

# **PORTUGUESE CULTURAL IDENTITY: FROM COLONIALISM TO POST-COLONIALISM: SOCIAL MEMORIES, IMAGES AND REPRESENTATIONS OF IDENTITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This reflection aims to analyse the relation between the memory and identity of the colonial Portuguese in Africa, according to how they were represented in Portuguese cinema until the end of the 20th century. We chose five examples, which we considered most illustrative (three feature-length fictional films and two comedies), which demonstrate the diverse ways in which the Portuguese were represented in terms of identity, as 'civilising agents' for the African people. Thus, we can consider that the cultural identity of the Portuguese in Africa, as portrayed in Portuguese cinema in the 20th century, had three distinct phases: we designated the first as 'The invention of an Empire', the second as 'a Portuguese colonialism', and a final stage, which is entitled with the expression 'Exiled from nowhere'. In the final part of this study, we discuss the possibility of understanding colonial and post-colonial identities and memories, from a wide range of modalities related to Myself and the Other, which require the continuation of a (re) construction of memories and identities, in a framework of exercising individual and collection liberty: a work of Sísifo, infinite by nature.

## **KEYWORDS**

Identity, Cinema; colonialism; decolonization; post-colonialism

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Far from being a static repository of information, memory is one of the fundamental elements which constitute identities, whether individual or collective. In terms of individual and collective memories, it may also be said that one inspires the other, and vice-versa, as they cyclically convene in tasks which reconstruct this sense of memory (Candau, 1996).

Thus, through the metaphor of the works of Sísifo, this paper considers the similarities between the constitution of autonomous subjects and communities which are free and self-regulated (Martins, 1996). Memory functions not only with self-identity but also with the identity of the Other — it is mediated, regulated, thought and frequently legitimised and established (also retro-actively) in relation to its potency regarding the connection between the subjects and between communities. The diverse cultural products that express these relations use distinct languages and records. At times, they are questioned, other times they can be grounded and naturalised, whether or not this is a conscious objective (Cabecinhas, 2007).

One of the most influential works which manipulates the individual identity and memory (and thus, simultaneously the identity and the memory of the Other) was the process of colonisation which the Europeans brought to bear in various corners of the world,

and in its most intense form, at the end of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Africa.

This current reflection is specifically dedicated towards analysing the relations between the memory and the identity of the colonial Portuguese in Africa, based on the manner in which they were represented in Portuguese cinema until the end of the twentieth century. Five examples were chosen (three feature-length fictional films and two comedies), which were considered the most illustrative in terms of how the Portuguese were represented in relation to their identity as agents of civilisation for the African people. While this paper does not constitute an analysis of the importance of cinema in the construction and the mobilisation of images, identities and memories (individual and collective), we cannot over-estimate the fecundity of this area of work, which, in Portugal, is taking its first steps as an area of investigation in the Cultural Studies field, and more specifically, in the dominion of post-colonial Portuguese studies<sup>1</sup>. Thus, in the present context, we understand cinema as “(...) a device for enunciation (...) a device in the act of simulation” (Martins, 1990: 127).

The colonising presence of the Portuguese in Africa during the twentieth century greatly interests us, in two major areas: firstly to understand the way in which the memory and the Portuguese cultural identity is transformed during this century, specifically in terms of the Portuguese who went to Africa and established themselves there, and on the other hand, the way in which the new land was reinvented, in their memory identities, auto and hetero representations, when they had to return to the *Metrópole*, following the Revolution of the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, 1974.

But, as identity is always relative, considering that it only functions in conjunction with the Other, by which it is constructed and defined, (Hegel, s/d), we must also aim to understand and discuss the image and the representation of the Other African, which would have been predominantly — and sometimes simultaneously — ‘indigenous’, ‘black’, ‘mulatto’, or even ‘assimilated’ (Cunha, 1994), as defined by the Portuguese of the Colonial Empire, in the territory that was subsequently designated as *Províncias Ultramarinas*.<sup>2</sup>

In effect, from a global perspective and from the point of view of the question that interests us in this context, the cultural identity of the Portuguese in Africa during the twentieth century passed through three distinct phases:

- A first phase, which we designate as ‘The Invention of an Empire’, lasting until the mid-1950s (which we highlight as a point of departure for the subsequent revision of the Portuguese Constitution in 1951, which changed the political statute of the Colonies, and the programme of luso-tropicalism of Gilberto Freyre, which began to be gradually disseminated throughout the Portuguese Empire from 1953, aiming to legitimise Portuguese colonisation;
- A second phase, which we refer to as ‘A Portuguese Colonialism’ - which began in the mid 1950s and ended with the Carnation Revolution on the 25th of April - 1974, and the subsequent decolonisation, which obliged the Portuguese in Africa to return en masse to the Metropole;
- A third phase, which began at a time whereby Portugal received, half a million ‘returners’ from the

<sup>1</sup> An inaugural study in this area of research, i.e. Cinema from the perspective of Cultural Studies and Post-Colonialism is that of Vieira (2011). Seabra (2011) is another recent study which is interesting, but takes a different angle.

<sup>2</sup> *Províncias Ultramarinas* is a Portuguese term to describe the Maritime Territories or Overseas Territories belonging to Portugal.

'ex-colonies' over just a few months, (and not from 'former-Províncias Ultramarinas' as they were named). From that time, until the present moment, the discussions, the memories and the representations of the Portuguese in Africa, and those who lived on after 'returning', emerge in great quantity, diversity and depth. This phase is thus designated by the generic title of 'Exiled from no land'.

### 1.1 THE INVENTION OF AN EMPIRE

From the 1890 British Ultimatum, whereby the Portuguese became generally conscious of the importance of their territories in Africa, India and Asia, it was understood that an attack on any of these possessions, whose dominion was considered to be ensured by a historic right, was deemed an attack on their own cultural identity.

But, the fact is, as stated by Valentim Alexandre (Alexandre, 1979), the 'Portuguese Empire' in Africa did not exist until the 19th century, as it was no more than very confined territorial occupation on the African coast, essentially directed towards maintaining commercial activity with the natives. In the context of this commercial exchange, the slave trade for Brazil increased markedly (until the mid-19th century), and still (even) later to the southern states of the USA, Cuba, and finally, for São Tomé and Príncipe (in the second half of the nineteenth century). In this way, what was less than a Portuguese Colonial Empire was actually proclaimed an Empire, which only came into existence following the Conference of Berlin, first in cartography (far beyond what the Portuguese had ever occupied, even in their imagination) and then on the ground, if not as a true occupation by the Portuguese population, an attempt at least, to install an incipient administration and a weak military presence, just capable of maintaining the border limits according to the treaty.

In this context, the image that the Portuguese constructed of themselves in Africa became crystallized as the 'Colonizing Adventurer', as its function essentially consisted of implementing a policy of 'civilizing' the indigenous. By the end of the 1st Republic in 1926 we were to have no other perception than that which lies in the conviction of the absolute legitimacy to occupy *what belongs to us* (after plundering the Ultimatum), and within the financial and demographic possibilities of the country, to bring 'civilization' and 'progress' to the blacks. The number of whites in Portuguese Africa was small, and mostly composed of soldiers, who aimed to pacify the indigenous populations, administrative staff and those banished for crimes committed in the *Metropole*. Africa was a land of savages, of uncivilized populations who were even capable of anthropophagy, a land with a difficult climate and of unknown diseases. All in all, a land of exile and expatriation.

From the beginning of the military dictatorship (1926) and sedimentation of the Estado Novo in Portugal (1933), the boundaries of our possessions in Africa were already sufficiently stabilized, and with pacified populations globally, we entered a second phase of construction, in particular with regard to the ideology and imaginary of an Empire. In our understanding, this second phase was to last until the mid-1950s, until the international pressure and criticisms of an anticolonial nature began to be felt in Portugal.

The Portuguese in Africa were no longer seen as 'Colonising Adventurers', but were instead seen as 'Colonial Heroes', whereby the figure of Galvão Teles can be considered

an illustrative example of yet another great adventure embarked on by the Portuguese people, which had its roots in the 15th century, with the Discoveries.

And yet, in this seminal period of the Estado Novo, in which a complimentary and very clear image of the negro to be civilized became 'assimilated', as was that of the white Portuguese, represented as the 'civilizing genius' as its concrete action was framed and legitimized by a collection of legal documents produced by the Estado Novo, in particular, the 'Political, Social and Criminal Statute for the Indigenous Populations of Angola and Mozambique' (1926, only repealed in 1954 with the Statute for the Indigenous Portuguese Populations in the Provinces of Guiné, Angola and Mozambique) the Colonial Act (of 1930 and repealed in 1951) and the Organisational Charter of the Portuguese Colonial Empire (1933)<sup>3</sup>.

