises the ecological violence that it is intended to prevent, while its definition of environmental damage is determined by human-centric parameters like damage to property and

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<sup>109</sup> Schuppli, p. 300.

<sup>110</sup> Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability* (New York: Zone Books, 2017), p. 94.

<sup>111</sup> Ros Gray and Shela Sheikh, ‘The Wretched Earth: Botanical Conflicts and Artistic Interventions - Introduction’, *Third Text*, 32.2–3 (2018), 163–75 (p. 165).

<sup>112</sup> Weizman, p. 255.

<sup>113</sup> Paulo Tavares, ‘The Geological Imperative: On the Political Ecology of the Amazonia’s Deep History’, in *Architecture in the Anthropocene: Encounters among Design, Deep Time, Science and Philosophy*, ed. by Etienne Turpin, Critical Climate Change (Ann Arbor (Mich.) Open humanities press, 2013), pp. 209–40 (p. 236).

loss of profit. Using the same example of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Tavares shows how the control of humans and violence against nature are interconnected in modern and colonial history. With the soil able to record the traces of contamination and its effect on human and nonhuman bodies, its “opaque testimony” functions as a ‘material witness’ testifying against the violent mechanisms of capitalist control: “the mud serves as a murky prism in which human and natural forces are entangled into a single, relational historical force field, the environment itself appearing as the very medium of violence and, ultimately, its victim.”<sup>114</sup>

Given Cabral’s strong influence on the first generation of Guinean filmmakers, the topic of agriculture becomes a common narrative in the images of the archive that César uses for her project. In his commentary of the archival images in *Spell Reel* describing his experience of filmmaking training in Cuba, N’Hada talks about the voluntary working of the land as a practice for learning humility, through footage showing the group of four students cutting grass with machetes. As César remarks, “to be humble is to be next to the humus, to be earthed, to not lose contact with the ground, to stay close to the soil,”<sup>115</sup> a practice that influenced Guinean cinema to remain grounded and faithful to its revolutionary ideals. Furthermore, the language chosen for the newly liberated state and its cinema was Creole, unlike other former colonies like Angola and Mozambique who had chosen Portuguese, turning it into a form of cultural resistance that supported the decolonising process. According to César, “militant cinema and Creole were the encoding of the struggle into the soil and onto the celluloid emulsion, a deprogramming of the colonial system and epistemological soil reclamation.”<sup>116</sup> In this way, the two languages, one linguistic, the other cultural and visual, gain a militant dimension that informs the country’s journey towards complete liberation.

Resistance through art and culture was instrumental in documenting the other forms of resistance, political, economic and military, during and after the war, yet the archival footage is subsequently deserted by the country’s political leadership, left to erode as a reflection of the progressive abandonment of revolutionary ideals: “Neo-colonial erosion is at stake not only in the soil of the nation but also on any surface inscribed by opposition to power.”<sup>117</sup> Yet the rediscovery of this fragmented and decaying archive, with its unfinished narratives and disjointed images and sound, has the potential to re-fertilise the decolonisation struggle fifty years later, making it relevant to the twenty-first century. This archive in the form of a “large

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<sup>114</sup> Paulo Tavares, ‘Nonhuman Rights’, in *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, ed. by Forensic Architecture (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), pp. 553–72 (p. 561-2).

<sup>115</sup> César, *Meteorisations*.

<sup>116</sup> César, *Meteorisations*.

<sup>117</sup> César, *Meteorisations*.

composting mass of collective resistance,”<sup>118</sup> as seen by Henderson, has the immense potential to create new images during the transformational process of decomposition that it has been subjected to over time.

César’s collaboration with the Guinean directors aims to continue the mission that the National Film Institute intended to develop, that of bringing together the Guinean people through a common language and identity and thus “create cultural and economic exchange through film so the Guineans would start travelling around the country to meet each other.”<sup>119</sup> This goal of creating a community across a multitude of ethnic groups, who needed to learn a new common language in order to form the basis of solidarity, became a major form of cultural resistance in which cinema and the moving image were intended to play a defining role. With Cabral’s revolutionary agenda abandoned after his assassination and the country’s unstable political situation since the independence, the mission of the Guinean National Film Institute to disseminate documentaries through mobile units is finally fulfilled through the *Luta Ca Caba Inda* project. The screenings across the country’s territories make visible, often for the first time, fragments of archival footage that finally gain inscription in the collective memory and contribute to resurrecting the unknown past, as well as “another treasure that was almost ruined—the sense of pride of belonging to a country that has seen so much,”<sup>120</sup> as Choudhury suggests.

Finally, as Cardoso’s body of work explores the propaganda of the colonial past and the post-colonial order through the use of memory, it often highlights forms of resistance to the dominant political regime. *Natal 71* shows that the counterforce at play against the fascist regime is the development of political awareness as the only way of understanding the truth in a society manipulated through propaganda and censorship. Either inherited through family upbringing or gained through exposure to others more politically involved, the increasing political awareness at the end of the dictatorship contributed to the fall of the Estado Novo, with a generational shift that extended even to the ranks of the more traditional military. Interviewed in the documentary, Cardoso’s father compares his first mission in Mozambique flying a fighter plane in 1965, when he was convinced that their role in the war was that of fighting terrorism, to his second deployment spent among militaries involved in youth protest movements. While he does not see their gatherings as subversive, but merely as a “general

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<sup>118</sup> Louis Henderson, ‘Compost in the Créole Garden: The Archive as a Multispecies Assemblage’, in *Cahiers du Post-Diplôme Document et Art Contemporain*, 2015, pp. 40–49 (p. 48).

<sup>119</sup> César, Smith, and Angermann, p. 10.

<sup>120</sup> Choudhury.

feeling of ‘we’ve had enough,’”<sup>121</sup> stemming from the realisation that the war had already been lost before its long-awaited ending, actor João Maria Pinto admits having actively tried to find ways to undermine the regime through small acts of resistance. Similar to those minor acts of resistance through culture that Joana Craveiro explored in her performance, *Cancioneiro do Niassa*, which originated in Vila Cabral in Mozambique in the late 1960s, embodied a poetically humoristic and sarcastic form of subversion born out of a collective effort that politically engaged the military. Widely spread and very popular amongst soldiers stationed in Mozambique, the collection of songs epitomises, in Pinto’s words, “a desire to be a witness for the sake of history of what the war was really about.”<sup>122</sup> Integrating these seemingly trivial, yet subversive instances of resistance in the soldiers’ everyday life had a gradual effect of awakening their political conscience and creating a communal spirit in their experience of war.

Yet Cardoso’s analysis of resistance brings a bitter, nostalgic note that stems from the tensions between past, present and future. *Kuxa Kanema* also shows powerful instances of colonial resistance, but they are juxtaposed with the present post-colonial order, highlighting the failure of the past socialist ideals. In the documentary, the resistance of the Mozambican revolutionary movement starts with Samora Machel’s plan to disseminate ideas of nation building and independence through the power of the moving image, and employing it to build the new socialist republic of Mozambique. His patriotic speeches, conveying ideas of freedom, unity, solidarity and internationalism to the people that had never experienced anything but colonial oppression, represent the first steps towards decolonisation, a continuous struggle that was reflected by the tireless endeavour of the filmmakers in charge of documenting the country’s first decade of independence. The president’s tragic death, followed by a long period of political unrest, led to the decay of the invaluable filmic archive that was once produced by a fleet of more than 250 people animated by the belief that Mozambique “could, one day, become a different country.”<sup>123</sup>

While the archival footage used in the film looks at the country’s past and the decolonising power of political resistance, the contemporary narrative exposes the failings of the post-colonial order dominated by the socialist Revolution. The old decaying posters of Samora Machel scattered across the city, the nearly derelict building of the National Film Institute, mostly destroyed by fire and populated by staff patiently awaiting retirement, offer a stark contrast to the once enthusiastic ideals of the socialist Revolution. The building thus

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<sup>121</sup> Cardoso, *Natal 71*.

<sup>122</sup> Cardoso, *Natal 71*.

<sup>123</sup> Margarida Cardoso, *Kuxa Kanema: O Nascimento do Cinema*, 2003.

becomes a metaphor that reflects the present image of the country: while the walls and the films continue to “exist without existing,”<sup>124</sup> enduring the passage of time but forgotten by a regime whose message no longer includes the cinema’s revolutionary mission, resulting in a systematic forgetting of the country’s past but also its present, perpetuating the failed dream of a better country. Estela Vieira argues that the “sense of nonexistence of both the potential of film and of the national political promise”<sup>125</sup> represents the director’s key concern, highlighting the fine line between “nonexistence and non-presence” that the documentary exhibits. The footage shown, emphasising the tensions between the present decaying building and the invaluable past archival images, implies a call for action for Mozambique’s cinematic and national history by not only prompting the conversation around the silenced memories that are missing from the public discourse, but also by condemning the unfortunate causes and outcomes of their non-presence.

In *Yvone Kane*, political resistance is also portrayed through its effects in the present, illustrating the failure of the socialist Revolution in the nameless African country with a made-up flag. The character of Yvone, the guerrilla fighter turned national hero, was intended to represent national salvation during the fight for independence; the commander and political commissar who had “taken up arms to free her country from the yoke of colonial oppression,”<sup>126</sup> as the foreign documentary introduces her in the film, was in charge of distributing the Party’s message across the nation: “Our aim is to create a new man who can give rise to a new socialist nation.”<sup>127</sup> Yet a month before she dies, Yvone confesses to Sara her intention of leaving the Party as “there were things that she could not accept,”<sup>128</sup> a fact that is later on confirmed by the documents that Sérgio had safeguarded, whose proof of arms trafficking could compromise many people within the increasingly corrupt political group. The story is further completed by Amélia Zuri’s testimony, Yvone’s friend from the Women’s Detachment and later on housemate in the luxurious villa left behind by the colonialists on the Karl Marx avenue. Yvone had also tried to discourage her from joining the border war and putting her life in danger for the Party ideals that she had lost faith in: “We no longer know what we’re defending,”<sup>129</sup> Yvone had told Amélia. Ironically, Amélia does get hurt in the border war, shot in the chest, but it is still Yvone who dies, killed abroad most likely by the

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<sup>124</sup> Cardoso, *Kuxa Kanema*.

<sup>125</sup> Estela Vieira, ‘Politics and the Aesthetics of Absence in Margarida Cardoso’s Cinematic Work’, *Hispanic Research Journal*, 14.1 (2013), 67–85 (p. 71).

<sup>126</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

<sup>127</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

<sup>128</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

<sup>129</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

party that she had invested everything in and sacrificed her personal life for, like the relationship with Elias.

Not only had the corruption within the party ended Yvone's life, but it also left other members like Sara disillusioned with the socialist ideals. Despite being a prominent member of the Party, as her photo in the National Museum indicates, and "always engrossed in some struggle"<sup>130</sup> like Yvone, as Elias describes her to Rita, Sara loses her job at the hospital after her husband's death due to conflicts with the party's leadership, and can only find work at the missionary orphanage ran by nuns. As archive worker Andrea tells Rita, in her youth Sara was devoted to the socialist ideals and an ardent critic of religion as the opium of the people, yet ironically spends her last years working with the nuns and constantly disagreeing with sister Rosário over her theories on Catholicism and faith. Subtle traces of the country's socialist past and its failed ideals are also scattered across the city, following Sara's steps, reminiscent of those of present-day Mozambique as shown in *Kuxa Kanema*. Among these, a poster of Yvone on the drive from the airport in a bustling market area that used to be uninhabited a decade before, as Gabriel highlights, the figure of Che Guevara graffitied on the walls of the derelict building adjacent to the orphanage, or the words "A revolução não more" (The Revolution does not die) inscribed on the arch that Sara and Gabriel walk under when crossing the cemetery.

Just like Yvone and Sara, the once socialist militant Andrea had been distanced from the party. While she had been intensively involved in politics and the country's revolutionary struggles during her youth, her image had been redacted from the archival photographs at the museum for being too white, and tells Rita about having had to hide her sexual orientation from the public eye, fearing the party would have ostracised her for the negative influence on Yvone, who was considered "the guardian of revolutionary morality."<sup>131</sup> She humorously talks about having to even hide her thoughts so they would not be revealed through some magical mind-reading machine "made in USSR." Andrea's character highlights the failings of history in recording the past and the manipulation of the archive, proving how the omission of marginal voices resulted in writing an impartial history. Furthermore, these tensions demonstrate how heroes become the oppressors, as the anti-imperialist discourse evolves into its own form of imperialism that rejects sexual minorities and dissident, marginal views.

