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Imperial remains: Post-colonialism in Portuguese literature and cinema

ABSTRACT

Post-1974 literature and cinema have contributed to a reflection about the Colonial War and, more broadly, about Portuguese colonialism. Novels like António Lobo Antunes's South of Nowhere, Lídia Jorge's The Murmuring Coast, Isabela Figueiredo's Notebook of Colonial Memories, and Dulce Maria Cardoso's The Return, as well as films such as João Botelho's A Portuguese Goodbye, Teresa Villaverde's Coming of Age, António Pedro Vasconcelos's The Imortals, and Manoel de Oliveira's, Non, or the Vain Glory of Command, to name but a few, deal with the country's long colonial past, try to come to terms with the heritage of colonial violence and reflect upon Portugal's postcolonial identity. In this paper, I argue that this literary and cinematic production mirrors what I have identified as the four modes of being post-colonial in contemporary Portuguese culture: (1) Nostalgia with bad conscience; (2) Trauma; (3) Melancholia; (4) Trace.

IMPERIAL RESIDUES

Portugal's former colonial empire and, in particular, the former colonies in Africa feature prominently in contemporary Portuguese culture.¹ From the art world, encompassing literature, film and the fine arts, to the media, including television series and newspaper articles, the country's imperial past remains

KEYWORDS

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1. In this article, I focus almost exclusively on Portugal's ties with its former African colonies. The complex relationship between Portugal and Brazil has been studied elsewhere at length, including in Eduardo Lourenço's *A Nau de Ícaro – Imagem e Miragem da Lusofonia/Icaro's*

Vessel – Image and Mirage of Lusophonia and in Fernando Arenas's *Utopias of Otherness*.

2. This cultural production is not limited to reflections on the Portuguese colonial past and the country's postcolonial present by Portuguese authors, film-makers and intellectuals. Contemporary lusophone African literature, music and even film are also widely disseminated in Portugal, thanks in part to a sizeable population of African descent living in the country.
3. As Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses (2005) points out, the colonial rhetoric of the New State followed in the footsteps of colonial discourses from the First Republic, which, in turn, were indebted to nineteenth-century debates on the subject (23).

the subject of heated debate. Following the 1974 Carnation Revolution and the independence of most colonies shortly thereafter, the nation went through a period of relative silence on colonialism, partly as a result of a bloody colonial war, the scars of which Portuguese society was trying hard to forget. The work of authors and film-makers such as António Lobo Antunes, Lídia Jorge, João Botelho, Manoel de Oliveira and António-Pedro Vasconcelos contributed to breaking the taboo that surrounded colonization and initiated a discussion about Portugal's imperial legacy that is still going on today.² Postcolonial studies is now a well-established field in Portuguese universities, with growing numbers of scholars adopting a postcolonial prism in their research on Portuguese history and national identity, and with the publication of numerous books and journal articles, as well as the organization of countless conferences and conference panels on this topic.

It suffices to consider the impact of movies such as *The Murmuring Coast/A Costa dos Murmúrios*, Margarida Cardoso (2004), an adaptation of Lídia Jorge's homonymous novel, and of books like *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais/Notebook of Colonial Memories* (Isabel Figueiredo 2009) and *O Retorno/The Return* (Dulce Maria Cardoso 2011) to realize that the memory of the former African colonies remains indelibly imprinted in Portuguese culture. Be it in political discourses about a 'lusophone' (Portuguese-speaking) society of nations that gained legal status in 1996 with the creation of the Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries), or in the variety of artistic productions about the colonial past, the empire remains a cornerstone of the Portuguese imaginary. Portugal is, in this sense, truly postcolonial, in that much of its culture, one might say its very identity, results from a struggle to come to terms with its postcolonial condition. Being *post*-colonial does not have here only a temporal meaning; in other words, it does not simply refer to the period of time that comes after the end of the colonial empire. Rather, it also signifies the myriad social, economic and even psychological consequences of the loss of the overseas territories. To put it more pointedly, Portugal is *post*-colonial because, in its social, cultural and political discourses, it often presents itself as embodying what was left behind after the dismemberment of the empire. The country sees itself as a residue, a remainder of its imperial past.

