

## THE *MESTIÇO* IN THE “URGENCY OF EXISTENCE”. *ESSA DAMA BATE BUÉ!* (2018), BY YARA MONTEIRO

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### ABSTRACT

In today's Lusophone cultural panorama (2010–2020), several artists of the generation of postmemory (Hirsch, 2016), heirs of the colonial trauma, have been deconstructing or repairing misconceptions, injustices and inequalities stemming from the colonial system. A group of researchers also fight for fairer memory policies to repair how Europe thought, classified and imagined the distant worlds. Drawing on Yara Monteiro's (1979–) debut novel, *Essa Dama Bate Bué!* (2018), this article aims to analyse how the postcolonial and *mestiço* condition of the Lusophone “generation of postmemory” is envisioned. Memories allow inquiring about the colonial past and the roots and cultural heritage of the following generations in “between-places” (Bhabha, 1994/1998), such as the *mestizo*. Yara Monteiro opens the discussion on the trauma, miscegenation, humankind, and even a possible universality or a historical reparation, seeking to normalise the other side of miscegenation in the European discourse. The process of identifying the *mestiço* is still problematic today and therefore requires an “urgency of existence”.

### KEYWORDS

generation of postmemory, miscegenation, historical reparation, Yara Monteiro

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## O *MESTIÇO* NA “URGÊNCIA DE EXISTÊNCIA”. *ESSA DAMA BATE BUÉ!* (2018), DE YARA MONTEIRO

### RESUMO

No atual panorama cultural lusófono (2010–2020), vários artistas da geração da pós-memória (Hirsch, 2016), herdeiros do trauma colonial, têm vindo a desconstruir ou a reparar equívocos, injustiças e desigualdades consequentes do sistema colonial, assim como há um conjunto de investigadores que lutam por políticas da memória mais justas, de modo a reparar a Europa na forma como pensou, classificou e imaginou os mundos distantes. A partir do romance de estreia de Yara Monteiro (1979–), *Essa Dama Bate Bué!* (2018), este artigo pretende analisar a forma como a condição pós-colonial e mestiça da “geração da pós-memória” lusófona é perspectivada. As memórias permitem indagar sobre o passado colonial e sobre as raízes e heranças culturais das gerações seguintes situadas “entre-lugares” (Bhabha, 1994/1998), como é exemplo o *mestiço*. Yara Monteiro enceta a discussão sobre o trauma, a mestiçagem, a humanidade, e ainda sobre uma possível universalidade ou uma possível reparação histórica, procurando normalizar no discurso europeu o outro lado da mestiçagem. Verifica-se que o processo de identificação do *mestiço* é ainda hoje problemático, reclamando por isso uma “urgência de existência”.

## PALAVRAS-CHAVE

geração da pós-memória, mestiçagem, reparação histórica, Yara Monteiro

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Drawing on the reading of *Essa Dama Bate Bué!* (This Woman Kicks Ass!) by Yara Monteiro (2018), we intend to explore the discourses of postcolonial contemporaneity that analyse the redefinitions of identities of individuals "between-places" (Bhabha, 1994/1998), who have suffered an individual or collective traumas for being among other identities.

This analysis is based on the European decolonial turning point (Bancel, 2019) as a political and social project and challenging the official cultural memories and the archives or testimonial narratives, based on a reading intertwined in postcolonial, representations and memory studies. The aim is to verify how culture and cultural discourses incorporate, interpret and represent the colonial past in the "time of now" (Bhabha, 1994/1998), to pave the way for a "historical repair" towards a collective awareness of an "urgency of existence" of the depreciated and discriminated identities, in particular the *mestiço*.