From the perspective of the imaginary of the empire represented 'as a centre' (Ribeiro, 2004), this is the most dense period, in terms of the construction of identity self-representations of the Portuguese. The full picture can be seen in the Proceedings of a cycle of Conferences «Alta Cultura Colonial», promoted in 1936 by the Minister for the Colonies at that time (Colónias, 1936), and which aimed to find a 'scientific' balance between the diverse areas of our knowledge about the Ultramar, having specifically invited those considered to have the deepest understanding of the reality of the Colonial Portuguese Empire, for them to give conferences in their areas of speciality. Obviously, for those chosen, like the maps or knowledge produced in Portugal, at the time, their own colonial reality, was completely immersed in an imperial ideology, to be firmly imperialistic, apart from rare and honourable exceptions, which present diverse features, but which globally permit little space for any kind of counter-image which might jeopardize the representation of the 'white, heroic civilizer in Africa', in opposition to the 'animalistic, savage negro', capable of even anthropophagy.

The identity representation of the Portuguese, which in our understanding is complimentary (the 'Colonising Adventurer', who is transformed to a 'Colonial Hero'), is found to be particularly well expressed, in the much proclaimed film, *Chaimite* (Canto, 1953).

*Chaimite*, directed by Jorge Brum do Canto, was premiered in Lisbon in April, 1953. The film is set in 1894, during which time the Vátuas<sup>4</sup> were frequently attacking the Portuguese colonies. The Portuguese did not hesitate in their response, and the film recalls the campaigns in Marracuene, Magul, Coela and Manjacaze, which were initially led by António Enes, Caldas Xavier, Ayres Ornelas, Eduardo Costa, Paiva Couceiro and Freire de Andrade, and thereafter by Mouzinho de Albuquerque, whose infamous exploit was the capture of the great black tribal chief, Gongunhana, who was then brought to Portugal in 1897 and publicly exhibited to the delight of the Portuguese.

In parallel to the 'Great History', we also have the 'individual story', of the colonial Portuguese living in Lourenço Marques, including a romance, when two soldiers fall in love with the same girl.

<sup>3</sup> The original titles of these acts are: the '*Estatuto Político, Social e Criminal dos Indígenas de Angola e Moçambique*', '*Estatuto dos Indígenas Portugueses das Províncias da Guiné, Angola e Moçambique*', the *Ato Colonial* and the *Carta Orgânica do Império Colonial Português*, respectively.

<sup>4</sup> Vátuas – A term that names a tribe from East Africa

This film, filmed mostly in Mozambique, is also of interest due to the inclusion of the director himself in one of the main roles: Paiva Couceiro. It is also the second great Portuguese fiction film about Africa, following *O Feitiço do Império* (1940), which was shown 203 times between 1953 and 1969, distributed both on the continent (175), Madeira (2), Azores (149), Sao Tome and Principe (1), Angola (7), Mozambique (3) and Canada (1) (Seabra, 2000:264). In 1961, Manuel Gama remarked that, in terms of ‘over-seas cinema’, Portugal was a total desert, except for *Chaimite*, which he considered «a dignified and highly esteemed work, the only bright star in the darkness of lost opportunities – small yet insignificant». (Gama,1961)<sup>5</sup>.

Regarding our main focus in terms of this current investigation — the memories and cultural identities of the Portuguese in Africa in the twentieth century — this film demonstrates the manner in which the Portuguese reconstructed Portugal and the memory which they had of it in Africa: men and women dressed as they would be in Minho, Portugal, although they were now in a tropical climate; in the bush or in the colonial towns, they built their ‘Portuguese houses’ (with eaves, flowers in the porch, a glass of wine on the table...) and were essentially rural, agricultural people, hard-working and honest, who had ‘claimed the land’ to build villages, towns and cities which replicated their homeland, the *Metropole*, as loyally as possible.

Furthermore, the identity of the white colony was consistently conveyed in the established form of a Portuguese identity of brave and valiant warriors, always in the minority and in a hostile territory, but revealing an ever greater conviction and love for their homeland. The narrative structure of the victorious Portuguese in Africa coincides exactly with that of the *Miracle of Ourique*, the Portuguese model for all future victories. (Lourenço, 1978), painting the Portuguese as ‘Hero-coloniser’.