The desire for re-discovering and re-animating past radicality, common in all three directors, can be read through Enzo Traverso's recent work, *Left-Wing Melancholia*, which

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<sup>130</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

<sup>131</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

explores the melancholic character of left-wing culture in the past century in its transition from utopia to memory, a melancholia that makes it possible for the quest of future projects to coexist with the mourning for a lost revolutionary past. According to Traverso, unlike the previous two centuries, the twenty-first century is marked by an “eclipse of utopias”<sup>132</sup> and the emergence of presentism, “a suspended time between an unmasterable past and a denied future, between a past ‘that won’t go away’ and a future that cannot be invented or predicted (except in terms of catastrophes).”<sup>133</sup> Referencing Adorno’s denouncement of amnesia aiming to remove the past from memory, Traverso notes how this amnesia continues to impact contemporary culture, more than half a century later, through which “entire dimensions of the past – antifascism, anticolonialism, feminism, socialism, and revolution – are buried under the official rhetoric of the ‘duty of memory,’” while “the legacy of liberation struggles has become almost invisible, taking a ghostly form.”<sup>134</sup> The spectres of the failed left-wing revolutions, intensely present in the contemporary works analysed in this chapter, haunt the present with a force that risks to void the hope for any radical change:

*“Abandoned by the ‘principle of hope,’ our age of post-totalitarian, neoliberal humanitarianism does not perceive the past as a time of revolutions, but rather as an era of violence. (...) Young people are not summoned to change the world, but rather to not repeat the mistakes of those who, blinded by dangerous utopias, finally contributed to the building of despotic order.”*<sup>135</sup>

Yet the crucial lesson that Traverso’s *Left-Wing Melancholia* intends to convey is not to remain paralysed in a bitter mourning of the ambitious revolutions that failed to succeed in their quest for radical change. On the contrary, this left-wing melancholy should fuel a rekindling of radicality in an era trapped between a failed past and an unpredictable future: it “does not mean to abandon the idea of socialism or the hope for a better future; it means to rethink socialism in a time in which its memory is lost, hidden, and forgotten and needs to be redeemed,” thus “rethinking a revolutionary project in a nonrevolutionary age.”<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Enzo Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory* (S.l.: Columbia University Press, 2021), p. 5.

<sup>133</sup> Traverso, p. 8.

<sup>134</sup> Traverso, p. 19.

<sup>135</sup> Traverso, p. 56.

<sup>136</sup> Traverso, p. 20.

By challenging master narratives of power and exposing the intricacies of uncovering the past through the use of memory, Joana Craveiro, Filipa César and Margarida Cardoso cast a critical eye on the history written by the Estado Novo and its constant reinterpretation and revision since the 1974 Revolution. The directors' scrutiny of the past, from marks of colonial violence and political oppression to inspiring instances of resistance, shows how the concepts of history, memory and truth continue to evolve for the postmemory generations. In relation to the powerplay behind collective memory, Rui Bebiano talks about "unmemory" rather than "forgetfulness", because while the latter involves "carelessness, accident, casual blur of past reminiscences", the former involves "a voluntary erasure of memory, a lack of knowledge or even a lack of interest in certain areas of living, considered irrelevant and not instrumental."<sup>137</sup> In their exploration of the minor, from marginal experiences not referenced in history books to elements of disappearing anti-colonial archives, the works of the three directors reveal the risks of "unmemory" and challenge the right to inscription for the silenced memories of violence.

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<sup>137</sup> Quoted in Silva and Ferreira, p. 41.

## *Chapter Six: Memory and Perspective in the Works of Joana Craveiro, Margarida Cardoso and Filipa César*

### **Introduction: the challenges of perspective**

The works of contemporary directors analysed in the second part of this thesis reveal a highly politicised impetus that propels their exploration of memory and the past. The understanding that history is representative of a particular memory, and that this social construct is what turns history into facts, has become an important part of the motivation behind the works of contemporary artists/performers, who are less interested in the factual nature of truth and more concerned with the affective nature of memory that gives a voice to those that had never been heard before. This final chapter elaborates on the changes in perspective that the postmemory generations introduce in their works, looking at how the aspects of class, race and gender influence their artistic approaches and discussing the added layers of memory that have made their works increasingly more complex and nuanced. The class standpoint becomes most central in Craveiro's performance, which focuses its views on a specific social group that the director/performer herself identifies with, namely the left-wing, politically active, former university students whose memories of the fascist oppression and involvement in the revolutionary process risk being redacted by the post-1974 right-wing oriented regimes. From a racial point of view, the white Portuguese artists looking at Africa, mainly in the cases of César and Cardoso, retrieve the archives and histories of former colonies from a European perspective, using mostly European money to save the African past from disappearing and exposing potential issues of racial privilege and inequality. While class and race are directly addressed, more often than not, the gender viewpoint no longer takes centre stage in the films, documentaries, plays and writings explored in the two recent chapters, but even when not overtly expressed, it continues to represent a crucial aspect. From mediating the male experience through female voices to complexifying racial perspectives with a feminine angle, the directors instrumentalise gender as part of their artistic process.

The visible similarities between feminist and post-colonialist discourses have stemmed from the subordinate position that both women and colonised subjects have been confined to by the white patriarchy, yet the separate ideological agendas have generated tensions that

expose the blind spots of the two discourses excluding the voice of the black woman, submitted to a double colonisation by imperial and patriarchal domination.<sup>1</sup> Kirsten Holst Petersen highlights the differences in ideological priorities, criticising African literature's use of women as subservient to dignifying the past to restore national pride, and arguing that "whereas Western feminists discuss the relative importance of feminist versus class emancipation, the African discussion is between feminist emancipation versus the fight against neo-colonialism, particularly in its cultural aspect."<sup>2</sup> While neither of the two forms of oppression can justifiably take priority over the other, this exposes the ideological complexities of looking at gender and race simultaneously.

Additional to the class, gender and race triangle that played a defining role in the first part of the thesis, the analysis of the contemporary artists/performers introduces a generational perspective that dictates their tone of voice, oscillating between nostalgia, harsh criticism and lamentation over a past that they never experienced and a future that never happened. As Gary Weissman remarks, there is a natural tendency "to privilege and identify with those histories that resonate with one's own sense of identity."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, postmemory generations' efforts to preserve the memory of the past they only experienced in a mediated form is manifested by choosing those perspectives that each person already associates themselves with. The generational position is thus defined through an increasingly complex and even confused sense of identity, intertwining race, gender and class with ideology. This chapter intends to uncover the issues of class and ideological perspective, post-colonial racial experiences and the complexities of representing femininity, masculinity and violence, highlighting their conflictive representations in the analysed works and proposing a deeper understanding of the evolution of concepts of class, race and gender.

## **The class and ideological perspective**

While class played a central focus in the novels of Lídia Jorge and Teolinda Gersão analysed in the first three chapters of this thesis, the attention of contemporary artists/performers is diverted rather towards ideology and politics, which replace class in their core approaches. Therefore, the representation of class gains a new subtlety in Craveiro's and

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<sup>1</sup> 'Feminism and Post-Colonialism: Introduction', in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London ; New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 249–50.

<sup>2</sup> Kirsten Holst Petersen, 'First Things First: Problems of a Feminist Approach to African Literature', in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London ; New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 251–54 (pp. 251–52).

<sup>3</sup> Gary Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust*. (Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 7.

Cardoso's recent works, encompassing the ideological perspective and the contradictions that it exposes. I argue, on the one hand, that Craveiro's performance limitation to a single leftist perspective restricts the representation of the memories of dictatorship and Revolution to a narrow and partial view of the past that risks to perpetuate the lacunae in the public discourse, rather than refuting them. On the other hand, Cardoso's approach in *Yvone Kane* and current projects, open to encompassing different class and ideology perspectives, offers a broader representation of the past and present manifestations of gender, race and violence.

The memory of the Revolution represents a key aspect of Craveiro's performance, yet its divisiveness reflects the contradictory nature of an event whose repercussions were perceived radically different by opposite political groups. Manuel Loff notes the divide between the left-wing's celebration of the Revolution and reclaiming the memory of the dictatorship, and the right-wing's embarrassment towards a public debate due to its positive memory of the Salazarist era.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, António Costa Pinto notes that "the trauma of the revolutionary years 'wiped out' that of the authoritarian period," generating a degree of polarisation that heavily delayed Portugal's politics of memory about the "authoritarian dual legacy of right and left."<sup>5</sup> In her play, Craveiro also quotes historian Fernando Rosas' statement that "right wings always say we had a democracy in spite of the revolution, but this is not true: we have a democracy BECAUSE of the revolution."<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the director herself admits the discordant nature of memory, reliant on ideology:

*"Depending on the ideological framework in which one was raised, the 25<sup>th</sup> of April could have indeed been a trauma, a 'confusion', a coup 'staged by a bunch of kids' (really young officers), 'initiating a state of siege in the country,' 'responsible [for] most problems we are facing today.'"*<sup>7</sup>

The director's own background and political affiliation dictate her left-wing perspective of the Revolution and the visible effort to justify and reclaim its legacy. Born merely months after the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1974, Craveiro's first memories refer to her parents working as urban planners and volunteering in a shanty neighbourhood on weekends in the years following the

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<sup>4</sup> Manuel Loff, 'Dictatorship and Revolution: Socio-Political Reconstructions of Collective Memory in Post-Authoritarian Portugal', *Culture & History Digital Journal*, 3.2 (2014), 1–13 (p. 5).

<sup>5</sup> António Costa Pinto, 'Settling Accounts with the Past in a Troubled Transition to Democracy: The Portuguese Case', in *The Politics of Memory and Democratization*, ed. by Alexandra Barahona De Brito, Carmen Gonzalez Enriquez, and Paloma Aguilar (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 65–91 (p. 91).

<sup>6</sup> Joana Craveiro, 'Appendices II: Performance Script' (unpublished Thesis (Ph.D.), University of Roehampton, 2017), p. 96.

<sup>7</sup> Craveiro, p. 96.

Revolution. For them, former militants in extreme-left parties, who had been reading Maoist publications during the dictatorship and taken part in student protests, the Revolution was an opportunity to fight for democracy and socio-political reforms, and its abrupt ending came too soon before true structural changes had the chance to occur. Discovering a box with communist books, magazines and pamphlets that they were meant to donate to the 25<sup>th</sup> of April Documentation Centre, Craveiro confesses her pride at her parents' contribution after always having felt "ashamed of not being able to report big feats."<sup>8</sup> Her view of the Revolution is even more nostalgic than that of her parents' generation who had taken part in the historical event, and have become disillusioned with the cultural revolutions of China and Cambodia. As one of the interviewees confesses, accepting their own former political beliefs is a traumatic process, because "when you leave a movement, you move to the other side of the barricade."<sup>9</sup> While the previous generation is forced to battle regret and even shame over their failed ideals, Craveiro's nostalgia is reflective of the postmemory generation who continues to sing the *Grândola*<sup>10</sup> full of emotion, as a reminder of an ideal and a utopian view of the past they never experienced.

Craveiro's entire performance relies on the power of political consciousness, bringing to light the memories of the left that were persecuted by the far-right regime. Despite arduously denouncing the general poverty and illiteracy in which the country was kept during the dictatorship, her views are biased towards elitism and limited to political voices. In the first act of the play, she criticises the idea of politics as idleness, quoting one of the respondents in anthropologist Tiago Matos Silva's interviews on intergenerational memory transmission:

*"Let me tell you something... those who say, 'Ah, Salazar wouldn't let us speak out', they say it because they were somehow into politics. (...) Those who complained about the regime were those who were into politics, not the common people. The common people had no time for it, they had to work!"<sup>11</sup>*

The notion of political involvement was obviously against the ideals of the Estado Novo, whose efforts to suppress activism and political consciousness were crucial to

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<sup>8</sup> Craveiro, p. 104.

<sup>9</sup> Craveiro, p. 101.

<sup>10</sup> Performed by Zeca Afonso, the song was broadcast on the radio station Rádio Renascença as a signal to start the revolution that overthrew Marcelo Caetano's authoritarian government, and became synonymous with the Carnation Revolution and the beginning of the democratic rule. This was the second signal to start the coup, after *E Depois do Adeus* (And after the Farewell), the Portuguese entry in the Eurovision Song Contest of 1974, performed in Portuguese by Paulo de Carvalho.

<sup>11</sup> Craveiro, p. 9.

maintaining the appearance of social order. Salazar's own stance was to engage in "politics without politics" and to have a "government without politics,"<sup>12</sup> aiming to prevent the population from engaging in political debate. Yet the Revolution, as a political event, is what created the appeal of politics for the general population, and not just something mobilising a militant fringe like during the dictatorship. Even though Craveiro mentions the state of poverty and illiteracy that characterised most of the population during the Estado Novo, her performance fails to give a voice to the working class whose everyday struggle was limited by the necessity to feed their families. While aware of this lacuna, her brief inclusion of a quote from José da Silva's *Memories of a Factory Worker*, in order to show "what a worker says about politics,"<sup>13</sup> fails to offer a true representation of the working class; Silva's discussion of the concept of democratic government, in a book that was forbidden during the dictatorship, can hardly be an extensive or representative view of the working class. Furthermore, even when advocating for all marginal voices to be heard, Craveiro fails to acknowledge her own elitist stance, endorsing only the views of the politically conscious left to be put forward. While it would be impossible to include all voices in the short space of the performance, the vehement rejection of opposite ideological perspectives is a constrictive factor in depicting a complete image of the forgotten memories of the dictatorship. Should freedom of speech, after all, not be granted to all those devoid of power, regardless of their political stance or level of education?