In Portugal, the last decade has seen several works produced in different areas of knowledge, focusing on the search for an understanding of the colonial past. One example is *Este País Não Existe. Textos Contra Ideias-Feitas* (This Country Does Not Exist. Texts Against Made-Up Ideas) was compiled by Bruno Monteiro and Nuno Domingos (2015a). It includes texts that "allow us to think the country differently than the interpretations that insist on forgetting experiences, processes and current dynamics" (B. Monteiro & Domingos, 2015b, p. 7), which perpetuate maladjusted ideas about how Portugal and its history are represented. Thus, this collective work seeks to support "a responsible intervention of citizens" by offering them tools for a reasoned interpretation of the past (B. Monteiro & Domingos, 2015b, p. 20). In the chapter "Defesa da 'Correção Política' em Tempos de Penúria Económica e Intelectual" (Defending 'Political Correctness' in Times of Economic and Intellectual Misery), Manuela Ribeiro Sanches (2015) warns of "the eloquent silence about the colonial past, the memory of slavery, of which Portugal was not only a pioneer but one of the longest and most persistent protagonists, with Catholic blessing" (p. 124). She calls for a public debate on Portuguese colonisation and recommends following the public debate in other European countries, such as Germany or France, where the colonial past sparks discussions and critical views around memory and historiography. According to the author, Portugal seems to merely exalt its miscegenation, somehow reviving the "Portugal for the little ones" without questioning what caused it. The "soft narratives" do not allow a permanent questioning, nor an effective awareness of the Portuguese society for the several identification processes coming from, for example, the Portuguese colonisation or the African diaspora. According to Sanches (2015), the risk is that "the descendants of the former 'indigenous' people are even more subordinated and segregated. Therefore, a political correction must be dared" (p. 126). This audacity has yet to arrive because the narratives that form Portuguese national identity are, in the words of Elsa Peralta (2015), "strongly associated with empire,

[and] its end is not remembered in a particularly effusive way" (p. 129). The fast and relatively "successful" decolonisation process and the "return" of over half a million people caused an "alienation towards the fractures left in Portuguese society by this phenomenon in particular and by colonial legacies in general" (Peralta, 2015, p. 131).

In 2017, Elsa Peralta publishes *Lisboa e a Memória do Império. Património, Museus e Espaço Público* (Lisbon and the Memory of Empire. Heritage, Museums and Public Spaces), where she exposes the challenges of the museological integration of memory in public space (the monuments or the statuary) for constructing a national identity: what is remembered or what is forgotten? Peralta (2017) states that the project of the "imperial nation" was thought and "implemented in the imperial centre, never including the subjects of the empire within the nation and excluding them from citizenship rights" (p. 212). The politics of memory marginalised the other side of the history of colonialism that took place "at a great spatial distance" (Peralta, 2017, p. 213). On the other hand, not least important, "colonialism is rarely considered a common European experience and debates about the legacies of the colonial past remain encapsulated within the specificities of each national experience" (Peralta 2017, p. 214).

Currently, and after the paradigmatic studies of memory around the Holocaust, research projects (and social, political and cultural intervention) are proliferating, with multidisciplinary research teams, based on the international study of the memories of the traumatic past. Such as the project *SPEME – Spaces of Memory. Questioning Traumatic Heritage: Spaces of Memory in Europe, Argentina and Colombia* (<https://www.speme.eu/>) concluded in 2020, *REPAIRS – Réparations, Compensations et Indemnités au Titre de L'Esclavage (Europe-Amérique-Afrique) (XIXe-XXIe)* (Reparations, Compensations and Indemnities for Slavery (Europe-America-Africa) (19th-20th century); in progress <https://esclavage-indemnites.fr/>) and, also, in Portugal, the project *MEMOIRS – Filhos de Império e Pós-Memórias Europeias* (MEMOIRS – Children of Empires and European Postmemories; in progress; <https://memoirs.ces.uc.pt/>), led by Margarida Calafate Ribeiro. These projects attempt to repair what Elsa Peralta (2017) calls "hypertrophy of memory", identified in cultural representations of the colonial empire in the city of Lisbon, empty of texts or explanations, as is the case of the Padrão dos Descobrimentos, thus perpetuating the invisibility of the harmful legacies of colonialism (pp. 216, 218).

In France, the historian Pascal Blanchard, also identifying hypertrophy of memory in French society, has stirred the French debate on the colonial past with the collective work *Sexe, Race & Colonies. La Domination des Corps du XVe Siècle à Nos Jours* (Sex, Race and Colonies. The Domination of Bodies From the 15th Century to the Present; Blanchard et al., 2018). One of the contributors, the writer Leïla Slimani, explains the relevance of the publication, even though it may be controversial:

one should not be able to talk about the veil, Trump, sex tourism in the South, the "great replacement", police violence against Blacks, migrants or New Year's Eve 2015 in Cologne without having read the text [*Sex, Race & Colonies*]. (Slimani, 2018, p. 507)

Knowledge about the “other” is scarce because of the fabricated discourse delivered by Europe about the “other”, the “Black”, or “African” for centuries. As Achille Mbembe (2013/2014) points out, how is an “imaginary relationship” with the Black man (African or European, it is not important) still possible in the 21st century? Mbembe (2013/2014), in *A Crítica da Razão Negra* (The Critique of Black Reason), emphasises the problem of the “non-place” of the Black and of Africa, as a sign and evidence of an absence, of a “rest”, that is, “figure, if it is, of the dissimilar, of the difference and the pure power of the negative”, with recourse to processes of fabrication, invention or imagination, in a “primary representation” of the “other” — of the African, the Black or the *mestiço* (pp. 28, 25).