Of particular significance is the way in which the film conveys the affiliation between the campaigns in Africa in the line of the Discoveries, in terms of the Portuguese representation as ‘Colonising Adventurer’- those Portuguese colonialists had the same objective as the *Marinheiros de Quinhentos*<sup>6</sup>: to conquer more souls for Christianity; to implement the civilised behaviour of the Portuguese and also the Portuguese character<sup>7</sup>.

*Chaimite* does not ignore the important role of the Portuguese women in the process of colonisation: for not only they were more beautiful, attractive, ladylike and serious than the foreigners, they were also indispensable due to their courage and resilience, encouraging and bravely accompanying and assisting their husbands, albeit from the wings as opposed to on the main stage, through their nursing, teaching, etc.

With regard to the blacks, they are portrayed as savages (with the recurrence theme being the subtle agitation of the phantom of anthropophagy from the opening scenes of the film), uncivilised, without a face and without a name — except for those who worked

<sup>5</sup> “A dignified, esteemed work, the only bright stone in this desolated mausoleum of lost opportunity. We believe that it is less than little - it’s not nothing!”/«obra digna e estimável, única pedra clara neste desolado mausoléu de oportunidades perdidas. É menos do que pouco, convenhamos. Não é nada!»(Gama,1961).

<sup>6</sup> *Marinheiros de Quinhentos* is a term which refers to the sixteenth century sea-farers.

<sup>7</sup> Which, moreover, the regime’s ideological State Nine repeats endlessly (cf, among many others (Vieira, 1933)).

directly with the Portuguese, and showed loyalty to them, becoming thus 'assimilated', or reneging on their own culture in order to live as a Portuguese 'species'. In summary, the non-assimilated blacks were generally portrayed as silent traitors and dangerous spies.

Furthermore, we can distinguish two types of blacks: the foreign traitors and the slaves sold to them (including the French and the English who were only interested in usurping the Portuguese possessions) or the 'assimilated', civilised, docile people who worked for the Portuguese, obviously just doing the less important work but still, for the duration of the film, in near silence and without a name.

From our point of view, the scene of the film which simultaneously constitutes the final message, and in our understanding, that which best condenses the model of black/white relations in this period is exactly that of the imprisonment of Gungunhana: the whites begin to cold-bloodedly execute two of the black chief's tribesmen, in a gesture that symbolises the total domination, coldness and rationality which the whites had over the blacks. Subsequently, the great chief Gungunhana is subdued, imprisoned and humble, confessing all.

Curiously, Bénard da Costa states that the importance of this scene of the film was the way in which «the native actor who interpreted the role of Gungunhana crushes, just with a glance — in which centuries of humiliation can be perceived —, the rhetorical theatre actor who took the role of Mouzinho (Jacinto Ramos)» (Costa, 1991:111). However, in spite of their cruelty (seen here through the bravery and power which the 'Hero-Coloniser', Mouzinho da Silveira exerts over his enemies), the Portuguese are also represented as being human and merciful characteristics: in this same scene, Mouzinho embraces the mother of the traitor, who is the one left suffering, although she is not responsible for the acts of her traitorous son.

Thus, in the end, what is emphasized is the most fundamental, basic level of interaction between the whites and the blacks: this both charges and liberates the whites, as they violently interrogate<sup>8</sup> and are able to kill the whites. On the opposite side, the whites have a code of conduct, they are organised to ensure the security of the white community, in a climate of constant inter-ethnic solidarity. There is, however, at least one moment of complicity between the whites and the blacks, which happens between two women, in the kitchen, instigated by a dish of rice pudding which the Portuguese woman was making for Christmas. Still, the black character, a maid in the house, who appeared constantly throughout the film, never opened her mouth, and her name was never mentioned.

Thus, as we have hoped to describe up unto this point, the model of relations between the blacks and the whites is that which that we would identify as 'aggressive paternalism', even if their principle mentors do not have this awareness, a kind of naive colonialism which was always the prerogative of the Portuguese form of colonialism (Lourenço, 1976b).

<sup>8</sup> Moreover, throughout the film, three types of characters are treated with violence: blacks and foreigners (by the 'heroic-colonial' Portuguese) and a young woman slapped by an aunt (one Portuguese, one of which is ultimately one of the first 'colonial-adventurers').