When it comes to Margarida Cardoso's approach, especially prominent in the case of *Yvone Kane*, the perspective of class is subtly embedded in the representation of race. The main characters are educated and articulate white women in a post-colonial African society where poverty and sexual violence are manifestations of a failed socialist revolution. The inclusion of marginal perspectives, even when their voices continue to be silenced, highlights the class disparities of the modern society.

In a personal interview, the director also discussed her most recent work in progress, a film adaptation of Isabela Figueiredo's *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais*,<sup>14</sup> an autobiographical novel published in 2009 which describes the experience of a returnee family from Mozambique that witnessed the end of the empire in Africa. Contradicting the alleged exceptionalism of Portuguese colonialism, the controversial memoir addresses a scandalous facet of the country's colonial past, exposing racism, intolerance and sexual exploitation as seen by a working-class

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<sup>12</sup> Patrícia Vieira, 'Filming Women in the Colonies: Gender Roles in New State Cinema about the Empire', in *Gender, Empire, and Postcolony: Luso-Afro-Brazilian Intersections*, ed. by Hilary Owen and Anna Klobucka (New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 71–85 (p. 80).

<sup>13</sup> Craveiro, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> See Isabela Figueiredo, *Caderno de memórias coloniais*. (Angelus Novus Editora, 2009).

family devoid of education or political awareness, yet representative of the masses of people that were pushed to flee Portugal to escape poverty and find a better living in the colonies. As Cardoso describes it, the narrator's point of view, in its uncomfortable ignorance and strong language, represents a class of people "so poor that they did not have the right to have a voice then and they still do not have the right today, as no one is ready to listen to this cruel, raw voice."<sup>15</sup> Cardoso's fascination with the novel comes not only from the common background shared with Figueiredo – both women are of similar age and grew up in Maputo in the 1970s – but also from an urge to preserve and recount the truth as she once witnessed it. By oppressing the voices that denounce uncomfortable truths or decentred perspectives, the rewriting of the past continues to change the narrative on colonialism and risks erasing the memories that do not conform with the official discourse. This tension justifies Cardoso's feat to adapt Figueiredo's divisive novel, whose depiction of Portuguese colonialism contributes to perpetuating a true representation of the past in all its controversies.

### **Post-colonial racial experiences and encounters**

The topic of race and its place as part of the Portuguese imperialist rhetoric were a crucial aspect that Jorge and Gersão addressed in their novels, exposing the inequalities and racism at the heart of the colonial system. Maria Piçarra and Teresa Castro talk about the "allegedly 'Christocentric' nature of the Portuguese maritime expansion and the imaginary aptitude for creating 'kinder and gentler' race relations"<sup>16</sup> as a way for the Estado Novo to maintain the illusion of tolerant colonialism. Far from being a closed subject in the post-revolutionary period, race, racism and the inarticulation of colonial violence continue to carry their mark on the contemporary Portuguese society. The revisionist tendencies of post-1974 governments have failed to address these issues, using Lusotropicalism and other theories in favour of the exceptionality of Portuguese colonialism as a pretext to not make reparations to former colonies or recognise instances of institutional racism that Afro-descendants living in Portugal have been subjected to. Manuel Loff discusses these concerns in his essays, speaking against the false pretences of cultural assimilationism and multi-racialism:

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Margarida Cardoso, Lisbon, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> 'Colonial Reflections, Post-Colonial Refractions: Film and the Moving Image in the Portuguese (Post-) Colonial Situation', in *(Re)Imagining African Independence: Film, Visual Arts and the Fall of the Portuguese Empire*, ed. by Maria do Carmo Piçarra and Teresa Castro, *Reconfiguring Identities in the Portuguese-Speaking World*, 8 (Oxford ; Bern ; New York: Peter Lang, 2017), pp. 1–21 (p. 8).

*“All those who subscribe to the narrative of the amputated Nation operate inside a widespread consensus on a sort of culturalistic self-indulgent explanation, the Lusotropicalism, committed to proving a special capacity for cultural assimilationism, an alleged multi-racialism and the absence of racial prejudice, a supposedly fatherly attitude of Portuguese colonists. (...) Portuguese governments have overlooked, and often denied, the African human tragedy, never investigating or publicizing any figures on the African victims of colonial repression and the 1961-74 war, do not recognize any war crimes (...), and have never discussed any financial reparation.”<sup>17</sup>*

Therefore, the exploration of history and past is also inevitably inclusive of a scrutiny of race, especially in the works of César and Cardoso whose narratives have Africa as a focal point. In her play, Craveiro also briefly approaches the topic of racial experience in Africa through the lens of the Portuguese returnees. As the process of democratisation is followed by decolonisation, the Portuguese Revolution reaches the African territories, once seen by Salazar as under the state’s responsibility to be civilised and controlled: “We believe there are decadent and retarded races, and it is our duty to call them to civilisation,”<sup>18</sup> as he stated in 1957. But leaving the colonies after an entire lifetime is a difficult feat for those derogatively called returnees, who become refugees in their own country, as the story of the family “taken by surprise” proves. Starting with Manuel Augusto Araújo’s diary, the story records the poverty, ignorance and violence of twentieth century Portugal that pushes the protagonist to move from Bragança to Angola, then follows the family across three generations in their transition from Africa back to Europe after the Revolution. The story reveals the contradictions behind the condition of the returnees, caught between the pejorative attitude of the Portuguese who see them as entitled and conservative, and their sense of disconnection to the metropolis; contrary to popular misconceptions, some support the independence of the colonies, reminiscent of Gita’s character in *A Árvore das Palavras*, as a Mozambican of white Portuguese descent who gets involved in fighting for her country’s liberation. Yet the story is full of racial controversies, like the example of the son-in-law who is accused of beating an Angolan to death and called a ‘colonialist’ and murderer by the angry community threatening to kill his family, making it difficult for them to escape Africa. While the members of the family claim they had lived in

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<sup>17</sup> Loff, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Craveiro, p. 77.

harmony with the Africans, the youngest daughter accuses them of being racist and remembers her father's refusal to sit next to Africans on the train.

As Craveiro points out, the status of the returnees is yet another instance of the repressed, non-inscribed memories that were excluded from the public discourse, an "episode that was buried under the debris of the non-explained and non-digested historical episodes, amidst resentments, sectarianisms, reaccionarisms and the impossibility of reconciliation."<sup>19</sup> While the performance focuses almost exclusively on retrieving the memories of the defeated left-wing and its failed socialist ideals, introducing the perspective of the returnees, for whom the Revolution was a sentence to exile rather than liberation from a dictatorial regime they had never experienced in the colonies, highlights the contradictions of recording history.

In Cardoso's work, the topic of racial and national identity is explored in depth especially in *Yvone Kane* through Sara's character, whose search for belonging in the unnamed African country is never resolved. During her youth, she is actively involved in the country's liberation and fighting for the Party's socialist ideals alongside Yvone, but she falls out of grace with the Party after her husband's death and loses her workplace at the hospital, spending the rest of her life working for the mission's orphanage. Disillusioned with the country's socialist path and forced to renounce her political beliefs, Sara's arrogant, stubborn and irritable character (her self-proclaimed "bad temper") is in a constant conflict with the outside world, including her own daughter. The film introduces Sara during her medical examination as she is forced to face her terminal lung cancer diagnosis, then stoically looking for a burial place in the next scene. However, as her chauffeur Gabriel points out, the edge of the community cemetery where she wants to be buried is no longer part of the graveyard, but the airport district where new modern buildings are being erected, a suggestive metaphor that introduces the character's lifetime of struggles with her sense of identity that risks to remain unresolved even in her afterlife.

Cardoso revealed that having Irene Ravache in Sara's role was a deliberate choice, including her keeping the Brazilian accent<sup>20</sup> that clearly contrasts with Rita's or any of the other characters in the film. This helps reinforce the impression that both mother and daughter do not belong to any country in particular, aligned with the director's own search for belonging between Mozambique and Portugal and difficulty to legitimate her space of identity. Similarly, archive worker Andrea, the other white woman in the film, has a noticeably foreign accent

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<sup>19</sup> Craveiro, p. 79.

<sup>20</sup> Margarida Cardoso, 'Discussion with Mariana Liz and Sally Faulkner', Conference Portuguese Film: Colony, Postcolony, Memory, 2016.

which contrasts with that of the locals that Rita interacts with, continuing to amplify the sense of distance between the two races.

The relationship between Sara and Jaime, her adoptive African son that was rescued from a burning village as a child, is evocative for their shared search for belonging. In his first interaction with Rita, we find out that Jaime, now a teenager, had chosen to move out of Sara's house to the adjacent building, changing the locks and refusing to return to his 'mother's' home. When Sara is confronted with sister Rosário's allegation that Jaime was one of the five boys who raped the two new girls at the orphanage, she instinctively defends him but struggles for days to get him to face her. Confirming to Sara that despite having felt loved, Jaime is forced to face the fact that he never belonged in her home with his white adoptive mother, reminding Sara of their common feeling of not being able to find their own place: "I'm not quite from here, I never was. I know you understand."<sup>21</sup> Always moody and aloof, not very different to Sara, Jaime knows that watching his friends rape the orphan Niazoia girls is a crime in itself, not only for not stopping it from happening but also for covering for them, yet this forms part of his attempt to fit in with the other black teenagers, people that he identifies himself with more than his adoptive white mother.

Sara's interaction with other black characters in the film is also revealing of the racial dynamics. Gabriel, her trusted chauffeur, is one of the most prominent characters who had been in Sara's life for over thirty years, helped raise her children and remained by her side until her death. However, he acts more like an employee rather than a friend as he drives the women around in silence for their errands, yet only rarely offers his opinion or advice. While he had always been present in their lives, both Sara and Rita take a long time to notice that they had never been to his home and barely even know where he lives. His resigned silence when the women mention this confirms the distance between the races even further. Similarly, when Sara's two houseworkers, Graça and Cassilda, ask Rita about what she plans to do with her mother during her last few weeks, their concern appears to be more of a transaction, pointing towards worry about their own jobs rather than genuine concern for the woman who had been their employer for years. Distant and cold, the two black women seem to always talk only to each other in their native language, and when they walk into the kitchen in the morning, Rita takes an uncomfortably long time to answer their greeting without any eye contact. In her search for Jaime, Sara also asks the two women about their conversations with the young man during their lunches together, trying to understand his recent distancing from her. In her abrupt

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<sup>21</sup> Margarida Cardoso, *Yvone Kane* (Midas Filmes, 2015).

and even impertinent reply, Graça tells Sara that their discussions excluded his private life, repeating and emphasising the word ‘private’ as something that the woman should recognise as a boundary between her and her son; and when Sara asks further questions, not understanding what their conversations were about, Graça’s almost exasperated exclamation as she looks away, followed by a long, uncomfortable silence, points out that Sara’s ignorance extends beyond their topics of conversation.

Furthermore, language is depicted as a site of racial tension, emphasising the lack of communication between the Africans and the Europeans. The whites are unable to understand the local language that the Africans use to communicate to each other, and when they refuse to speak Portuguese it turns into a political act. In her attempt to find Jaime, who had been hiding out of fear of being punished, Sara is accompanied by Gabriel to the black neighbourhood and approaches one of her son’s friends to send him a message. When he ignores her, Gabriel intervenes and the boy swears and spits at him for working for the whites, which angers Sara to slap him in the middle of the busy market. Despite feeling humiliated, having to collect his cap off the dusty road, the boy continues to grin and life goes on undisturbed in the market, as the presence of the only white woman passes by unnoticed.

The film displays a constant and deliberate juxtaposition between the whites’ way of living and that of the Africans also through montage, additionally to the narrative and the languages spoken, amplifying the sense of distance between the two races in their day to day interactions. In one of the first scenes, on the night when Sara is driven by Gabriel to meet Rita and João at the airport, they overtake a truck filled with African women returning from work, squeezed close together in a tight space, with the younger ones forced to stand and offer their seats to the older women. The camera constantly changes focus between the women packed together in the truck and Sara next to her personal chauffeur, in a contrastingly comfortable setting. Similarly, when Rita visits Elias at the university, we see her waiting on a bench in the corridor, next door to the African secretary’s office. The camera frames the two women less than a metre away from each other, yet in separate rooms with a wall dividing the screen through the middle and creating the physical and symbolic separation between the white visitor and the African local.

### **Escaping the trope of the white saviour**

The discussion on race needs to inevitably address not only the effects of historical violence, but also the dangers of the “white saviour” narrative mainly in the context of César’s and Cardoso’s filmography that deals with postcolonial Africa as seen from a white point of

view. Rescuing the decaying archives of Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau is an obvious starting point in analysing the two artists' works from this perspective, as white Europeans who explore and, to a certain degree, even exploit the African culture by using these images as primary source for a lot of their works and building their professional success on them. Sana N'Hada, one of the Guinean directors whose footage is used in César's works, frequently talks about the precarious state of the physical archive before the Portuguese artist's arrival and even attributes its salvation to her: "If it weren't for the intervention of Filipa César and the Arsenal Institute, there wouldn't be any films left."<sup>22</sup> The Guinean Film Institute's fall out of grace with the current political power left it vulnerable and in desperate need for salvation, and only through European funds was it possible to digitise the remaining footage. Similarly, Cardoso talked about her amazement at discovering the huge, invaluable archive that the Mozambican Film Institute itself had forgotten about, which she uncovered during her research for the filmic adaptation of *A Costa dos Murmúrios*.<sup>23</sup> *Kuxa Kanema* was created as an ode to the Mozambican militant cinema, but also as an indictment of the political conflict that resulted in its exclusion from contemporary public discourse. Yet, by condemning the fate of the Guinean and Mozambican archives in the hands of local political systems whose disregard of their militant cinemas allowed for the near-destruction of the images, César and Cardoso can be accused of taking the stance of Western patronisation in its conviction that Africa needs to be saved from itself.