Why this focus on the postcolonial condition? There is a wide variety of explanations, ranging from economics to demographics. One is the large number of settlers who returned to the nation once the African colonies became independent, which corresponded, according to some estimates, to roughly ten per cent of the overall Portuguese population at the time. The arrival of many lusophone African immigrants to the country from the 1980s onwards also lent visibility to this postcolonial condition and gave rise to a vibrant Portuguese-African subculture. Furthermore, the strong economic ties binding Portugal to its former colonies have contributed to an ongoing cultural exchange between these regions. Yet these reasons alone do not fully justify the centrality of the empire in the definition of contemporary Portuguese identity. I argue that the root of the Portuguese fixation on its postcolonial condition, a situation whereby the country perceives itself as a remnant, a footnote to a colonial text that no longer exists, has to be traced back to the role played by the empire in the nation's political life from the nineteenth century onwards and, in particular, during the Estado Novo (New State) dictatorship.³ In what follows, I briefly sketch the ways in which Salazarism deployed the empire to justify the existence of the regime. The

understanding of the fetishistic attitude towards the overseas territories will serve as a background to my subsequent analysis of how the imperial legacy has been inherited, reworked and transformed after the end of the New State to adjust to the country's new postcolonial circumstances.

THE EMPIRE AS A FETISH

During the New State, the Portuguese-African colonies were regarded as a heritage to be preserved. Salazarist propaganda produced not only a number of texts but also several films about the nation's overseas territories, which highlighted the benefits of Portuguese colonization both for the mainland and for Africa. The novel *Feitiço do Império/Spell of the Empire* by journalist Joaquim Pereira Mota Júnior is a case in point. The book won a contest organized by the Agência Geral das Colónias (General Agency for the Colonies) to select the best screenplay for a film about the empire. The narrative was adapted to the screen and made into a film directed by António Lopes Ribeiro and released in 1940.

The film *Spell of the Empire* epitomizes the main tenets of the New State colonial rhetoric. I have discussed the film at length elsewhere, so I will not go into an in-depth analysis here.⁴ What I would like to foreground for the purposes of this article is the emphasis on the large size of the colonized regions, which would supplement the comparatively small geographical boundaries of Portugal. The film includes numerous shots – often aerial images – of the vast expanses of Africa, as if to bring home to viewers the immensity of the landscape. The magnificence of the colonies, in turn, changes one's perception of European Portugal, which appears as more attractive and desirable when seen in the light of the overseas territories.

The protagonist of *Spell* is a Luso-American called Luís Morais (Luís de Campos), the son of a Portuguese emigrant who made his fortune in Boston. Luís travels to Portugal on the advice of his father and is disappointed in Lisbon when he first arrives in the city. It is only when he comes to the capital for a second time after a prolonged stay in Africa that this perception changes. All he had found dull and unappealing in his first visit now seems to be different, mediated by his passage through the empire: 'Lisbon stood in front of me, beautiful as ever. Now that I know our Africa better, the city looked bigger, more important' ('diante de mim estava Lisboa, bonita como nunca. Agora que conheço a nossa África, parecia-me maior, mais importante'; Ribeiro 1983: 391). Size is paramount in Luís's concerns. He points out that Lisbon appears to him to be not only more beautiful but also bigger and more important after his stay in the colonies. I interpret this emphasis on the size of the overseas territories, which can be found not only in literature and film but also in the discourse of the main political leaders of the New State, as a sign of a fetishization of the empire. Again, I developed this argument elsewhere and will therefore just replay its basic structure here, as it is pertinent to the understanding of the postcolonial juncture in Portugal and to the interpretation of Portuguese literature and cinema dealing with the colonial past.⁵

During the New State, the empire functioned as a fetish that replaced something lost, namely the grandeur of Portugal as a European political and economic power and as the last bastion of the values of western civilization. Following the theory of the fetish developed in Freudian psychoanalysis, the fetishized object both stands for something that is missing and signals the inability to come to terms with this absence (Freud 2001a). Translated into

4. See Chapter 6 of *Portuguese Film 1930–1960: The Staging of the New State Regime* for an in-depth discussion of the fetishization of the Portuguese empire in New State political discourse and in the regime's propaganda cinema.
5. Again, see Chapter 6 of *Portuguese Film 1930–1960: The Staging of the New State Regime*.

the Portuguese colonial setting, this means that Salazarism insisted on disavowing Portugal's peripheral economic and political role in world affairs and covered up the country's insignificance by resorting to a fetishized overseas territory. This fetishization of the empire, to which the images shown in propaganda films greatly contributed, was indispensable for the rule of Salazar, who was able to rationalize the lack of political freedom in the country by presenting himself as the guardian of a great nation, a larger-than-life, idealized Portugal that included the mainland and the colonies. The crumbling of this fetishized empire with the beginning of the Colonial War in 1961 sealed the fate of the regime, which could no longer justify its existence in the context of a nation reduced to its modest European borders.