With her life story and work *Essa Dama Bate Bué!* Yara Monteiro opens the discussion on trauma, miscegenation, humankind, and a possible universality or a possible historical reparation of the European discourse in how it thought, classified and imagined the distant worlds.

## 2. YARA MONTEIRO: AFRICAN ROOTS AND EUROPEAN WINGS

The plan is to analyse how the generation of postmemory envisions postcolonialism in Yara Monteiro’s (1979-) debut novel, *Essa Dama Bate Bué!* (2018), drawing on Marianne Hirsch’s (2016) reflections in “Geração da Pós-Memória” (The Generation of Postmemory):

describe[s] how the generation that came after those who witnessed the cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who lived through them before, experiences that they “remember” only through those stories, images and behaviours they grew up with. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively that they seem to constitute memories in their own right. (Hirsch, 2016, p. 303)

In the Portuguese scene, this uprooted generation, and “with an urgency for existence”, could be called the “*bué* generation”, for being contemporary and responsible for the adaptation and introduction of the word “*bué*”, from the quimbundo *mbuwe*, in the informal discourse of the Portuguese language of the youth born from the mid-1970s onwards. The term was first introduced in 2001, in the *Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa Contemporânea da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa* (Contemporary Portuguese Language Dictionary of the Lisbon Academy of Sciences), coordinated by the linguist João Malaca Casteleiro. However, the term was consolidated as a linguistic mark of identity of Lisbon’s suburban culture, by Boss AC, a Portuguese singer with Cape Verdean roots and a pioneer of the hip-hop musical style in Portugal, through the success of the song “*Bué de Rimas*” (A Lot of Rhymes) :

Bué de styles [a lot of styles],  
(Eu tenho) [I have]  
bué de flows [a lot of flows],

<sup>1</sup> Synonymous a lot or in great quantity or intensity.

(Eu tenho) [I have]  
 bué de rimas [a lot of rhymes],  
 (Eu tenho) [I have]  
 Bué [a lot] (BossACTV, 2017, 00:00:19)

The title *Essa Dama Bate Bué!*, on the one hand, draws on that generation (now in their 40s) of an urban and multicultural body, the legacy of the long presence of enslaved Africans in Portugal since the 15th century. Above all, the descendants of the postcolonial African diaspora of the 1980s, who grew up in Portugal and gave rise to the miscegenation of various cultural identities on Portuguese territory. The author explains that "it was an attempt at linguistic occupation, because 'bué' is an Angolan word, and I thought it would be interesting to have that title in a book because it holds a part of my identity" (Wieser, 2020, para. 5). On the other hand, it also represents the culture acquired emotionally through family: identity imprints and memories inherited from a distant "lady", Luanda.

Yara Monteiro, writer and plastic artist, was born in Huambo (Angola) in 1979 but has lived in Portugal since she was 2 years old. Like the novel's protagonist, Vitória, the writer's family moved to Lisbon in the 1980s. At the "5ª Festa do Livro Amadora" (5th Amadora Book Festival), the writer talked with José Eduardo Agualusa, moderated by Tito Couto. She explained how her self-definition of "great-great-granddaughter of slavery, great-granddaughter of miscegenation, granddaughter of independence and daughter of the diaspora" (Henriques, 2019, para. 12) does not necessarily carry the weight of the colonial past. She sees it as part and parcel of her identity history (African/Angolan and European/Portuguese) since her African roots have always been with her through her family's memories, expressed essentially through gastronomy, music, and family stories from a distant Angola. In another interview by Doris Wieser (2020), Yara Monteiro states, "my roots are African, and my wings are European. They are Portuguese" (para. 9). But only during her stay in Brazil she became aware of her blackness and African identity: interestingly, this had not happened in Portugal or Angola.