In the case of Cardoso, the director's personal connection to Mozambique, the country where she grew up until the age of 12, is an integral part of her identity – neither entirely Portuguese, nor fully African. In her personal search for a sense of belonging, she explores the duality of the post-colonial subject in *Yvone Kane* through the tensions between the characters of Sara and Jaime. Sara is portrayed as a haunting spirit looking for peace, unable to let go of the past nor to adapt to the present. Conversely, Jaime represents modern youth, indifferent to the struggles of the past and focused on the future and finding his own sense of belonging. Sara's furious yet failed attempt to tear down Jaime's locked door is a subtle metaphor for the past attempting to forcefully insert itself into the present. Furthermore, the relation between the two characters is an allegory of empire and colony. Jaime's black mother was killed during the war, in a parallel to Yvone Kane's death as the mother of her modern nation, and is being raised by a white woman who struggles herself with personal identity and belonging. Europe is guilty

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<sup>22</sup> Filipa César, Tobias Hering, and Carolina Rito, *Luta ca Caba Inda: Time Place Matter Voice, 1967-2017*, Archive Books, 2017, p. 231.

<sup>23</sup> Cardoso, 2019.

of pushing Africa to a desperate point in need of salvation yet, after years of fighting for independence, the colonies are once again relying on being rescued by their former oppressor. Cardoso is brutally critical of colonial violence and its impact on contemporary Mozambique, a theme that has become central in her work by exposing the dangers of ignoring the repercussions of past violence and taking a stance against the false pretence of race-blindness of Portuguese colonialism.

Kim Wale views whiteness as a system of racial hierarchy in which the denial of vulnerability played a crucial role in perpetuating oppression and maintaining power, embracing a degree of “wilful ignorance”<sup>24</sup> to deny white privilege and the individual role played in racial exploitation. In contrast to DiAngelo’s notion of “white fragility” describing the use of emotion as a mechanism of defence against the guilt of racial injustice, thus perpetuating deliberate ignorance,<sup>25</sup> Wale argues that the transformative effects of “critical cultural openness” by embodying the position of vulnerability are essential in overcoming the white saviour complex. Unlike the white “fantasy of openness” that reduces blackness to stereotypical cultural artefacts, becoming emotionally open to being affected by the experience of oppressed groups is a form of “epistemic vulnerability” as defined by Erin Gilson, embracing being out of one’s comfort zone and allowing this embodied form of knowledge to “alter the sense of self.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, challenging the inherited understanding of the world as passed down through tradition is a key element that can rectify systemic oppression, defining critical cultural openness as “a capacity that is grounded in the dis-locating discomfort of emotional vulnerability to seeing, feeling and hearing the suffering that other people experience at the hands of a cultural system that otherwise feels normal, natural and comfortable to white people.”<sup>27</sup>

Cardoso’s work embraces this discomfort in showing the racial divide and the legacy of colonial violence that continues to make its mark on present Africa. *Natal 71*, *Kuxa Kanema* and also the filmic adaptation of *A Costa dos Murmúrios* exposed the injustice perpetrated by the imperial system and the conflict at the heart of the false representation of racially integrated Africa as claimed by the Estado Novo. Critics like Paulo de Medeiros, Estela Vieira and Mark Sabine have commented on Cardoso’s use of photography in *A Costa* to condemn imperial

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<sup>24</sup> Kim Wale, ‘Towards Critical Cultural Openness: (In)Vulnerability in White Student Narratives of Transformation in South Africa’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 43.7 (2020), 1189–1207 (p. 1193).

<sup>25</sup> See Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s so Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (London: Allen Lane, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Wale, p. 1199.

<sup>27</sup> Wale, p. 1204.

brutality and generate debates on a past that has been consistently denied and gradually revised. While Jorge uses photography in her novel to localise the origins of trauma, Cardoso explores it as a means of investigating the past trauma, as Sally Faulkner and Mariana Liz suggest.<sup>28</sup> Among the photographs hidden in the locked cupboard that Helena shows Evita, documenting the Portuguese genocide during the Colonial Wars, the image of Luís holding the impaled decapitated head of an African man is particularly shocking and suggestive. Not just a mere rendition of a fictitious character, it was created by adapting one of the few authentic photographs of a war-crime victim that publicly circulated in Portugal post-1974. As Sabine explains, Cardoso admits to using the iconographic power of this public image to provoke “discomfort and guilt,”<sup>29</sup> challenging the memory and forgetting of colonial violence while also throwing a critical eye at Portugal’s military engagements in the occupation of Iraq when the film was released in 2004.<sup>30</sup>

With *Yvone Kane*, Cardoso turned her gaze even closer to the present by questioning the tensions between the visibility and opacity of post-colonial violence as a result of a brief, yet disastrous process of decolonisation that left Portugal’s former colonies torn by decades of civil war. Once again, through photography, the director performs a critical exploration of the failed communist ideology, alluding to countries like Mozambique, where romanticised notions of independence and progress, as embodied by Yvone’s character and modelled on Samora Machel, turned into new forms of violence that looked to control the past just as imperialism once did. This critique of modern Africa’s abandonment of revolutionary ideals and unstable governments is also an indictment of Portugal’s nostalgia of its former rule in Africa, in which, as Sabine points out, idolised images of the colonies are depicted as “a civilização que nós criámos” (the civilisation that we created),<sup>31</sup> ignoring the legacy of violence that colonialism left behind. Cardoso takes a deliberate stance against Portugal’s display of “wilful ignorance” and “white fragility” in relation to its colonial past, bringing trauma and guilt back into focus to help further debates and change false perceptions of race-blindness.

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<sup>28</sup> Sally Faulkner and Mariana Liz, ‘Portuguese Film: Colony, Postcolony, Memory’, *Journal of Romance Studies*, 16.2 (2016), 1–11 (p. 8).

<sup>29</sup> Mark Sabine, ‘Putting Violence Back in the Picture: Margarida Cardoso’s “A Costa dos Murmúrios” and Postcolonial War Anamnesis’, in *Conflict, Memory Transfers and the Reshaping of Europe*, ed. by M. Helena Gonçalves da Silva and others (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010), pp. 291–302 (p. 298).

<sup>30</sup> Mark Sabine, ‘Killing (and) Nostalgia: Testimony and the Image of Empire in Margarida Cardoso’s A Costa dos Murmúrios’, in *The Genres of Post-Conflict Testimonies*, ed. by Cristina Demaria and Macdonald Daly (Nottingham: Critical, Cultural and Communications Press, 2010), pp. 249–76 (p. 249).

<sup>31</sup> Sabine, ‘Killing (and) Nostalgia: Testimony and the Image of Empire in Margarida Cardoso’s A Costa dos Murmúrios’, p. 255

## Complexities of the gender perspective

As the post-memory generations are taking an increasingly politicised approach in their project of challenging the dominant rhetoric of the past, the issues of gender that once led the agenda of Jorge's and Gersão's writings also gain a new ideological dimension. No longer a central topic but rather a complementary issue that complexifies the contemporary perspective with yet another facet, the exploration of gender in Craveiro's and César's works is merely episodic and subjacent to politics: Craveiro addresses gender violence in relation to dissident anti-fascist memories that are only recently starting to gain visibility in the public discourse, while César touches upon archival representations of gender through racial politics. On the other hand, Cardoso has continued to scrutinise the issues of gender that Lídia Jorge's novel unveiled in the 1980s through her 2004 filmic adaptation, yet with a contemporary take that highlights the construction of gender in a postcolonial context. In her most recent work from 2014, *Yvone Kane*, the director goes even further in dissecting the construction of femininity through the lens of motherhood and gender violence.

Starting with Filipa César, the artist's project also includes footage from an unfinished film in which N'Hada was planning to explore the role of women in the Guinean society during the period of nation building, aiming to capture the realities of women from all backgrounds, from peasants working in the field to those participating in political gatherings. The surviving series of portraits depicts women engaged in the political life of the country, singers and speakers making their voices heard in the microphone, activists bearing arms, school teachers and doctors depicting the image of gender progress that Cabral himself had envisaged as one of the cornerstones of the decolonisation struggle. Flora Gomes talks about the Guinean leader's progressive ideas of gender inclusivity, campaigning for the involvement of women in institutions, highlighting how contemporary and modern his approach was in today's context when the United Nations are legally enforcing this right: "He said that in each organisation, out of every five people there shouldn't be more than three men; at least two out of five should be women, or more."<sup>32</sup> Leading by example, the group of four young Guinean filmmakers that Cabral sends to Cuba for training also includes a woman, Josefina Lopes Crato, who can be seen in the 1967 footage where students are chopping down weeds with machetes to learn how to be humble. In the *Time Place Matter Voice* monograph of the project, César curates stills from the archival footage showing the women's portraits alongside pages from Anita Fernandez's diary from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of June 1980, a CFMAG poster from 1973 with the title

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<sup>32</sup> César, Hering, and Rito, p. 272.

“Women of the Revolution,” a manuscript copy of Cabral’s speech “As mulheres – na frente da nossa vida e da nossa luta!” (Women – in front of our life and our struggle!) and an excerpt from the table of contents of Grada Kilomba’s 2010 book, *Plantation Memories: Episodes of Everyday Racism*. Compiling these very different images helps to re-contextualise the 1970s struggle for gender equality in the contemporary setting that Kilomba explores in her depiction of black women’s condition.

The eclecticism of the Guinean archive is also seen through the foreign film reels that it comprises, and among these César includes Anita Fernandez’s 1980 short-film, *Un Balcon en Afrique*, for which the French female director collaborated with the Guinean filmmakers to illustrate the European perspective of activism during the decolonisation process. The film shows a white woman, a real NGO worker rather than an actress, who watches the streets of Bissau from her treehouse in a kapok tree, ideologically supportive of the struggle yet permanently isolated in her high, vantage point above the city. As she “observes from above a life that she doesn’t take part in,”<sup>33</sup> the protagonist’s detached position, uninvolved in the everyday and distanced from any action and therefore danger, appears as representative of the white activists that visited Guinea-Bissau and many other African countries in the post-liberation war period.

Following stills from the film and conversations with Fernandez about the making of *Un Balcon en Afrique*, César reproduces an excerpt from Kilomba’s thesis on *Decolonizing Knowledge* presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> Encounters Beyond History conference where she criticises the film and its creator for depicting “how the emancipation of white feminists took place at the cost of the colonial subject,”<sup>34</sup> a topic often explored by black intersectional feminists like bell hooks, who argued in favour of “the production of a discourse on race that interrogates whiteness.”<sup>35</sup> Coming from a marginal place of oppression in patriarchal Europe, the white woman is finally emancipated as she gains power in Africa by working side-by-side with the black men, yet remaining above the black woman who is subject to becoming the “other of otherness.” Thus, the white woman continues to propagate the colonial order that associates whiteness with the human condition, while the black woman occupies the “third space,” an ideological blind spot that overlaps the margins of race, gender and class discourse,

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<sup>33</sup> César, Hering, and Rito, p. 290.

<sup>34</sup> César, Hering, and Rito, p. 293.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 8.

“maintained by the polarization of the world into blacks on one side and women on the other,”<sup>36</sup> as Heidi Mirza argues. As equality, social justice and universal sisterhood were the defining objectives of white feminism of the ‘70s and early ‘80s, driven by its opposition to patriarchal power and whiteness being the default social position, omitting to problematise the racial element meant that “an epistemology that rests on inclusion and equality was itself excluding and unequitable.”<sup>37</sup> The invisibility of the black female experience that excludes the element of racism reflects the false universality that the white feminist project aimed to define, overlooking the involvement of white women in the imperialist agenda and their benefitting from the economic exploitation of the colonies.<sup>38</sup> Anne McClintock also talks about the “misbegotten commercialization of white women’s liberation”<sup>39</sup> that stood in the way of women of colour to form alliances with white women. In *Plantation Memories*, Kilomba refers to bell hooks’ indictment of white feminism’s complicity to colonial oppression:

*“Sexist discrimination has prevented white women from assuming the dominant role in the perpetuation of white racial imperialism, but it has not prevented white women from absorbing, supporting and advocating racist ideology or acting individually as racist oppressors.”*<sup>40</sup>

While gender is far from being a central issue in her work, César acknowledges the complexity that characterises the gender and racial debate by juxtaposing Anita Fernandez’s film with Grada Kilomba’s direct, sharp criticism. Does César, as a white woman working with the African archive and the black men that created it, in many ways similarly to the protagonist of *Un Balcon en Afrique*, disregard this criticism by perpetuating the trope of the European activist or does she rather endorse it by including Kilomba’s critique of white feminism as a form of colonial oppression? Moreover, Anita Fernandez, Chris Marker’s friend and co-editor, spent years working with the young Guinean directors and took an active role in supporting their cinematic work, co-writing scripts, editing their material and participating in creating the unfinished documentary about the women of Guinea-Bissau. Ironically thus, her involvement could not be more different to that of the non-participating observer in the film. Perhaps the

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<sup>36</sup> Heidi Safia Mirza, ‘Introduction: Mapping a Genealogy of Black British Feminism’, in *Black British Feminism: A Reader* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1–30 (p. 4).