PORTUGAL'S COLONIAL HERITAGE IN LITERATURE AND FILM

The independence of the last Portuguese colonies in Africa, which spelled the end of a colonial period that lasted for more than five centuries, necessarily entailed a profound transformation of the fetishized image of the empire that had been in place during the New State. What are the different modes of depicting the former empire in Portuguese literature and cinema after 1974? In other words, what are the aesthetic responses to the postcolonial condition in Portuguese cultural productions? Or, better still, are Portuguese literature and film contributing to the creation of a de-fetishized image of the country's former colonies and, if so, in which ways?

We can identify at least four paths adopted by Portuguese literature and cinema in the last three decades when it comes to representing the former overseas territories. Needless to say, these different categories are not airtight compartments but rather trends found in most works of literature and films addressing this theme. By adopting one or sometimes several of these strategies, these books and films continue to engage in a dialogue with the heritage of the former empire.

Nostalgia with a bad conscience is one of the modes of being postcolonial in contemporary Portuguese culture. This entails, on the one hand, an acknowledgement of the violence perpetrated by Portuguese colonialism both against the colonized, whose lands were seized and who were enslaved or forced into hard labour, and, more recently, vis-à-vis the Portuguese themselves, drafted by the New State government to fight in a colonial war that, as most realized, was a lost cause. On the other hand, this position involves a shamefaced nostalgia for the country's former greatness as a colonial power, which cannot be tainted by the individual episodes of brutality that punctuated the nation's long colonial history. Manoel de Oliveira's film *Non, ou a Vã Glória de Mandar/ Non, or the Vain Glory of Command* (1990) and his most recent *Painéis de São Vicente de Fora, Visão Poética/Panels of São Vicente de Fora, A Poetic Vision* (2010) are good examples of this kind of nostalgia that can be found both in cultural productions and in public discourse.

In *Non*, there is a clear condemnation of the Colonial War, which is juxtaposed with other military defeats in the history of Portugal. We witness, for instance, the murder of Viriato, a mythical Lusitanian hero who symbolizes resistance against the Roman Empire in the territory that later came to be Portugal. Viriato was betrayed, so the legend goes, by a friend who had been bought off by the Romans. Another defeat portrayed in the film is that suffered by the Portuguese army in the Battle of Alcácer-Quibir, in the course of which King Sebastian was killed, a death resulting in the nation's loss of sovereignty

to Spain in 1580. The Colonial War would therefore follow in the footsteps of a long tradition of large-scale military debacles. This reading is confirmed by the death of the protagonist (Luís Miguel Cintra), a soldier who entertains his comrades-in-arms by narrating famous episodes of Portuguese history. The film ends when he passes away on the emblematic day of 25 April 1974, after suffering severe injuries in battle.

Yet this negative view of Portuguese military undertakings has an underside in Oliveira's film. The film revels in battle scenes, especially the Battle of Alcácer-Quibir, which was painstakingly recreated. The plot emphasizes the courage of war heroes such as King Sebastian or the unknown soldier in the Battle of Toro, who holds the Portuguese flag in his mouth after the Spanish enemies had cut off one of his hands, and then the other hand. *Non* presents Portuguese colonization in the light of supposedly universal principles such as bravery and patriotism that would stand above and beyond the cruelty of conflicts. Portuguese war heroes embody the values of integrity and fidelity to their ideals brought to remote areas of the globe by the country's colonizing project. This understanding of Portugal's imperialism leads the protagonist to highlight his nation's 'gift' to the world in discovering new territories and in leaving behind a rich cultural legacy in overseas regions. The film thus separates the violence of colonial rule, an example of which would be the Colonial War, from the benefits of Portuguese civilization and nostalgically bemoans the decline of the latter.