In summary, *Chaimite* presents us with an identity of the Portuguese in Africa, according to the colonial warrior, the adventurer and hero, whose impact can be traced back to the Discoveries. The black identity is already exchanged with a representation of a savage (sometimes good, other times bad), but always as an inferior creature, or, in the best cases, as exotic.<sup>9</sup>

The film ends with a *cliché* whereby the Portuguese couple found a village, symbolising the fertility, progression and development of a civilisation of Portuguese in Africa.

Although this film was made in 1953 (but set in the early days of the effective Portuguese colonization in Africa), it was in the transition to the 1950s that we find the possibility of penetrating a counter-image of the Empire and with this, of the Portuguese who are installed there. We can mention, for example, the novel by José Augusto França, *Natureza Morta* (1949), where the Portuguese appear with traces of uncivilized brutality, in a kind of contagion with the image that always attaches to the other, black. Another example which is also commonly indicated is Castro Soromenho's book, *Terra Morta* (also written in 1949), which places the shock between the black and mulatto identities on one hand, and the white and western on the other, as a site of mismatch and uprooting, very different from the self-representation of the official Portuguese identity as imperialists and builders of an empire.

Similarly, we can identify some aspects of this counter-image, which began to trace its transition from the 1940s to the 1950s, and which became embodied in the following phase. This is most visible in the African movements of opposition towards the Portuguese dominance, that later resulted in the colonial war which began in the 1960s. One of the rare fictional Portuguese films which addresses the Empire and the Portuguese is entitled "*O Costa de África*" (Mendes, 1954).

This film can be considered, in the context of the present reflection, as a piece of remarkable importance, as it powerful repercussions in Portugal, becoming a major hit. A picaresque comedy, with very popular actors such as Vasco Santana, Laura Alves and Ribeirinho, the film had its origins in a piece for stage, which since 1953, had been presented on the stages of Lisbon, and which had toured the country with great popularity and public support.

In the words of Manuel Cintra Ferreira, "the popular comedy makes an idiot of itself (even more!) in the *Costa de África* by João Mendes» (Ferreira, 2002:298).

The plot of the film ("memory of our 'bodily scars'" (Martins, 2011:133), as all the film is), is filled with puns and light jokes, 'Costa from Africa' is a Portuguese man in Africa who travels to take care of business in Europe, an individual already imbued with African 'brutality and incivility'. Having made his fortune in Africa, he reveals to us how the Portuguese in the *Metrópole* represent the Portuguese colonies, looking at those who serve them as blacks ('bijagós'), even when they are white, a species of infantilized adults, without any kind of life, wish or desire, an object of violence, to improve its obedience. *Costa of África's* ultimate objective is to bring a woman whom he wishes to marry

<sup>9</sup> Strongly affiliated concepts in the representation of the other, and in particular that of the Negro originating from German philosophy during the Enlightenment. (for more information, see Sanches and Serrão, 2002).

(whoever she may be) from Portugal, to continue the work of bringing Portuguese civilization to African lands. In the final analysis, a white woman that he would bring to Africa, ended up to be levelled to the condition of a domestic or slave, after being transported in a cage by boat, where she would travel with Costa, on his return to Africa, treated like the servant-negro or the African Nature (animals, for example); everything over the dominant and amused gaze of Costa and under his orders.

Such was the 'imperialist and civilizing character' of these Portuguese passing through the Metr pole!

The image is completed with the representation of a creature without polished manners, apart from being affectionate, who, during the journey from the Metropole, still had time to see and be dazzled by the works which the Estado Novo developed in the city of Lisbon, turning it into a modern city, a moment in the film whereby the regime's propaganda is blatantly obvious.

Thus, the image of the Portuguese colony (or colonialist, as until this time no great difference was visible, once that the 'colonial-emigrant' seemed to turn into a true colonialist), began to emerge in the mid-1950s, with various shades and offering diverse prisms of understanding, particularly in more popular representations, not yet mediated by the mystique of the Empire and which unveiled, in a burlesque way and with a comic tone, the most brutal aspect of the colonial Portuguese, which did not pass as a task of 'civilizing the blacks', without he himself also becoming kind of 'wild'.