<sup>37</sup> Mirza, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> Hazel V. Carby, ‘White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood’, in *Black British Feminism: A Reader*, ed. by Heidi Safia Mirza (London ; New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 45–53.

<sup>39</sup> McClintock, p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Grada Kilomba, *Plantation Memories: Episodes of Everyday Racism*, 4. Auflage (Münster: UNRAST-Verlag, 2016), p. 58.

choice to curate discussions around Fernandez's film points towards César's own identification with the white woman activist whose role behind the camera is more active than what meets the eye.

Throughout Cardoso's work, the director's feminist perspective plays a crucial role that at times becomes apparent not only through the obvious female-focused narratives of *A Costa dos Murmúrios* and *Yvone Kane*, but also through more subtle elements at the heart of *Kuxa Kanema*. The documentary is full of female presences, from the often-heard female voiceover that guides the narrative, which inevitably stands for Cardoso's own perspective, to the brief insertions of the director's own body, such as her hands holding the film strips, and footage of a black Mozambican woman working the field introduced throughout the film. The ending sequences bring in another female voice, that of director and producer Isabel Noronha, who exposes the propagandistic nature of the work commissioned by the National Institute of Cinema in the service of the socialist regime, disappointed with the loss of meaning in the cinematic discourse of those first Mozambican films. The director follows Noronha's statement with footage of the 'armed bandits' denounced in Machel's speech, illustrating the polarised nature of the archival images and their visibly political stance marking the transition from a revolutionary discourse to a conservative and propagandistic one. Noronha also reminisces the brutality of the war and the trauma of filming the aftermath of conflicts, bringing attention to the unbearable violence of the past. Removed from the public eye as a result of the armed conflict and dedicated exclusively to creating propaganda, the failure of Mozambican cinema is inevitable, as the voiceover concludes, and not only because of Machel's sudden death.

In a recent essay, Estela Vieira discusses Cardoso's feminist perspective on exploring a woman's role in retelling the unresolved stories of the past. She notes that beyond the analogy between the formation of the Institute and that of Mozambique's nascent socialist state, made obvious in the film, there is a subtle, yet more significant simile that links *Kuxa Kanema*, as Cardoso's filmmaking, with *Kuxa Kanema*, as the concept of "educating and transforming society and communities through film and images."<sup>41</sup> Quoting Philip Hall's statement that "Machel's failure is Cardoso's triumph," Vieira concludes that only Cardoso is able to engage creatively and critique the potential of the image through the refreshing feminist perspective that she introduces, while Machel's fall into propaganda was a betrayal of cinema. Despite taking a less obvious or central position in the structure of the narrative, which remains

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<sup>41</sup> Estela Vieira, 'Image, Historical Memory, Politics: Margarida Cardoso's *Kuxa Kanema* and Susana de Sousa Dias's *48*', in *Women's Cinema in Contemporary Portugal*, ed. by Mariana Liz and Hilary Owen (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

dominated by male images like that of Machel, the subtle feminine voices of *Kuxa Kanema* question the limitations and possibilities of the image, while remaining critical to the relations of power behind it. Cardoso's gender perspective embodies an aesthetic message that pushes the audiences to reconsider their assumptions of cinematic conventions, criticising the manipulation of images through political propaganda, yet also ending on an optimistic note with Machel's call for the fight to continue, attempting to restore the country's trust in the promise of cinema.

## **Motherhood and the representation of gender**

In the traditional representation of gender, motherhood has always played a defining role, especially in terms of social conditioning and subversion. This topic has been previously explored in the second chapter of this thesis through the analysis of the two main female characters in the novels, and it remains relevant in contemporary works, especially when it comes to Margarida Cardoso's films. As the director's exploration of gender takes centre stage in *Yvone Kane*, the narrative illustrates a conflictive representation of femininity on a large spectrum encompassing issues such as marriage and motherhood, as well as political involvement. The film reveals a disturbance in the representation of femininity as motherhood, an essential element in the portrayal of gender which reminisces that of the main characters' in Gersão's and Jorge's novels previously discussed. The parallels with *A Costa dos Murmúrios* in particular are very strong, a novel that Margarida Cardoso adapted in her first feature film in 2004, which also stars Beatriz Batarda in the main role, as Evita.

At a time when women's main responsibility was motherhood, *Yvone Kane* portrays the guerrilla-fighting women of the FPLA as exceptions that chose political involvement over the satisfaction of homemaking. The foreign documentary that Rita watches during her investigation of Yvone's death highlights the fighters having "sacrificed their family lives to join the guerrilla war,"<sup>42</sup> emphasising the exceptionality of choosing politics over motherhood. Yet those women that followed the traditional path to end up as mothers, like Sara and Rita, are far from fitting the ideal accolades of womanhood and of the cult of domesticity, exposing the tensions at the heart of modern femininity.

While the film clarifies very few facts about the characters' lives, the viewer can infer that Sara's two children, Rita and her estranged brother, had spent their childhood in the African country, but were sent abroad by their mother, most likely to Portugal, and the brother

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<sup>42</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

currently lives in London working as an actor. The film's opening scene shows Clara, Rita's and João's young daughter, drowning in the tumultuous sea and unresponsive to the sound of her mother's cries. Even though the scene appears to be only a nightmare, with Rita suddenly waking up on a hospital bed, the failure to recover after the death of her daughter is visibly taking over her life, and she invests all her desperate need for closure into the Yvone Kane investigation. Her loss as a mother turns into self-hatred – "I don't love myself,"<sup>43</sup> as she tells João in one of their rare moments of intimacy – and the impossibility of return to her home, her old self and her relationship, makes her wounds remain painfully open.

One of the defining elements is the visibly unsettling and distant mother–daughter relationship, and the interaction between the two women is constantly marked by a feeling of unease echoed through their awkward gestures, unfinished phrases and lack of eye contact. Their interaction is persistently obscured by camera angles and their limited encounters are all nearly missed opportunities, with the director deliberately changing the focus of the image during their scarce instances of intimacy. As she waits for Rita's plane to land, Sara turns her back to the runway as the viewing deck fills with people and her daughter arrives. The double reflection in the window as she watches her daughter collect her luggage in the airport hall is the first shot of the two women together, but as soon as Rita catches her eye, the mother turns away again. When they finally see each other after many years, the camera shows an uncomfortable hug in a close shot that places the focus on the back of Sara's head, with only João's face visible, in an awkward smile. On her first day back, when Rita wakes up she seems relieved to find Sara sleeping in her room and thus postpone their first conversation alone. The lack of tenderness is felt in every scene where the two women are together, reflected in the distant camera angles. When Sara asks for a photo of the granddaughter that she had never met, she quickly changes her mind to maintain the illusion of her never having existed, choosing to remain ignorant to Rita's pain despite the visible burden that her daughter carries on her shoulders. During this brief conversation they have in Sara's room, one of the very few instances of familiarity between the two women, only a strip of light reveals their faces in an otherwise shadowed background. There is very little direct eye contact between them, despite their brief hug, and Rita's face is shown indirectly through her reflection in the mirror opposite her mother's bed.

Given the brief, inconclusive dialogues and overall lack of information about the characters' lives, the mother-daughter tension is mostly depicted through the clever and

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<sup>43</sup> Cardoso, *Yvone Kane*.

deliberate use of *mise-en-scène*. On the night when Rita rushes to help her mother who had fallen on the floor, we see the young woman through the open door yet Sara's body remains hidden behind the wall and only a hint of affection escapes from this shot. When Sara tells her daughter about the terminal illness that she had been hiding, the camera moves further away from the characters with a long shot that covers the whole house seen from outside and the women remain barely visible through a window in almost complete darkness, save for a few dim lights inside the house, while the sound of their conversation is entirely obscured by the loud barking of Sara's dog outside. Rita's concern for her mother, as she caresses her face, is an easy to grasp human emotion, yet the distance imposed by the camera makes it infinitely harder to perceive.

Sara's failure as a mother extends beyond Rita and her biological son, whom we only see briefly in an image out of focus on her TV, playing an English-speaking character in a British series. He is unrecognisable to her not only because of the moustache he is wearing, but also because of their estrangement, as Sara admits not having even contacted him for his birthday. Her second chance at motherhood with Jaime, the orphan boy she legally adopts after being saved from a burning village, seems to be another defeat, with their increasingly distant relationship pushing him towards a new group of trouble-making African friends. When Jaime is accused of rape, Sara is forced to admit the distancing between them to the already suspicious police detective who questions the adoptive mother's influence on the young man's actions. Moreover, even when confirming Sara's legal adoption of Jaime to the detective, the Mother Superior avoids calling him her son, pointing towards the uncertain status of their relationship despite the legality of this matter.

The depiction of motherhood as complex, challenging and uncomfortable through the characters of Sara and Rita shows how the modern definition of femininity continues to embody the tensions between the socially conditioned depiction of women as mothers and the harsh realities of the present that challenge the traditional simplification of gender roles. Just as the women in *A Costa dos Murmúrios* and *A Árvore das Palavras* once proved, the two strong leading female characters, together with Yvone and her guerrilla group, show how the limitation of womanhood to the private sphere of the home and family is a false representation of what is assumed to be the "true nature" of femininity.

### **The representation of gender violence**

Violence, and especially its lack of quantification, have long been used as instruments in support of the 'gentleness' of the authoritarian regime and the exceptionality of the

Portuguese colonial system, which denied the radical forms of violence that characterised other European fascist regimes and claimed that miscegenation and multi-culturalism were at the heart of its form of imperialism. Yet censorship, the lack of personal freedom and the oppression of political dissidents are proof of the punitive and preventive forms of violence discussed by Fernando Rosas,<sup>44</sup> while the exploitation of the African populations, the massacres, the racism and the systemic oppression of the colonised show that violence occurred, as Miguel Cardina notes, “not as an anomaly, but as a mechanism placed at the very heart of colonialism.”<sup>45</sup> Using Enzo Traverso’s distinction between strong and weak memories, those propagated by the state versus those repressed from the public space, Cardina argues that the memories of violence as a core element of the Estado Novo have turned into weak memories, while violence perceived exclusively in the context of Colonial Wars remains a strong memory.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, gender violence is an issue that has had poor visibility in post-revolutionary Portugal, yet Cardoso and Craveiro have chosen to tackle this topic in their works, illustrating Pollack’s notion of the “management of the unspeakable” and denouncing the silence around the traumatic experiences of women both in Portugal and in the colonies.

In *Yvone Kane*, one of the most memorable and unsettling images is that of the two unnamed Niagoia girls, often inserted in the narrative and shrouded in painful silence, a constant reminder of post-colonial racial and gender violence. Forced out of their pillaged village and raped in the orphanage that was meant to offer them a safe home, their presence is filled with contradiction, both a reminder of the sexual and racial violence that black women endure, and a threat risking to destabilise Sara’s way of living. Unable to speak Portuguese, their northern dialect is barely understood in the city, making the rape crime committed against them even harder to investigate. As they are always depicted sitting next to each other without uttering a word, they seem to communicate through their shared silence and the intense, piercing gazes that instil discomfort and guilt in those around them. Their accusation against Jaime for silently witnessing their rape without intervening forces Sara to admit her son’s identity crisis. Additionally, their presence constrains Sara to face her own conflictive identity, trapped between being a woman and a mother, between condemning the violence against the girls and defending her son.

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<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Miguel Cardina, ‘Violência, Testemunho e Sociedade: Incómodos e Silêncios em Torno da Memória da Ditadura’, in *As Guerras de Libertação e os Sonhos Coloniais: Alianças Secretas, Mapas Imaginados*, ed. by Maria Paula Meneses and Bruno Sena Martins, Série Cosmopolis, 6 (Coimbra: Edições Almedina : CES, 2014), pp. 29–39 (p. 32).

<sup>45</sup> Cardina, p. 31. [my translation]

<sup>46</sup> Cardina, p. 39.