Oliveira's short film *Panels of São Vicente de Fora* offers another example of this conception of the empire. The film stages the scene of one of the most famous artworks of the Portuguese Renaissance: a group of six paintings by Nuno Gonçalves depicting a cross-section of Portuguese society in the fifteenth century. The film is set in the Lisbon Museum of Ancient Art, where the panels are housed. The paintings come alive as actors play some of the main figures represented on canvas, such as Henry the Navigator (Diogo Dória) or Saint Vincent (Ricardo Trêpa). The exact interpretation of the panels has long been a matter of debate, but they are certainly a celebration of the social groups that spearheaded the Portuguese voyages to Africa, Asia and the Americas, paving the way to the colonization of these regions: the higher nobility, especially Henry the Navigator, who appears in one of the central panels; the lower nobility, represented in the panel of the knights; the clergy, who provided an ideological justification for colonialism as a way to spread Christianity; and the people, portrayed in particular in the panel of the fishermen, many of whom manned the first ships that sailed overseas.

By choosing to set to cinema such an emblematic art piece, Oliveira was again nostalgically going back to the early stages of Portuguese imperialism, a time considered still today to be the golden age of the country's history.⁶ The film-maker's statement that the main characters in the paintings and in the film, namely Saint Vincent and Henry the Navigator, 'share the same desire for justice, fraternity and peace between people, beyond matters of race and religion' (*'partilham de um mesmo desejo de justiça, fraternidade e paz entre os povos, fora de questões relacionadas com raça e religião'*; quoted in Paixão) evinces a naïve understanding of the historical period in question, when plunder was regarded as war compensation, slavery was widespread and religious conflicts were rife.

Oliveira differentiates in *Panels*, as in *Non*, between a romanticized, heroic view of the Portuguese imperial enterprise as a vehicle for the dissemination of freedom, justice and peace and the nitty-gritty reality of colonization. The

6. As Oliveira mentions in an interview, 'the Panels of Saint Vincent have always been recognized as the most important representation of Portuguese society of the time, when Portuguese navigators sailed through the oceans of the five continents, opening up the planet and making new places and people known' ('os Painéis de São Vicente foram desde sempre reconhecidos como a mais importante representação da sociedade portuguesa da época, quando os navegadores portugueses viajavam pelos oceanos dos cinco continentes, desbravando o planeta e dando a conhecer novos lugares e povos'; quoted in Paixão).

7. See 'Specters of Colonial Violence: The Archive in António Lobo Antunes's *South of Nowhere*' for a detailed analysis of the novel's representation of memory and the archive in relation to the Portuguese colonial war.

process of de-fetishizing the empire therefore remains incomplete, given that an idealized view of Portuguese culture, encapsulated in the earlier-mentioned values, continues to be fetishized, actually replacing the material reality of the imperial fetish. In other words, what now tries to compensate for the reduced geographical size of Portugal and the country's relative political and economic insignificance is a fetishized image of Portuguese culture and values as the main embodiments of the Portuguese 'spirit'. In the aftermath of the empire, remnants of Portuguese civilization have been left behind in the overseas regions and are nostalgically perceived as the positive heritage of colonization.

A second way of representing the former empire in lusophone postcolonial literature and cinema falls under the sign of *trauma*. Several books and films dating from after 1974 have focused on traumatized soldiers who, having fought in the Colonial War, returned home profoundly transformed by the violence they witnessed, by the atrocities they committed and by their very survival when so many of their fellow comrades died in combat. António Lobo Antunes's novel *Os Cus de Judas/South of Nowhere* published in 1979, is one of the first literary works to address this traumatic experience. In the text, an army doctor narrates his war experience in a long monologue, in the course of which he obsessively returns to some of the most disturbing moments of his life as a soldier. The book is composed of chapters ordered following the letters of the alphabet, a structure that stands for the protagonist's effort to organize his memories and create an archive of the spectres from the war period haunting his present life. This archival drive is not a way to bury past recollections. Rather, it functions like a prosthetic memory that helps both the narrator and Portuguese society as a whole to live with its imperial ghosts.⁷

Films such as Teresa Villaverde's *A Idade Maior/Alex* (1991) and António-Pedro Vasconcelos's *Os Imortais/The Immortals* (2003) also portray the predicament of soldiers returning home after the war. Both movies depict a soldier – played by Joaquim de Almeida – suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and unable to integrate into Portuguese society after leaving the war zone in Africa. Faced with the inability to come to terms with their war memories and incapable of establishing meaningful social ties with family members and friends who do not understand what combat in the colonies was like, the protagonists end up committing suicide in the final moments of the films.