I don't think it happened in Portugal, especially because of the education I had: the school in Portugal addresses precisely the achievements of navigation, of what you can call "the discoveries", but it doesn't tell the other side of the story. (Wieser, 2020, para. 3)

Yara Monteiro left Angola as a child. The personal memory of her African past lies in the private and family sphere. This memory materialises, as an adult, through the discovery of her traditional Angolan name, an identity element that, due to the consequences of a long-lasting colonial situation, was hidden and was not registered because it caused family and social conflicts:

I also found out that my traditional name is Navitangue, where "vita" means "war". But my grandfather did not want me to be registered with the traditional name. My parents were very young. So when I was born, I caused

some social and conventional problems in my own family. And it was only in this quest for memory that I understood and accepted part of that history of mine. (Wieser, 2020, para. 30)

To rebuild the memory of her cultural roots, she also made use of her grandfather's archive, some "old papers" marked by "silences, gaps and uncertainties", for which she feels emotionally "guardian" (Y. Monteiro, 2020, paras. 3, 6). This testimony inspired the attempt to "deconstruct traumas, reconcile and articulate, through the use of imagination, my place of belonging, this life of mine divided between two continents, trying to give meaning to the nostalgia and suffering felt by the grandfather" (Y. Monteiro, 2020, para. 9). In the postcolonial context, Yara Monteiro is part of a generation — the generation of postmemory — which, on the one hand, lived the consequences of pain and the memories of relatives — colonisation, wars, exile, search for refuge. On the other hand, it seeks to question the past fill gaps and absences to build a becoming and the place of their existence.

In *Essa Dama Bate Bué!*, the concept of "postmemory" materialises in the words of the protagonist Vitória, who bears the memories of those who came first:

not that this story and so many other family memories have ever been told to me. Throughout my childhood, I would listen to the conversations between grandmothers and aunts. I pretended to be distracted, so I could pay attention to what I was hearing.

The thing is that family memory does not belong only to those who lived it. Those born after bear the biography of those who arrived first. I exist in that past, and the memory belongs to me. The Angola I know is the evocation of memories that have not been extinguished by time. It is the utopia of happiness. It is that Angola that my family misses. They recurrently return to them to satisfy the hunger for the urgency of existence. (Y. Monteiro, 2018, pp. 81–82)

In *Essa Dama Bate Bué!*, Yara Monteiro (2018) introduces a novel of self-discovery and a reflection on the reminiscences and remnants of the imperial situation across culture and identity, language, nationality, gender, sexuality, social class or religiosity, as part of the spectrum<sup>2</sup> of "narrative[s] of problematic personal cohesion and social and cultural integration in authors and characters of either first or second-generation 'retornados' (repatriates) ( ... ) or African descendants mostly disseminated in the suburban peripheries of Lisbon" (Pereira, 2019, p. 755). As Margarida Calafate Ribeiro (2019) states in "Viagens da Minha Terra de 'Outros' Ocidentais" (Travels of My Homeland of

<sup>2</sup> With no pretension to be an exhaustive list, here are some examples of the Portuguese-speaking "generation of post-memory": *Os Pretos de Pousaflores* (The Negroes of Pousaflores; 2011), by Aida Gomes, *O Retorno* (The Return; 2012), by Dulce Maria Cardoso, *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais* (Journal of Colonial Memories; 2015), by Isabela Figueiredo, *Esse Cabelo* (That Hair; 2015) and *Luanda, Lisboa, Paraíso* (Luanda, Lisbon, Paradise; 2019), by Djaimilia Pereira de Almeida, *País Fantasma* (Ghost Country; 2015), Vasco Luís Curado, *Debaixo da Nossa Pele - Uma Viagem* (Under Our Skin - A Journey; 2017), by Joaquim Arena, *Também os Brancos Sabem Dançar* (The Whites Can Dance Too; 2017), by Kalaf Epalanga, among others.

"Other" Wests), these narratives "testify to an essential turning point in the postcolonial awareness of the formerly colonial space and the realities lived there as immanent to our identity as Portuguese, as Europeans, and to our personal identities" (p. 294). They emerge as questioning and reconfiguring the cultural identities of the milieu (Bhabha, 1994/1998), illustrated with an excerpt chosen from Miguel Torga's *Diário* (Diary) that Yara Monteiro begins the narrative with: "fate has overdone it with me. It messed up my condition. It planted me here and pulled me out of here. And never again did the roots hold me tightly in any land" (Y. Monteiro, 2018, p. 7).