Sara's position towards the Niazoia girls exposes the issues that Chandra Talpade Mohanty discusses in her essay on feminist scholarship and colonial discourse, arguing that Western women "discursively colonise the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world, thereby producing/re-presenting a composite, singular 'Third World Woman,'" thus appropriating "the fundamental complexities and conflicts which characterise the lives of women of different classes, religions, cultures, races and castes in these countries."<sup>47</sup> Power is exercised through a homogenous representation of gender oppression over women as a group, while also including a classist element representative of the "third world," such as poverty, ignorance or victimisation, in contrast with the self-representation of Western women as educated, modern and free to control their own bodies. Mohanty criticises the depiction of women as victims of male violence that limits them to objects of oppression and men as subjects that perpetrate violence, in a simple binary system that reduces the society to "powerless (read: women) and powerful (read: men) groups,"<sup>48</sup> to exploited and exploiters. Sara's position as an outside observer of male violence, with a limited ability to intervene because it could result in having Jaime punished for his crime, reflects this victimisation of African women in a potentially simplistic representation of the gender struggle. When Sara asks how many boys raped them, one of the girls decisively and chillingly replies "four" in a clear Portuguese, without a trace of hesitation in her voice. Sara's reluctance to believing their story reminisces Grada Kilomba's view of "the standpoint of the black woman as a distortion of the truth,"<sup>49</sup> with the white woman assuming the position of power at the centre of knowledge creation, confining the black woman's discourse to the margin.

Yet, at a closer reading, this image hides a wider degree of complexity. While the young African girls are portrayed as almost always silent and defenceless, an image perpetuating the colonial stereotype of the black woman victim, their piercing and often defying gaze challenges Sara to acknowledge them as subjects. Moreover, their precise answer to her question disproves Sara's assumption that they would make unreliable witnesses for being unable to understand or communicate in Portuguese. When talking to the police detective, Sara mentions that the girls had confirmed Jaime's innocence to her, having explained in their own way through gestures, a conversation that happens outside of the camera gaze suggesting that the girls had

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<sup>47</sup> Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses.', *Boundary 2*, 12/13. On Humanism and the University I: The Discourse of Humanism (1984), 333–58 (pp. 334–35).

<sup>48</sup> Mohanty, p. 339.

<sup>49</sup> Grada Kilomba, 'Decolonizing Knowledge', in *The Struggle Is Not Over Yet: An Archive in Relation*, ed. by Nuno Faria, Filipa César, and Tobias Hering, CIAJG Notebooks (ARCHIVE Books, 2018), pp. 191–204 (p. 199).

managed to refute Sara's initial assumptions. The director subtly turns the girls' defenceless position into one of agency, through almost imperceptible gestures that overturn the balance of power between men and women on the one hand, and white and black women on the other hand. However, the stalled investigation of their rape, whose progress is never shown in the film, serves as a bitter reminder of the systemic violence that black women are subject to. Cardoso chooses to portray the troubling passivity of the authorities in charge of protecting the girls, who remain reluctant to spare any resources to bring the crime to justice. Sally Faulkner talks about Cardoso's take on feminist cinema that "creates space for us to contrast the powerful, articulate, educated women – journalists, doctors, politicians – with powerless, inarticulate and uneducated ones – the raped girls."<sup>50</sup> By addressing gender violence in a deliberate contrast to the main characters whose privileged whiteness and class shields them from such brutal encounters, the director exposes the complex reality of postcolonial society whose legacy of imperial violence and racism continues to perpetuate inequality.

In her play, Craveiro also addresses the topic of gender violence in its focus on exposing the invisible archives of the PIDE, denouncing the extreme brutality and humiliation that women were exposed to during interrogations, contrasting this with the "gentle manners, kindness, neutrality and passivity"<sup>51</sup> traditionally associated with the Portuguese identity. The performance names some of the female dissidents who revealed their stories, like Maria da Conceição Matos Abrantes and Aurora Rodrigues, whose chilling accounts expose severe human rights abuses, with prisoners brutally beaten, refused access to the toilet, forced to undress, denied legal representation and kept in isolation for months. On the other hand, militants like Aida Paula focus on the messages of hope and poems of resistance that she wrote on the walls of her cell, helping her succeed in keeping her silence during repeated imprisonments.

Writing the story of Aurora Rodrigues, as recounted in the woman's testimony published in 2011, *Gente Comum*, Craveiro summarises the former MRPP (Portuguese Workers' Communist Party) militant's three-month imprisonment and the extreme beatings and humiliation that she endured, to a point where the PIDE agents themselves were worried that they had killed her. Even after nearly 40 years following the imprisonments, the bruises on her legs never healed, defying the invisibility that the Estado Novo attempted to impose on its violence, while the effects of her post-traumatic stress continued to leave their mark on the

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<sup>50</sup> Sally Faulkner, 'Women's Cinema, World Cinema: Margarida Cardoso's Yvone Kane', in *Women's Cinema in Contemporary Portugal*, ed. by Mariana Liz and Hilary Owen (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), p. 203.

<sup>51</sup> Craveiro, p. 36.

present. Using Luisa Passerini's connection between memories, silence and oblivion, Miguel Cardina highlights how the silenced trauma inscribed in the bodies of tortured political militants proves how the nonverbalised, embodied memories can turn silence into "remembering rather than forgetting."<sup>52</sup> As Passerini suggests, "silence can nourish a story and establish a communication to be patiently saved in periods of darkness, until it is able to come to light in a new and enriched form."<sup>53</sup> In Rodrigues's case, the decades of silence that followed the unspeakable torture ended with the publishing of her story that exposed the true face of violence during the dictatorship at a time where revisionist politics attempted to devalue and even erase the traumatic experiences of the past.

In her introduction to Aurora Rodrigues's memoir, anthropologist Paula Godinho talks about the duties of memory that motivated the former detainee to share her story, "so that [memory] is not built on the forgetfulness of a common society, and the dimension of the public sphere is not disrupted."<sup>54</sup> And as Cardina concludes in his analysis of the behaviour of former militants in the face of torture, "persecution, torture, and imprisonment did not end with April 25, 1974, and they are still reflected today in the bodies, speech, and silences of former prisoners."<sup>55</sup> The omissions and distortions of facts recorded in the official PIDE archives had led to crass errors and ambiguities when made public, while their use as a privileged source of information in academic and journalistic works continued to propagate the misrepresentation of the past that Rodrigues had experienced. The indignation and fear at the loss of truth became common motivators for those whose experiences had been distorted in the public sphere, and Craveiro's choice to recount Rodrigues's story, representative of gender violence, retains the resentment at the selective representation of subaltern memories in contemporary Portugal.

## Mediating the male experience

As already mentioned in the first part of this dissertation, a more complete discussion of gender needs to address the question of male representation. While Jorge and Gersão had already challenged traditional gender roles including the idealisation of masculine stereotypes of power, control and violence, contemporary artists continue to explore this by mediating male

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<sup>52</sup> Miguel Cardina, 'To Talk or Not to Talk: Silence, Torture, and Politics in the Portuguese Dictatorship of Estado Novo', *The Oral History Review*, 40.2 (2013), 251–70 (p. 258).

<sup>53</sup> Luisa Passerini, 'Memories between Silence and Oblivion', in *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts*, ed. by Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, Memory and Narrative Series, 1st pbk. ed (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 2006), pp. 238–54 (p. 238).

<sup>54</sup> Paula Godinho, Aurora Rodrigues, and A. Monteiro Cardoso, 'História de um Testemunho, com Caxias em Fundo', in *Gente Comum: Uma História na PIDE*, Cultura e Sociedade, 2a ed (Castro Verde: 100Luz, 2011), pp. 11–44 (p. 16). [my translation]

<sup>55</sup> Cardina, 'To Talk or Not to Talk', p. 269.

experience and memories through the voices of female artists and characters. The soldiers' memories are explored in Craveiro's and Cardoso's works, looking at the representations of trauma, heroism and virility that were previously caricaturised in the images of Captain Jaime Forza Leal and Lieutenant Luís Alex. As the present of the novels turned into an already long-gone past that Cardoso and Craveiro had never experienced, the need to revive the memories of their parents' generation switches the focus back onto the experience of war and the way it shaped contemporary Portuguese society, addressing the deep wounds that were silently covered over the decades since the Revolution.

Breaking the silence surrounding the topic of war, both directors mention the Christmas tradition of the vinyl gifted by the National Feminine Movement to the soldiers, criticising the futility of this object in the middle of the battlefield. Exposing a regime absurdly disconnected from the reality of war points towards the irony of the Estado Novo controlling not just the state politics but also the stereotypes defining manhood. In the first act focusing on gestures of resistance, Craveiro opens the discussion on the Colonial War by mentioning the forbidden book, *Massacres in the Colonial War* from 1976, which denounced the human rights violations conducted by the Portuguese army in Wiriyamu, in the Mozambican region of Tête. Tête repeatedly appears in the other war-time narratives of *A Costa dos Murmúrios* and *Natal 71*. In the novel, lieutenant Fernandes crashes over the smouldering fires of Tête in his ambition to become the pilot with the most flight hours, and in the documentary, Cardoso's father describes the unbearable heat of Tête, with its dirty river and red earth, where the summer's dust turned into mud in winter. Cabo Delgado is another a central area in the Colonial War, which Adelino Cardoso associates with the first acts of "terrorism," where men were often badly wounded by missile attacks. As a former pilot deployed to rescue the troupes after battles, his memories are marked by blinded twenty-year-old soldiers with missing limbs, a sight that had become unfortunately too common. In contrast with the hardships of wartime recounted by Cardoso's and Craveiro's interviewees, the voice on the vinyl talks about a "sacrifice shared by all,"<sup>56</sup> both soldiers in the colonies and those back in Portugal, denouncing the failure of the state in recognising the true impact of war that lead to the non-inscription of its uneasy legacy. Similarly, in *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, Cabo Delgado is the "land of savages"<sup>57</sup> where the men living at Stella Maris are often deployed to. Even though the novel repeatedly mentions Cabo Delgado, acknowledging it as the place of "the triumphant march over the mortal heart of the

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<sup>56</sup> Cardoso, *Natal 71*.

<sup>57</sup> Jorge, p. 52.

guerrilla war, of which next to nothing was known but about which there was little doubt,”<sup>58</sup> Jorge chose to focus her narrative on the memories of the wives waiting for their soldier husbands at the hotel rather than on the armed battles, bringing the minor to the forefront to explore another non-inscribed aspect of the Colonial War.

The aerograms that Craveiro quotes in her play, in which soldiers declare their longing for their loved ones, never mention the war, neither its victories nor its hardships; the “terrible life,” “despair” and “suffering”<sup>59</sup> are strictly attributed to the sadness of being away from their family and partners. Cardoso also contrasts the soldiers’ experience with the images of state propaganda, whose aim was to minimise the importance of war by portraying it as a form of protecting the “overseas territories” from the communist threat. Yet those conscripted to fight in a futile war were forced to spend years facing the imminent threat of death without any recognition from the Portuguese society. As a former captain interviewed by Craveiro declared, “most people who were for the war did not fight in it,”<sup>60</sup> while Cardoso’s father talks about the war for those back home being perceived as “so far away it hardly concerned them at all.”<sup>61</sup>

The mediums of film and theatrical performance add new perspectives to the soldiers’ experience once portrayed in the two novels. Jorge and Gersão tackled this topic through the voice of their leading female characters, placing the male experience as an instrumental element to deciphering violence and the separation between the domestic and private spheres during the Estado Novo, aspects that were crucial to understanding women’s lives as experienced by the two authors. However, in the contemporary works analysed, masculinity is dissociated from femininity as the focal perspective of the narrator is not visibly gendered, as it appeared in the novels. Even though Craveiro herself impersonates the Archivist, the narrative persona of the play, her performance treats male and female experiences separately yet the focus shifts towards men’s voices in the vast majority of her interviews. In *Natal 71*, Cardoso builds her entire narrative on soldiers’ memories and their exclusion from the official records of the dictatorship. With the story narrated in the first person in the director’s own voice, the exploration of her father’s and his generation’s war memories results in discovering her own childhood experience. Gender is no longer a lens through which the world is dissected, but an instrument for contextualising the aftereffects of war and its lack of inscription, a way of continuing the conversation on history and memory.

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<sup>58</sup> Jorge, p. 108.

<sup>59</sup> Craveiro, ‘Performance Script’, p. 20.

<sup>60</sup> Craveiro, p. 21.

<sup>61</sup> Cardoso, *Natal 71*.

Just as traditional gender roles were once challenged by Jorge and Gersão, the contemporary directors and performers revisit the stereotypical definitions of femininity and masculinity to expose the tensions behind personal experiences and sanctioned memories. The contradictions inherent in the representation of gender, but also of race and social class as seen in the works of César, Craveiro and Cardoso, point towards the inconsistencies and failings of the Portuguese imperial rhetoric and its legacy in the present. By highlighting elements of racial and gender violence, the works analysed in the second part of this thesis continue to offer a harsh critique of postcolonialism, through a series of overlaid perspectives that look at the present through the prism of the past to leave a mark on the future. Rather than striving to uncover and preserve the truth, like the first generation of writers did in their works, the contemporary artists' concern revolves less around the factual, but rather around the preservation of memory as a previously suppressed voice that continues to change and evolve.

## *Conclusion*

The explosion of voices and perspectives in the first couple of decades after the 1974 Revolution facilitated the inclusion in the canon of those previously marginalised voices during the Estado Novo, thus making way for female novelists in the ranks of Portuguese literature. Lídia Jorge and Teolinda Gersão have become influential names in post-1974 Portuguese writing, and their novels heavily challenged the representation of traditional gender roles and questioned official imperialist history to bring gender and racial violence, inequality and injustice to the forefront. In the contemporary space, women artists, directors, performers and academics have been gaining national and international notoriety over the last two decades. While the first generation revisited the past to rewrite history and give a voice to silenced and oppressed women that were omitted from official records, finding their way into the post-dictatorial Portuguese canon, the second generation takes a rather post-historical stance, retrieving the past to reassess historical representation and (non-)inscription while rejecting the canon altogether. The contemporary fragmented narratives, bringing together overlapping voices and a plurality of perspectives, point towards a rejection of the linearity of history. They rely on memory to deconstruct the past and reveal not only what happened, but also what the future could have looked like and the dangers of forgetting.