The Colonial War is both present and absent from these films: the war scenario drives the plot but war scenes are conspicuously missing, with the exception of a few brief flashbacks in *The Immortals*. The films faithfully reproduce the structure of trauma, traumatic events being characterized, precisely, by the inability to represent or mediate them symbolically. The most disturbing moments undergone by the soldiers come back to them in a distorted, disorganized manner and lead them to adopt an erratic, often violent behaviour. Unable to incorporate what they experienced into a narrative framework and thus to work through trauma and to start the process of psychological healing, the soldiers remain trapped in the web of brutality woven during the time they fought in Africa.

It is telling that many recent books and films about the empire have focused on the Colonial War and its implications both for the soldiers and for their families. To be sure, the war had a lasting impact on an entire generation. However, this emphasis on the long and painful process of separation of Portugal from its empire in contemporary cultural productions also signals the nation's difficulty in coming to terms with the repercussions of the end of colonial rule, as well as its problems in finding its footing without the crutch

of the fetishized empire. As Freud points out, the exposure of the fetish as an imaginary object can be extremely traumatic. More often than not, the fetishist holds on to his or her fetish, unable to fully accept its idealized character. The fetish then coexists with the knowledge of reality, in an uncomfortable, pathological attempt to reconcile fact and fiction (Freud 2001a: 154–57). The end of the fetishized empire after the Carnation Revolution was a traumatic event for Portuguese society as a whole, which is still grappling with its imperial identity after the independence of the country's last colonies.

Melancholia is a third mode of being postcolonial in contemporary Portugal. The fetishized image of the empire in place before 1974 has prevented Portuguese society from coming to terms with the end of colonial rule through the regular process of mourning. As Freud points out, melancholia consists in the inability to free oneself from a lost object, which is pathologically incorporated into the psyche of the melancholic person (Freud 2001b). Extrapolating from Freud's theory, a melancholic approach to the former overseas territories would entail a failed process of mourning for the lost empire and the attempt to integrate its idealized image in contemporary life, a condition that comes through in several recent novels and films.

João Botelho's movie *Um Adeus Português/A Portuguese Goodbye* (1986) focuses on an incomplete process of mourning, translated into the fact that neither the father nor the wife of a soldier killed in Africa ever visited his grave in the twelve years since he died.⁸ The repression of memories from the Colonial War and the failure to accept the loss of those who died in combat go along with the rejection of the post-imperial condition as a whole. The film depicts a stagnated postcolonial society, a situation eloquently portrayed in a dialogue between the widow and the parents of the dead soldier:

Mãe: Se ele [o soldado] não tivesse morrido, como é que estaria?/ Mother: If he [the soldier] had not died, how would he be now?

Viúva: Estava como nós, assim./ Widow: He would be like us, like this.

Pai: Nós não estamos mal, não temos muito de que nos queixar./ Father: We are not too bad; we don't have much to complain about.

Viúva: Nem muito nem pouco./ Widow: Not much but also not little.

Neither happy nor very unhappy, the Portuguese are portrayed as inhabiting a limbo, leading an enervated and resigned half-life in the wake of the end of the empire.

Unlike *Alex* and *The Immortals*, Botelho's film is partially set in Africa and depicts a military expedition that resulted in the killing of one of the soldiers by enemy fire. This strand of the narrative, filmed in black and white, is interspersed with sequences in colour portraying the encounter between the dead soldier's elderly parents, his widow and his younger brother Alexandre (Fernando Heitor) twelve years after his death. Even though the two actions run parallel, it is never clearly stated that they are related, indicating that what took place in the past remains divorced from the present. The desire to repress the memory of the events surrounding the Colonial War is mentioned by Alexandre, who comments that people look away in shame when he talks about the death of his brother in combat. He tells his girlfriend that, when asked, he now simply says that his brother died in an accident in order to avoid embarrassment, to which she replies '[i]t was such as long time ago',

8. This situation changes in the end of the film when the father finally goes to the cemetery, thus offering a glimmer of hope for the beginning of the country's reconciliation with its past.

implying that what happened in Africa is no longer relevant and should better be forgotten.

Dulce Maria Cardoso's most recent novel *O Retorno/The Return* (2011) also evinces signs of postcolonial melancholia. The narrative depicts the separation of a family of Portuguese settlers after Angola's independence. The father is arrested by the Angolan army under the (false) accusation of being a criminal, while the mother and their two teenage children fly back to Lisbon. Together with countless other returnees (*retornados*), the family is housed in a hotel in Estoril, where they wait for the father to join them. The latter functions as a symbol for the family's comfortable former life in Angola, which contrasts sharply with their dreary, destitute present. Just like other returnees clinging to the colonial past in Africa, the mother and the two children refuse to believe that the father could be dead. His arrival in Lisbon in the end of the novel, which happens thanks to an unexplained *deus ex machina*, allows for a somewhat contrived happy ending that diverges from the gloomy mood permeating the rest of the narrative.