For its part, with regard to the official discourse or the identity self-representations of these Portuguese, what we find are images which are always linked to the celebration of the Empire, but at this time of transition for another period of Portuguese colonialism which began in the mid-1950s, which was no longer considered as the 'colonial-hero' a type of colonizing hero-adventurer, but rather by the 'colonizing emigrants', always few in number, who were only permitted to install themselves in Africa with the authorization of the State, thus ensuring that there would not be a mass emigration of poor Portuguese people, which could change the identity representation of the white in Africa, running the risk of being seen as miserable amongst the miserable.

In this way, the 'colonising emigrant', always maintained his condition of economic, social and religious superiority compared to the negro, an essential condition in order to continue to Portuguese-ify Africa, deserving the respect, to the point of veneration, which the natives had for the whites, and combining their desire, enthusiasm and inclination to be assimilated.

All in all, the superior identity of the whites, reassured by the existence of the blacks, which they frequently confused with the African landscape, appearing not to distinguish between them from it, as neither had a language, political institutions, science or technology. The blacks were confused with the admirable African nature, plants, animals and geography, for the most part inoffensive or at least exotic.

The superiority of the white European Portuguese lived in the negation and the submission of the Other, in the final analysis, the negation of whatever Other, reducing him to the condition of the 'bijag s', as *Costa from  frica* symptomatically refers,



transforming him into an absolutely invisible being. But as the Other is the one that may humanises our identity, the result of this total invisibility of the Other may extend, at certain moments, to the point of barbarianism or the uncivilised savageness.

## 1.2 A PORTUGUESE COLONIALISM

If until the mid-1950s, we have seen what we designate a period of civilization and assimilation of the colonizers, from this point the international context in which the European colonialisms in Africa were developing, was submitted to major changes and the Portuguese State would be the object of strong international pressure. Specifically with the entry of Adriano Moreira to the government in 1959, and in 1961 as the Minister for the Ultramar, a new cycle of identity representation began for the Negro, which began to feature more and more of their voices and faces, forging an identity of resilience and revolt against the white coloniser, and also the European colonialist who no longer appeared as a 'colonising adventurer' or 'hero', but progressively as a colonial immigrant, poor amongst the poor, in an Empire which was increasingly unstable.

In effect, from colonies of the Portuguese Empire, this territories became 'Ultramarine Provinces', and at the same time the 'assimilation' discourse stopped, while the concept of 'integration' was preferred. The Estado Novo accepted some timid attempts to promote a small social and cultural elite mix in Africa, apart from limiting the possibility of creating universities or superior schools, in order to avoid creating a nationalist African movement with independent re-vindicated people (as had been happening for more than two decades close by in the former Belgian Congo).

It was truly considered a time of crisis for the conscience of the European colonialist, which worried the Estado Novo, but which did not shake it at first. On the contrary, there was a movement to reinforce the colonization and effective occupation of the African provinces using white Portuguese population.

The beginning of the War, which will never be considered so, but always referred to by the *Metrópole* authorities as 'actions of pacification', made the Portuguese who went to Africa the 'emigrants to the colonies', but still and above all, at a higher social level than those who went to France in the 1960s. The policy continued to be the same: the white emigration to Africa was welcome but controlled, in order to avoid creating a multitude of poor whites, equal to the blacks, compromising social and economic relations which were long established and stable.

Still however, the economic condition of these 'emigrants to the colonies', arriving in Africa was lower than that of their 'colonising emigrants'. Their role was ambiguous and some joined the independence movements, with their cultural Portuguese identity, in some cases reneged and recalculated. An elite black and mixed, with an inevitable nationalist sentiment was created, particularly in Protestant seminaries, which the Estado Novo did not support.

Thus, until 1974, the fiction of the Portuguese Empire continued and was reinforced with an skilful use of luso-tropicalism of the Brazilian sociologist (Freyre, 2002 (1953)), which aside from its formulation in 1953 and having been regarded indifferently

by the Estado Novo, was now integrated in a discourse destined to justify our obstinacy as a colonizing nation, now absolutely outside the times of European Empires.

Luso-tropicalism became a means of articulating an identity for the Portuguese colonizer, but now in a much more gentle manner, as it becomes imbued with a multiculturalism and multiracialism, for which Brazil would constitute a peerless example and the absolute caution (Lourenço, 1976a).