In the words of Rosangela Sarteschi (2019), writers of African descent "problematise the Portuguese Black cultural identity, its historical and cultural elements, dialogues with Lusitanian tradition and, simultaneously, its link to African heritages" (pp. 285-286). Writers of African descent are "naturally" given the duty and responsibility to create bridges and dialogues between their original culture, the inherited culture and, ultimately, the culture they adopted and desired. It follows a search for cultural roots and in understanding and interpreting a past, which, in this case, is necessarily linked to family or collective trauma: colonisation, emigration or displacement. Thus, the generation of postmemory embarks on "journeys" to locate (or find) itself within the "cultural diversity". According to Birgit Neumann (2016), the contemporary literature has seen "an increasing number ( ... ) of self-reflexive novels, which evidences a growing awareness of the main problems and limits of the appropriation of the past for identity creation" (p. 272), to which Lusophone writers are no stranger.

In work under analysis, *Essa Dama Bate Bué!* the central aspect is the "journey" (inner and physical) as a leitmotif for acknowledging or understanding the colonial past: the journey of the family Queiroz Fonseca from Huambo to Luanda and from there to Lisbon, the journey of Vitória from Lisbon to Luanda and from there to Huambo. It is mainly in the journey back that much of the history building Vitória's identity is recognised, a postcolonial return marked, in turn, by an urgent restlessness about the feeling of belonging to Angola or Portugal.

### 3. *ESSA DAMA BATE BUÉ!*: CULTURAL LEGACIES AND THE URGENCY TO EXIST

The narrative focuses on Vitória Queiroz da Fonseca's urgent feeling of existing. The protagonist was born in Angola in 1978 but was brought up by her grandparents in Portugal, in a quiet village (Malveira), and according to the "good customs" of Portuguese society, defined by Catholic education and religion. Vitória is affected by the trauma of never meeting her mother, Rosa Chitula, an Angolan revolutionary who broke away from her affective family to join a political and guerrilla family. With her wedding fixed, Vitória flees to Angola, searching for her mother and her own cultural identity. She finds a Luanda of the 21st century, a chaotic city of blatant social contrasts, an antagonistic portrait of the family memories absorbed during her life. She meets Romena Cambissa, Zacarias Vindu and Juliana Tijamba, characters who try to make her find the way to her mother or her own path.

Vitória is mixed race: granddaughter of a white grandmother and an assimilated Black grandfather; daughter of a mixed-race mother (and an unknown father). In the 1980s, abandoned by her mother at the age of 2, she left Luanda with her grandparents to flee the civil war. On a TAAG Angola Airlines plane, the family set off for Portugal, where "people exhausted by the uncertainty of the future" also boarded; blurred spectres of what they had been", because, in the words of grandfather António, "the war swallows our dignity before it even touches our skin" (Y. Monteiro, 2018, pp. 22, 17). Between resignation and resilience, the family carries on with life:

- Life goes on, António ( ... )
- It's the only choice we have.
- They're rednecks here. Be discreet.
- I know that I'm not in my country
- A bit racist, but good people.
- Aren't they used to seeing darker people?
- No. But they don't nag. (Y. Monteiro, 2018, pp. 23–24)

Rosa Chitula, Vitória's mother, a free spirit and revolted against colonial oppression, had split with the family for ideological reasons, since her father, an assimilated Black man, prevented her from manifesting any protest against the Portuguese, despite not understanding the reasons for the war:

grandfather António considered himself assimilated and, above all, Portuguese. He regarded the implosion of nationalism as an insidious twist against colonial serenity. However, he was appalled by Portugal's attitude: they had washed their hands of it. It seemed that they did not know how to solve the great *maka* installed. (Y. Monteiro, 2018, p. 11)

António, as an assimilated Black or *mestiço* (depending on the perspective), for the sake of his family's survival, eventually collaborated with both sides of the war:

out of the misfortune of life, he made an opportunity ( ... ) the middle colour had placed him in the middle world. For some, he was not Black enough and, for others, he needed to lighten his skin. He revered the Portuguese and tolerated the others. Whites and Blacks greeted him with exaggerated salutations. (Y. Monteiro, 2018, p. 13)

Rosa Chitula participated in the struggles for the liberation of Angola, was raped and got pregnant, returned home to leave her daughter and disappeared: "my mother loved Angola, more than she loved me, and fought for her" (Y. Monteiro, 2018, p. 9).