Both *A Portuguese Goodbye* and *The Return* point to Portugal's colonial melancholia, that is to the nation's failure to accept the loss of its former empire. Instead of going through the regular process of mourning, the country engaged in a melancholic process of identification with the lost object: the former overseas territories. These are now sublimated and transformed, for instance, into the immaterial notion of pan-Portugueseness or Lusophonia present both in cultural and in political discourses. We witness an obsessive, melancholic desire to integrate the sublimated empire into Portuguese contemporary life, in a process that has affinities with the feeling of nostalgia described earlier. Concretely, this melancholia entails an emphasis on the ties binding the former overseas provinces and Portugal and the incorporation of the representatives of these regions – the lusophone African and Brazilian immigrants living in the country – into Portuguese society.

A film such as Pedro Costa's *Casa de Lava/Down to Earth* (1995) shows the failure to sever ties with the empire and therefore to go through the normal process of mourning for this loss through its two female protagonists. Both Edite (Edith Scob) and Mariana (Inês de Medeiros), who represent two generations of Portuguese women, leave their homeland for Cape Verde. The first followed her husband, imprisoned in a concentration camp for political prisoners built in the area by the Portuguese dictatorship. The second worked as a nurse accompanying an injured Cape Verdean construction worker who is flown back to Fogo Island after suffering an accident in Lisbon. Once in Cape Verde, the two women get trapped in the sociocultural environment of Fogo and establish ambiguous ties with the local inhabitants that mirror the complex relationship between post-dictatorship Portugal and the nation's former colonies.

Costa's trilogy about the Fontainhas neighbourhood in Lisbon, home to a large number of African immigrants from the former overseas regions, was produced as a result of the director's first encounter with Cape Verdean culture when shooting *Down to Earth*. Rather than dwelling on melancholia, however, the films from this trilogy highlight the paradoxes of a melancholic outlook on the past. *No Quarto de Vanda/In Vanda's Room* (2000) and *Juventude em Marcha/Colossal Youth* (2006) dwell on the utter failure of Portuguese society to integrate African immigrants, even as it keeps colonial melancholia alive. Costa's focus on immigrants from the former empire and his realistic portrayal of their derelict lives in the old metropolis weave a poignant critique

of the fetishized image of Portugal's former glory as a colonizer and represent a decisive step forward in the process of imperial de-fetishization.

In its portrayal of the contradictions inherent in colonial melancholy, Costa's work resonates with *Terra Estrangeira/Foreign Land* (1996) by Brazilian film-makers Walter Salles and Daniela Thomas. The film dwells on the underside of the idealized notion of a pan-Portuguese culture based upon a shared language and history. It represents Portuguese society from the perspective of the former colonies and focuses on the racism and discrimination encountered by Brazilian and Portuguese-speaking African immigrants in Portugal. Sérgio Tréfaut's *Lisboetas/Lisboners* (2004) also emphasizes the pitfalls of melancholic discourse in its depiction of different immigrant groups living in Lisbon, many of them from the former empire. Rui Simões documentary *Ilha da Cova da Moura/Island of Cova da Moura* (2010), on the other hand, paints a somewhat rosier picture of melancholic incorporation, focusing on the immigrant African community living in the neighbourhood of Cova da Moura, where it recreated cultural and economic structures typical of Africa at the heart of Lisbon.

A fourth mode of dealing with the postcolonial condition in Portuguese contemporary literature and cinema is *trace*. I include in this category books and films that deal with the tensions inherent in the legacy of the empire and with the traces left by Portuguese colonization in the former overseas territories, all the while avoiding a discourse of cultural universality. The earlier-mentioned *Fontainhas* trilogy, directed by Pedro Costa, could be interpreted as an effort to represent the marks inscribed in Portuguese urban geography, demography and culture by the process of the disintegration of the empire after 1974, at the same time as it embodies a critique of colonial melancholia.