I chose Lídia Jorge and Teolinda Gersão as subjects for my analysis because of how accomplished and dominant they have become as part of the Portuguese literary canon, with the two novels regarded as some of the most prominent writings of the post-revolutionary period. While they started their literary careers as dissident voices denouncing the exclusion of the minor and deconstructing male-centred, imperialist master narratives, they are now themselves canonical and thus part of the discourse of power. With canonisation serving as a form of institutionalising cultural memory, it gave the two writers a dominant platform to share their experiences once considered minor and become influential narratives that are studied in schools and viewed as contemporary classics. The publishing of these works in the late 1980s and early 1990s contributed to opening up the public debate around the highly controversial topic of the Colonial Wars, breaking the long years of silence following the traumatic events, while also bringing the attention to the racist and sexist policies of the Estado Novo. The canon allowed the two works to be not just widely read and discussed but also, in the case of *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, to be immortalised through its adaptation into a feature film, the 2004

eponymous production that helped the director, Margarida Cardoso, gain international recognition. The cinematic adaptation, widely acclaimed and receiving ample press coverage, becomes yet another means through which the novel and, implicitly, its author, are canonised into Portuguese cultural memory. I would argue that the narrative's firm inclusion in the canon prior to the feature film is what facilitated its popular cinematic adaptation, by comparison with Margarida Cardoso's recent project on Isabela Figueiredo's *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais*. Despite the director's influential position in contemporary Portuguese cinema, securing funding to adapt the highly controversial and contested novel turned into a long process that will take years to reach fruition.

Despite their current canonical status, *A Costa dos Murmúrios* and *A Árvore das Palavras* started out as disruptive forces of change that highlighted social, gender and racial inequality and violence. As I argued in the first chapter of this thesis, the novels exhibit a myriad of elements that come together to create a complex depiction of social class as a defining constituent of the colonial society, highlighting how status and privilege often contradicted the expectations of race. Chapter Two underlined the complexity of gender representation in the two novels, exposing the tensions between conventional gender roles and the nonlinearity of femininity and masculinity within the Estado Novo. I have emphasised how the characters contradicted the patriarchal discourse in their rejection of motherhood and marriage as quintessential feminine duties, but the novels also stood up against the artificiality of representing manliness as synonymous to bravery and warfare, exposing the futility and injustice of a war that left a strong mark across generations. Chapter Three highlighted the complexities of discussing race in the context of colonial Portuguese society, pointing out the writers' contribution towards portraying a more complete representation of the racial minor previously omitted from the discourses of power. My analysis proved how the tensions between history, memory and truth, between personal experience and official narrative, contributed to creating a complex, often contradictory image of blackness and whiteness. The three chapters in the first part aimed to scrutinise the way in which social class, gender and race represented fundamental elements in the construction of Portuguese identity, while also remaining crucial axes of analysis of contemporary works.

The three female directors/artists/performers that I selected as representative for the contemporary generation are becoming prominent artistic voices on the cultural scene. My intention was to broaden the analysis by looking at a series of similar, yet formally diverse mediums of representation outside of the more traditional cultural object of literature, while still maintaining the focus on the construction of identity through social class, gender and race.

Filipa César's cinematography features a lyrical form of expression that is concerned with form and style, resulting in hybrid productions that merge the intention of pragmatic documentary with the poetics of visual arts, full of artistic metaphors. Margarida Cardoso's take on documentary with a seemingly straightforward narrative hides a myriad of subtle questionings of traditional filmic representation and political subversion, while her feature films move even further away from traditional, linear narrative with open-ended interrogations of history and memory. Finally, Joana Craveiro's successful theatre career as director, playwright, actor, performer, and artistic director of the Lisbon-based Teatro do Vestido for nearly 20 years makes her a noteworthy emerging voice. Her practice-as-research play, supported by a well-documented doctoral thesis, is an expression of documentary theatre and theatre of the real that gained public attention in Portugal through the debates it generated.

When I initially wrote the proposal for this thesis in early 2014, one of my objectives was to account for the apparent disappearance of feminism in the construction of identity of a contemporary generation that, despite being highly politicised, chose to take interest in other causes than feminism. At the time, I could notice a stark contrast between the strong feminist voice of the first generation that fought for having women inscribed into the national literary canon, and an apparent rejection of feminism by contemporary artists whose works had replaced the female subject with a predominantly male presence and voice, and an apparent rejection of gender.

The initial plan for this project was to analyse two works by two contemporary directors and to contrast these with the two novels by Jorge and Gersão. The first film proposed was Filipa César's 2011 *The Embassy*, which used a photo album illustrating the perspective of the Portuguese colonist in Guinea-Bissau in the 40s and 50s to address counter-memory through the voice of a Guinean archivist. This complemented Jorge's and Gersão's personal experiences of Africa, yet complexified the element of perspective. The second work for analysis was going to be Salomé Lamas's 2012 *Terra de Ninguém* (No Man's Land), which traced the story of Paulo de Figueiredo, a mercenary in the special military forces during the Colonial Wars in Angola and Mozambique, a character that was both an outsider infiltrated into the colony, as well as an outsider of the metropolis that kept him within the bounds of invisibility. The two documentaries centred on memory and questioned the borders of official history and historical representation, yet marked a clear departure from the feminist agenda of the 80s and 90s writers through powerful male voices, even though looking at the same timeframe and similar subject matter. While I was working on the first part of the thesis, César premiered *Spell Reel* in 2017 and Lamas showed her latest essay film, *Extinction*, in 2018 at

the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. The narrative was located in Transnistria, the Communist state that broke away from the former Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, and explored the fluid borders between past and present.

While César's latest work brought her closer to the Portuguese post-colonial subject matter, Lamas moved further away from the exploration of national identity that was prevalent in the first part of my thesis. Wanting to maintain a stronger connection with the first generation of writers, I started looking at other contemporary Portuguese female artists and I came across Joana Craveiro's unpublished doctoral thesis and theatrical performance, and rediscovered Margarida Cardoso's *Kuxa Kanema* and *Yvone Kane*, bringing together militant cinema and the African post-colonial subject with a strong female voice. I also considered focusing on the works of Ângela Ferreira and Grada Kilomba, but given the limited space of the thesis I decided to centre my research on just three female film and theatre directors. Additionally, rather than restricting the analysis to just one of each artists' works, I wanted to consider the wider artistic diversity in their body of work and elaborate a better understanding of how they interpret the issues of class, race and gender discussed in the first three chapters.

Because the three directors' works heavily relied on the (re)interpretation of the archive, I wanted to start the second part of the thesis with an exploration of the complex relations between archive, memory and history under the influence of political power. In Chapter Four, my analysis highlighted the way in which the directors use the archive as a site of memory retrieval while also challenging its selectiveness and artificiality in the recording of history, bringing to light those previously undocumented voices excluded from the official record. Chapter Five continued the scrutiny of memory and power in the contemporary productions, going back to the triad of history, memory and truth previously discussed in relation to Jorge's and Gersão's novels in the first part, highlighting the historical importance of non-submission to the political norms and giving a platform to the marginalised voices of resistance. The last chapter aimed to conclude the exploration of the contemporary generation through a critique of the multiplicity of perspectives in the works analysed, and this way bring the attention back to the original question around gender and the evolution of the feminist agenda. The intention was not only to address the intergenerational differences in comparison to the perspective of the novelists, but also to expose the latent blind spots in the directors' works. From a social class point of view, I looked at the limitations of the class and ideology perspective in Craveiro's performance, dissecting the imperfections of an elitist angle that fails to recognise opposing views. In terms of race, I discussed the challenges that post-colonial racial encounters exhibited in the works, from the controversial perspective of the returnees in *A Museum* to the

characters' unresolved quest for belonging in *Yvone Kane*, as well as how the dangers of the white saviour trope are avoided through the depiction of colonial violence. The chapter ends with the exploration of gender, including a critique of white feminism and its traditionally limited depiction of the black woman, highlighting the complexity that this assumes in César's and Cardoso's works, continuing with an analysis of the role of motherhood in the representation of women, a depiction of gender violence in *Yvone Kane* and *A Museum*, and the mediation of the male experience through the female voices.

While in the first part focusing on the novelists' works, the emergence of the female voice discloses and questions the relations of power, thus justifying the urgency of a gendered perspective, in the contemporary films and performance analysed this is replaced by a highly politicised perspective in which activism prevails. The politics of gender, in its overt militant manifestation, is rejected by many contemporary female artists and replaced with a stronger focus on politics, mainly on power struggles and the politics of memory in post-dictatorial Portugal and its former African colonies. And while acclaimed and well-established writers such as Lídia Jorge and Teolinda Gersão have become themselves part of the canon, contemporary artists have turned their back on this canon. The directors' political stance thus indicates a rejection of the canon that is not only widely male-centred, but also gender-focused and, in choosing to replace the overt expression of gender with a subtler approach, they consequently and consciously reveal their dismissal of the canon altogether.

What initially looked like a disappearance of feminism when this project began to take shape, proved to be, in fact, a more complex take on gender in the contemporary directors' works. Whether unmistakably evident or expertly disguised under the various layers of politics, ideology, class and race perspectives, the presence of gender in the works analysed proved to be inescapable. The visual, performative and cinematographic productions carry an embedded expression of gender that becomes even more evident when compared to the works of Portuguese male film-makers who have been making their presence visible on screen through overt, intentionally representative signals; in the works of female artists, gender becomes, rather than invisible as previously thought, much subtler and more complex.

Some of the gender themes observed in the works analysed continue to cross the intergenerational boundaries, like the critique of violence against women as seen in Craveiro's depiction of former political dissidents of the Estado Novo and in Cardoso's discussion of violence against African women, highlighting how black women continue to be unfairly overlooked by the system. The interpretation of motherhood, pivotal in the construction of femininity in Jorge's and Gersão's novels, is a topic that Cardoso further explores in *Yvone*

*Kane* through the two central characters, whose troubled mother-daughter relationship reinforces the fallibility of limiting the female gender to the experience of maternal and family life. Another aspect worth mentioning here, which I decided not to address as part of my analysis due to lack of space, is the role of romantic relations in *Yvone Kane*, a topic previously discussed in connection to the novels which exposed the problematic imposition of matrimony as a compulsory female duty. In the film, the estranged relationship between Rita and João and the gradual dissolution of their marriage after their daughter's drowning is an aspect that the director makes visible throughout the narrative, showing how their failed attempts at intimacy and unsuccessful communication are unable to help them overcome the personal trauma.

The gender perspective often takes on a white, Portuguese viewpoint in both generations, especially visible in the novels whose depiction of black women is commonly formulaic, either simplistic in resulting to naturality in the case of the character of Lóia in *A Árvore das Palavras* or superficial in *A Costa dos Murmúrios* in the brief description of the journalist's African lover, who maintains a wide, innocent smile despite the misery of poverty. Despite the novelists' strong feminist message across their works, the bias and limitations of the Eurocentric perspective resulted in marginalising the black female subject and reducing her to an inferior position. However, this prejudiced perspective is challenged through César's and Cardoso's self-critical approach as they subtly highlight the flaws and limitations of (white) feminism. César addresses this issue by bringing in Grada Kilomba's critique of the white female perspective that subjugated the black woman to the status of the "other of otherness," condemning European activists for pursuing their emancipation to the detriment of African women. Cardoso confronts this aspect by juxtaposing the central images of educated, modern white women, Sara and Rita, with that of the quiet and disquieting Niazoia girls, who are forced to endure extreme violence, subjected to rape after having been saved from their war-torn village. Yet this juxtaposition is not a mere simplified contrast between the civilised and the "third world" that makes white women look progressive and compassionate and black women are seen as powerless victims; on the contrary, the narrative portrays Sara's inner struggles between helping the girls and protecting her son, challenging her position of power and her instinctive mistrust of the African girls. Additionally, with merely a few brief words uttered and instances of a defying gaze, the director turns the Niazoia girls' position into one of agency, gaining control over their own narrative, while also emphasising the reality of systemic gender violence and injustice in the contemporary African society.

The exploration of masculinity, while present across the two generations, is one of the key topics that takes on a new shape and focus for the contemporary artists. Notwithstanding

the obvious critique of the stereotypical representation of manliness remaining constant across the two generations, the shift in perspective marks a different take on gender and masculinity. Male experience was treated as an important element in the depiction of gender in the two novels, highlighting the fundamental contradictions created by stereotypical attributes of masculinity such as virility, strength of character and the idealisation of war as a consecrated space for solidifying manliness, yet this was always secondary to the feminist agenda which prevailed for Jorge and Gersão. The writers' main focus was that of spotlighting the conflicts at the heart of the female condition during the Estado Novo and utilised masculinity as an instrument to expose gender violence and draw attention to the invisibility of women's perspective in a patriarchal society that idealised manhood and created strict segmentations between the public and the private spheres. The shift in perspective seen in the second generation shows less an alignment with the feminist perspective to the detriment of the male point of view, but rather a mediation of the male experience through the female voice. This perspective strikes a more balanced view between the effort of exposing the marginalised experience of war, kept away from the public eye for the uncomfortable truths that it signalled, and the directors' more 'feminine' take of addressing personal memories and discussing the powerful emotional impact of war that scarred a whole generation.