In 2003, Vitória returns to Luanda hoping to find her mother again, with only a vestige in her luggage, a picture of Rosa Chitula; from the plane window, she observes a city in the aftermath of the civil war:

down below, houses that look like they've been dropped in carpet bombing cluster together. They fell lined up in groups. ( ... ) covered in dust. Dismantled,

they have assembled themselves blindly, forming a shambling skeleton of red clay, old wood and zinc. They contract and expand. The walls are adjusted to gain room. The houses exist in all shapes and sizes. They stand with no plaster or paint, permeable to good and evil. (Y. Monteiro, 2018, p. 27)

At the airport of the city she thinks she knows, Romena Cambissa, a Black woman, widow and mother of two twin daughters, Katila and Nadia, awaits her. At Romena's house, she immediately comes across one of the greatest socio-cultural contrasts in Luanda, represented by the twins and the maids Josefa and Mariela: the cosmopolitanism and the misery of the *musseque* (slum). Vitória does not know that urban body, after all, that "lady" deified by her memories.

Luanda is a city that every day, at dawn, "abandons sleepiness, vibrates aggressively and rushes to the struggle for survival": the chaotic traffic, the noise amongst voices and honking, the women and men selling on the street "hoping to conquer the day" (Y. Monteiro, 2019, p. 32). Vitória encounters a place very different from "the idyll of life in Malveira [Portugal]" and one unknown and sad reality, as can be inferred from the dialogue between Romena and Vitória:

- It hurts, doesn't it! What can we do? Seeing the same thing over and over again gets the eye used to it and closes the heart.
- It's horrifying.
- You have to speed up the feeling - [Vitória] warns me.
- How?
- Not looking. Not thinking about it. If you go down that road here in Luanda, you'll get depressed.
- Pretend not to see.
- That's it. You are not going to solve their problem. (Y. Monteiro, 2018, p. 33)

In the young social circle where Vitória dwells, the differences are felt in lifestyle, being and behaving. From going out at night to the music, the make-up and the clothes... even her accent:

- That accent of yours, Victoria. Refresh. Refresh.  
I feel the comment like a hand abruptly thrown in my face. A harsh reminder that I don't belong there. I don't have the local accent.
- Drag the speech a little. You don't say "know", you say "knowinn", get it? (Y. Monteiro, 2018, pp. 70-71)

In the aftermath of the civil war, in the reconstruction of a country "almost at peace", middle-class Luandan youth parade on a "hip-hop music video set" in an Americanisation of lifestyles: "the male bond is in the basketball cap, t-shirt, baggy jeans and *Air Jordan* trainers the boys wear. The height of the heels and the scarcity of fabric in the clothes stifle female competition" (Y. Monteiro, 2018, p. 49). The remnants of the colonial hierarchy are at the door of the nightclub, where segregation is still in use, now on a capitalist basis:

the rope is the border separating the welcomed from the renegades. Whites go straight in. The Mulattos are selected, and the Blacks wait. Perhaps the doorman's choice is more capitalist based. For the doorman, a White man in Luanda is likely to have more dollars to spend than others. (Y. Monteiro, 2018, pp. 50–51)

Vitória comes across an Angola far from the utopian happiness of the Angola of family memories. Today's city of Luanda is an effervescence of new or renewed cultural practices driven by the effects of globalisation, for example, the exuberance of weddings, funerals, architecture, music, noise and chaos.

After spending some time in Luanda, and with new clues on her mother, Vitória heads to Huambo, where she meets up with Juliana, the woman who handed her over to her grandparents. Mama Ju, now caring for an orphanage, was a guerrilla fighter and still bears the trauma of war; "she believes that in war, death can even be the best fate. She or oblivion. She is alive and has never forgotten" (Y. Monteiro, 2018, p. 154). Juliana knows the truth about Rosa Chitula, "her" truth and her perspective on events, but she expects Vitória to find out for herself and to interpret it.

Victory is not victorious. After a long search, she gets a letter from her mother: "it is a long letter that says little about Vitória, about regrets or a meeting. It falls into clumsy justifications for hatred, resentment and disaffection. A selfish letter. With nothing noble written in" (Y. Monteiro, 2018, p. 203). The mother figure ignored her daughter's urge to feel complete. Still, her daughter manages to forgive her because she realises the suffering caused by war, torture and rape<sup>3</sup>: "she feels sorry for her mother. She wanted to hold her in her arms. To caress her until she fell asleep and no longer remembered the men who raped her" (Y. Monteiro, 2018, p. 204).