Margarida Cardoso's *Natal 71/Christmas 71* (1999) is another example of the attempt to represent in cinema the traces left by the colonial empire in contemporary Portugal. The documentary comprised interviews with those who participated in the production of a record with popular Portuguese songs, created as a Christmas present for the soldiers fighting in the Colonial War in 1971. Cardoso intersperses these interviews with footage from the time, including that of soldiers receiving the gift and of Cecília Supico Pinto, head of the Movimento Nacional Feminino (National Women's Movement) and the main promoter of this initiative, as well as with a long conversation with her father, who was an army officer. Viewers are informed that the film-maker herself lived in Africa as a child, as her mother accompanied her father to Mozambique during a period when he was stationed in the region. The film endeavours to shed light on a minor episode related to the war, at the same time as it explores personal memories. The director tries to make sense of a period in her life that is very seldom mentioned in her family but which, in her words, determines much of the present behaviour of her relatives. The movie can be seen as an effort to work through the trauma of the Colonial War, to 'understand' what went on, as the film-maker puts it, and to document the 'traces of those sad, oppressed years'.

Catarina Mourão's documentary *A Dama de Chandor/The Lady of Chandor* (1998) focuses instead on the traces left by Portuguese colonization in Goa. The movie depicts the everyday life of Aida Meneses de Bragança, an elderly Portuguese-Indian woman living in an old colonial-style mansion in Goa, and her mixed feelings towards Portugal. A large part of Aida's time is devoted to taking care of the house where she now lives alone, which became an emblem of her own cultural heritage. Even though the building stands as a material trace of the Portuguese Empire and Aida as an example of the spread of

9. See 'Sob o Signo de Mnemósine. Memória e Olvido em *A Costa dos Murmúrios*' for an analysis of the interplay between memory and forgetting, and the representation of history in Lídia Jorge's novel.

Portuguese language and culture to faraway regions thanks to colonization, the film avoids a nostalgic look back to the time when Goa was one of Portugal's overseas territories. The portrayal of a wedding towards the end of the documentary, with its blend of European and Indian elements, shows how Portuguese-Indians have adapted to their mixed heritage. Coming from a family that fought against the Portuguese dictatorship, Aida, as well as her Portuguese-Indian friend who works as a teacher, does not idealize Portuguese colonialism and seems, all in all, to feel at home in postcolonial India.

More recently, the film *Tabu/Taboo* (2012) by Miguel Gomes underlines the continuity between the colonial past and Portugal's postcolonial present, as it narrates the adventures of an old lady during her youth in Africa. The film begins with a pastiche of a love story and then proceeds to rewrite this initial drama, a strategy that lends the plot an ironic undertone, therefore rescuing it from colonial nostalgia. In spite of the irony, this is a film about Africa that depicts virtually no African characters, as it focuses on the perspective of the colonizer. This absence can, again, be understood ironically as a sign of the colonizers' narcissism. However, *Taboo* never makes this interpretation unequivocal, and viewers are left to wonder whether the film's reiteration of colonial stereotypes is intended as a criticism or whether it is a mere replay of the old colonial mentality.

In the field of literature, Lídia Jorge's novel *A Costa dos Murmúrios/The Murmuring Coast* (1988) also addresses the traces left behind by colonization in Portugal. The book reflects upon the interaction between memory and forgetting, as it juxtaposes an idealized account of a night spent in Mozambique's colonial capital Lourenço Marques with a woman's very different version of the same events. The novel can be read as an indictment of Portuguese society, which created an embellished image of the country's colonization by deleting from public discourse all negative aspects of the nation's imperial rule.⁹ Isabela Figueiredo's *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais/Notebook of Colonial Memories* (2009) is one of the novels from the new millennium that follow in the footsteps of Jorge's narrative, in that it strives to debunk myths associated with Portugal's supposedly benevolent colonialism and present a de-idealized image of the former empire.

Portuguese literature and cinema produced after the 1974 Carnation Revolution have adopted heterogeneous approaches to the topic of colonialism. The novels and films mentioned earlier reveal that Portugal's process of decolonization remains incomplete, given that the independence of the African colonies was not always followed by a reconfiguration of the relationship between former colonizers and colonized. Ranging from colonial nostalgia to the trauma of the Colonial War and of the loss of the empire, through the contradictions of melancholic incorporation and through an emphasis on the traces left behind after the end of centuries of colonization, Portuguese literature and cinema offer us conflicting images of a country faced with the task of 'decolonizing the mind' (Thiong'o 1986) and of creating a non-fetishized representation of its former empire.

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