While gender becomes both a place of contestation and convergence between the two generations of female writers and directors, the exploration of truth, history and memory remains a strong element of unity. Just as the novels once stood against the revisionist tendencies of post-revolutionary Portugal in their attempt to paint the past in a more positive light and erase the traces of male and colonial violence, the contemporary films, documentaries and performance continue to question the so-called post-truth politics that disregards facts and proof in favour of an appeal to emotion. The need to continue the conversation about a history that will soon no longer have living witnesses emerges from the directors' efforts to bring to light the once invisible, marginal perspectives, even when they themselves do not fully politically or ideologically align with these points of view. Hannah Arendt's cautionary statement comes to mind, now more relevant and urgent than ever:

*“The chances of factual truth surviving the onslaught of power are very slim indeed; it is always in danger of being manoeuvred out of the world not only for a time but, potentially, forever. Facts and events are infinitely more fragile things than axioms, discoveries, theories – even the most wildly speculative ones – produced by the human mind; they occur in the field of*

*the ever-changing affairs of men, in whose flux there is nothing more permanent than the admittedly relative permanence of the human mind's structure. Once they are lost, no rational effort will ever bring them back.”<sup>1</sup>*

While the critique of power and the selectiveness of history continues to remain relevant, truth appears to take on a different form for the two generations as it transitions from testimony to memory. Jorge and Gersão witnessed first-hand the trauma of colonialism and dictatorship, which consequently started to be gradually erased from the public memory. Their impetus to share their personal experiences came from the need to draw attention to the unseen aspects of reality that risked being distorted by history, criticising the “onslaught of power.” The emotional connection remained a powerful force at play for the second generation who lived in the shadow of the past through their parents’ experiences, but have to rely on the memories of others to piece together the remains of a past that continues to evolve in the present. The directors expose the limitations of representing and reconstructing an ambiguous and nearly forgotten past that survives only through distorted memory, bringing to light the fragility of facts and personal experiences under the influence of power.

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt, ‘Truth and Politics’, in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, Enlarged ed (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), pp. 227–64 (p. 231).

## *APPENDIX*

### *Interview with Margarida Cardoso Conducted by Irina Ene-Mitrović, Lisbon, December 2019*

This interview took place on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019 at the Universidade Lusófona in Lisbon. I am grateful to Margarida Cardoso for her time and the invaluable insight that our conversation provided for my analysis.

**Irina Ene-Mitrović:** Why do you work with the archive?

**Margarida Cardoso:** In the beginning, I was working for 15 years in a very tough industry in Portugal and in France doing mainly fiction, and it was very industrial – TV series – so I worked a lot with good directors too. But then I got really tired of this profession and this ambiance, when the shots didn't matter, telling stories nonchalantly without historical accuracy. When I began to do my own things, my first movement and desire was to move towards a kind of exploration of my own story – my father and the war, being in Mozambique, something that was very blurred concerning my childhood, something very tough that I couldn't fully understand. It was when I began to explore the past that I got this desire to discover things about the image and the archive, I love being on the archive and researching it, I always have the impression that I will find something that will reveal something hidden.

For *Natal 71*, I spent a lot of time on the archive that was at the time completely dead. It was the army archive, all film, no digital copies, they didn't know exactly where all things were... All the images of archive that I even decided to use in the film were so bad and completely destroyed that I decided to assume this materiality of the image, and I became fascinated with the archive.

One day I was in Mozambique and I went to this archive with the person from the sound there, Gabriel Mondlane, who also became a director. I was so amazed when I saw the archive, but the people there told me they had nothing because everything burned. When I began filming

in the early 2000s, they had reopened part of the Institute [INC – National Film Institute] that had been closed and they had to remove a lot of the archive, it was even worse than what I showed briefly in the film. It was a huge archive, not just negatives like they thought! For me, even if it wasn't going to be a film, I knew that I had to go there and see it. At the time, I had already written the script for *A Costa dos Murmúrios* and it was in the phase of preproduction, so for me it was also a way to see images of the time because they had reels from the colonial period. But then I wrote a project based on images I hadn't seen and I was offered funding.

**I.E.M.:** What do you look for in the archive? Do you look for something in particular or do you just start with a blank page?

**M.C.:** For *Natal 71*, it was based on a vinyl record that they gave to the military in '71 during the war by a group of women called O Movimento Nacional Feminino, a state organisation, that gave small presents to the military when they left Portugal; messages and cheesy songs for the military, a mix of terrible propaganda and artists that were compromised because they worked with the regime on this, and the military didn't know what to do with the records because they didn't have pickups. So I was looking for footage concerning war and propaganda, where the soldiers are clearly asked to recite a speech, so I was looking for the discourse of these newsreels that was very propagandistic and images of war, but most of them were just fake – they didn't happen during combat, but were scripted. Any image that doesn't have the same speed that it was done for, 24 frames per second, becomes another thing and if you stop on one single image as opposed to seeing it frame by frame, you can see thousands of images inside one image. What interests me a lot is what is behind a central figure, the intention of a single image, like in propaganda.

For *Kuxa Kanema* it was a completely different process and the task was to see everything available on this archive. When I was there, I just gave myself the time to see everything and to understand the country that I had left when I was very young and had meanwhile become another thing. I was trying to understand the history and the feelings of this country, through this image, taking into account that the image is always a reflection of those who produced it, and the filters that interested me, like the propaganda and the speech.

**I.E.M.:** The archive has an important role in recreating the collective memory that is so easy to twist over time, there is a visible tension in *Kuxa Kanema* between propaganda and historical facts.

**M.C.:** I'm guiding people around this world of image and capturing things, and of course I don't believe in image as a document but a point of view, that's why it's so important to know who produced it. I don't believe something is true just because you have an image of it, I think you can do a lot with the plasticity of the image, especially when you just cut a part of an image and use it in another context. I saw this a lot in the INC in Mozambique, all the images that have been kept on these newsreels from the colonial times. What I'm most interested in is the desire and intention of capturing a particular image, who is behind the camera, what kind of forces of power are behind this image. And even if you then use the image with another purpose and destroy the intention, what they bring you clearly if you look at 24 images per second and see the original thing then you can capture the genesis of this image. I think the only thing that is true is the profilmic, the moment that the image was recorded, the image only exists as a document of that very moment.

**I.E.M.:** What are the challenges of working with memory?

**M.C.:** The biggest challenge is the notion of memory and the definition of it. I think that we remember things for which we constructed a narrative in a previous moment of our lives. Everything that we can call memory is a narrative that has been constructed at a certain moment in time by you as an individual, you construct something that will have this particular form. The memory just exists because someone or you individually had tried to construct a story. The biggest challenge is that I see memory as stories or narratives that exist already and I work with these pieces of memory that are not concrete, have this plasticity, thinking in a nonlinear way. I always have some doubts about what memory is exactly and the way we confound it with nostalgia, these bits of stories can change a lot and are matters that not concrete, but have fluidity. And the problem is that when you are constructing things with this matter it somehow becomes a different matter and you can destroy it very easily.

**I.E.M.:** Do you find in your work that there is a tension between what we learned in school as history and what you find in the archive?

**M.C.:** When I went to Mozambique I was one-year-old, we lived there during the war, but even during those times we doubted a lot about this construct identity of Portugal all around the imperial ideas, that the sun never sets on the empire etc. But since I remember and have the clarity that I began to read that Portugal was not a small country, even in my family that is not very politically advanced (my father was a pilot in the military), I still remember clearly that we didn't believe in anything like that. It was already a joke when I was a kid, we were very conscious that this was all a fake scenario. After the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, this whole imperial identity disappeared and there was nothing left, we didn't yet have an identity to replace the fake one, but we were so used to this difference between what we were told and what we could see. We knew that it was a lie...

*Yvonne Kane* is based on the image of the archive, the story that the power invented for this woman. I'm always very interested in what the story told by the power is, and this is very present in everything I do. And since I started doing movies, my goal was to find the truth just because I knew that there was always a construct present in my life.

Lídia Jorge said in an interview in a forum on reconciliation and the end of the conflict in Colombia, that she thought she would never be able to write about something that happened in Africa. But then she began to hear in the '80s that just 9,000 persons died, that the war was not so tough, and maybe they weren't racist at all! When she saw the memories being redacted and disappearing, she knew she had to write because the truth would die. Eduardo Lourenço wrote about the difference between the British and the Portuguese colonialism.

I started working with *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais* by Isabela Figueiredo – she is my age and was living in the same place as me, the daughter of an electrician in a family without any education, very low class and a terrible witness, but it was very common because a lot of the colony were people who didn't have anything to eat in Portugal. It's the first time that I see the colonial history written from this point of view that no one wants to know because it's horrible and racist, people are ignorant! We know that this happened, but then you see it written and the witnesses are people who shouldn't have a voice! But she was attacked by people who denied these facts, saying that it wasn't true, it's too much... But of course, these things happened, when we read the book everyone knows that these were words said by everyone. These people were so poor that they didn't have the right to have a voice at that time, and they still don't have the right today, and no one is ready to listen to this cruel, raw voice.

So, I was very interested in this book because of its rawness and resistance. Of course that with the recent political change and the current populist political movement, my fear is that now everybody that turns to this woman is enraged, and today everything moves so quickly and technology is used for spreading the ignorance, hatred and the lies that our colonialism was better. And it's become easier to spread all these crazy ideas, like the Earth not being round and our colonialism being different. In the last five-six years, with the growth of the right-wing movement, I felt that the colonial past is being rewritten. I'm using animation with mostly the text from the book and I wrote the script together with actress Beatriz Batarda; she read the book for three and a half hours by herself in a theatre and no one left the room, despite the very strong language. If something becomes illustrative, it destroys everything. I'm using puppets but also images of the archive to construct something that invites you to interpret what is truly behind. What interests me in mixing the archive, something that has a texture and is very photographic, with drawings and puppets, is that we recognise some traces and we identify real buildings and places, but without making it a reconstruction of something, so I just keep some things that are connected to the true existence of something, like material anchor points. I've been working on this for four years now, but production is very difficult and hyper-expensive, and I'm relying on grants.

**I.E.M.:** Do you feel that the feminist mission that the novel *A Costa dos Murmúrios* had changed over time in your film, in the representation of it in your work?

**M.C.:** I think that I kept a lot of Lídia Jorge's feminist point of view of, like the tough, aggressive and toxic way that men related to women. I had to exclude some parts because a book is always a more extensive form. When people first saw the film, they thought that the men were portrayed very negatively, but now I don't hear this remark anymore. Now people look at the toxicity between the relationships and they understand that the film is a lot about this that we don't have that much gender relativism anymore. At the time, being a feminist was something very strange, a powerful statement associated either with being gay or being extreme, but now we more and more understand the novel and the relationships it portrays, and I think this is a good thing. But nowadays I don't see this feminist angle in films as much, apart from this recent documentary I saw by Pedro Filipe Marques, whom I work with in editing. It was shown at Doc Lisboa and it takes place at a football club in Porto, and the whole film is about these two women in their 50s and 60s that work there but they never leave the place where they are, and men walk past them like they didn't exist at all, they're close to pushing

them. And I thought this was the most feminist film I saw because it's always about them, but they don't exist at all! So sometimes I see more feminist films done not by women, but by men.

**I.E.M.:** Does the fact that you're a woman play a role in your work?

**M.C.:** Of course, it plays an important role. I don't know if there are some generational differences. A few days ago, a colleague who is doing her PhD sent me a photo of us two from twenty years ago. And I remember very well that day – it was Sunday, we were driving a jeep in the far north of the country, in a Trás-os-Montes, and each time we stopped the car to eat, men would get very aggressive, calling after us... All we could do was to fight with them or just leave! And we couldn't go anywhere all day, we had to buy something in a small supermarket to eat. I remember this very well, *piropos* as we call them, but now it's an aggression! Even if I've always been very good at working with men, the strange thing is that I avoid to identify this kind of stigma of being a woman, for me it was natural and I didn't think it was different because I was a woman. But now when I think about the past I suffered a lot in the beginning (I started working when I was 17) when I was travelling across the country to take photos of factories alone. And of course, it's not only this question of aggression, not wanting to be identified as a woman, but when I was young I was protected from this that is always around you. There was a gap between the world of men and that of women until very late, like in the car men sitting at the front and women at the back. And also, in the conversations, with women going to the kitchen and men talking separately. I don't see this as a drama, I think it's very sweet, but it is what it is; and these boxes where they put people I think that it contributes a lot to the necessity to look for an answer when the two worlds are separate, with the constant division between men and women. It was a masculine profession, but also very nice.

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