Finally, despite her motherly indifference, Juliana puts the future in Vitória's hands: the country Angola belongs to her, and Vitória exists for the country. To Juliana, Vitória belongs "to a people who are still waiting, who are waiting, always" (Y. Monteiro, 2018, p. 206) for reconstruction, for answers. Rosa, a symbol of the war, has not overcome the trauma of the past. Juliana awaits death to forget it, and others await forgiveness (Zacarias Vindu). Vitória (and her generation) symbolise hope, the future, perhaps uncertain and probably with losses, but strong enough to build a new place, a new ground. Vitória may or may not want to stay, "it is not her home either", as Miguel Torga's words illustrate, once again, "fate has overdone it with me. ( ... ) It planted me here and pulled me out of here. And never again did the roots hold me tightly in any land" (Y. Monteiro, 2018, p. 7).

#### 4. CLOSING REMARKS

As pointed out, *Essa Dama Bate Bué!* is a novel of self-discovery, or "memory fiction". These are, by principle, "stories that individuals or cultures tell about their past to answer the question 'who am I?' or, collectively, 'who are we?' ( ... ) [and] often turn

<sup>3</sup> On violence in women, refer to Sandra Sousa (2020).

out to be an imaginative (re)construction of the past as a response to current needs" (Neumann, 2016, p. 268). According to Birgit Neumann (2016), "literature is never a simple reflection of pre-existing cultural discourses; rather, it contributes proactively to the negotiation of cultural memory" (p. 269). Whether through fiction or her biography, Yara Monteiro fits into a European agenda to question the colonial past and to take a sociopolitical stance towards historical reparation, understanding and mutual respect for testimonies and colonial and postcolonial memories in the public space.

This novel is part of the set of narratives of survival or the urgency of the existence of the *mestiço* community in a post-imperial area (Portugal/Europe) and a postcolonial condition (Africa/Angola). It is a process of acceptance for one and reconstruction for the other, with the collateral effects that the colonial system created, incorporated and inherited by the following generations. Yara Monteiro echoes the words of Homi Bhabha (1994/1998): "an international culture [is based] not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but the inscription and articulation of the hybridism of culture" (p. 69); and resonates with the words of Rachel Khan (2021), that is, "in the current context, the issue of creolisation is key to repair. It entails the irruption of a plural, shifting, 'mixed-race' identity" (p. 171)<sup>4</sup>.

The writer exposes, through the character Vitória, the issue of miscegenation (creolisation?), to which contemporary societies still have no answer (or place?), the result of a discursive fixity on the figure of the Black and, consequently, on the *mestiço*. To be undefined, in the *mestiço* body, as is the case of Vitória (Yara Monteiro?), is perhaps the colonial heritage which involves the most identity conflicts, operating in pendulum movements or with a boomerang effect, not finding an identity ground to which one belongs completely. Nonetheless, this generation of postmemory, including Yara Monteiro, tries to use memories to build bridges between spaces formerly in a colonial situation or at war, constantly negotiating with cultural memory, to create a new future in peace. Thus, and in line with François Laplantine and Alexis Nouss (2002), "miscegenation is not fusion, cohesion, osmosis, but rather confrontation and dialogue" (p. 9), where the deletion of the specificities and diversities of the common whole is not allowed.

In *Essa Dama Bate Bué!* Vitória did not intend to heal the wounds but to perceive them; she accepted the scars and absorbed them as memories of her wandering and proof of her existence. Yara Monteiro repairs history by shaking off the dust of colonial narratives and determining and exposing the burden of the injustices inherited by the following generations, a past of which they feel, naturally, "guardians" of the memory.

### Translation: Anabela Delgado

<sup>4</sup> It is worth mentioning some "words that lead to nowhere", listed by Rachel Khan (2021), "diversity", "miscegenation" and "non-miscegenation" and "collective", empty words "corresponding to inactive acts or just the famous 'advertisements' that let us believe that a morbid discourse is alive", strengthening the "identitarian dogma" (pp. 94, 101). Therefore, the author advocates the word creolisation and rejects the terms "mixed-race" or "miscegenation" since "the *mestiço* is, conceptually speaking, one addition of elements that would give a diminished sum of races. ( ... ) With creolisation, synthesis is impossible. It imposes uncertainty upon us" (Khan, 2021, p. 161).

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