But, if this is the official discourse, which easily penetrates the mentality of the ‘emigrant to the colonies’, essentially seen as a promoter of civilisation, progress and development together with the most backward people, the war in Africa would have another unaccustomed consequence: for the first time, millions of Portuguese (soldiers) are sent to a reality which they do not recognise and which they would soon describe to their families in the *Metrópole*<sup>10</sup>.

It was the beginning of the end for fiction. For the Portuguese in the *Metrópole*, Africa’s war emerged in the twists and turns of a horrendous reality, where lives and resources are lost, for the sake of a cause that seemed increasingly less Portuguese.

The descriptions which these soldiers sent from Africa about the Africans were in no way similar to the perceptions of the ‘emigrants to the colonies’ in the 1960s and 1970s, in which they were represented as ‘naturally’ African, ‘naturally’ white, ‘naturally’ belonging to a medium class or medium-high class, ‘naturally’ served by blacks and mulattos (Cabecinhas, 2007).

Of the rest, Portuguese soldiers at war and white ‘emigrants to the colonies’ had little in common and their mutual representations at that time, are clear: the soldiers abhorred the superficiality of the lifestyle which the whites in Africa led, whilst the soldiers were giving their lives to maintain this kind of lifestyle (Lourenço, 1992); the white ‘emigrants to the colonies’ were unable to have a clear idea that a brutal war was going on very close by, in which the maintenance of their lives and identities were implicated (they had a vague idea that there were conflicts and skirmishes ‘far away’ and of ‘little importance’ — cf., among others, (Fonseca, 2009)).

With regard to the blacks, their identity remained invisible or almost transparent in a society of whites that came from Europe that they self-represent as ‘naturally African’.

Thus, it was precisely this invisibility of the blacks in Africa in the context of a colonial system in contrast with the white identity which wielded its power over the blacks who were placed in his service, which constitutes the object of the film, *Deixem-me ao menos subir às Palmeiras...* (Barbosa, 1972). It was the first film to be shot and produced entirely in Africa (Mozambique), involving Africans and white colonialists. Considered the first anti-colonial film before the Revolution of the 25th of April, it was completely censored by the Estado Novo regime and was only shown in 1975.

The story, based on the traditional African tale, ‘Dina’ (published in 1964 by Luís Bernardo Honwana in *Nós Matamos o Cão Tinhoso*) is set on a Mozambican farm, where the blacks are violently forced to work from sunrise to sundown, under the command of a black foreman, who serves the white colonialist. Meanwhile, at the white’s house, the landlord’s, all is calm and peaceful. There he lives in peace and well-being, a paradise

<sup>10</sup> Cf. amongst many others (Antunes, 2005)

accompanied by the sound of classical music which his daughter plays on the piano, vindicating the change from the black world to the white world, the road from hell to heaven. Moreover, what appears to be adjacent to the images is the happiness which is only possible due to the sub-human condition in which the majority of the blacks lived.

The film, in runga and in English, shows precisely the inhumanity and cruelty of the work in the fields and culminates with the violation of Maria, the daughter of one of the oldest workers, Madala. The violation by the barbaric foreman took place under the helpless gaze of her father and the other workers. For a moment, the revolution seems possible and there are times in the film where it emerges, but then the white appears, to guarantee, with the force of firearms, that the colonial order is re-established and the blacks return to work. To pacify the fury of the old man Madala, the foreman offers him a bottle of wine. The temper is silenced and crime remains unpunished. Dead from exhaustion, the film ends with the burial of the old man and the infinite sadness of Maria, who symbolizes the melancholy and the fury of all the population subject to dominance and injustice.

In the words of de Luís de Pina, “*Deixem-me ao Menos Subir às Palmeiras (...)* is, from the beginning, a humble, poor, direct film, almost a documentary, with a very singular fiction, the way of telling a traditional tale, about the condition of indigenous people, so shackled by the system, that it seems the only space of liberty would be to climb up the palm trees. (...) But this is precisely, through the absence of rhetoric, the human force of the film”.<sup>11</sup>

It is, in short, a first moment in which the wound that all colonialism strives to hide is openly exposed, showing its intrinsic and unavoidable violence. And if literature is very precocious in the process of termination of the identity of the blacks, who are negated and humiliated in their own land, the film will become unbearably visible. Hence, despite its director’s conviction that the film would pass through the meshes of censorship<sup>12</sup>, the film could naturally only be envisioned in a post-colonial society and with the possibility of looking forward to itself and the repressed side of the Portuguese white colonialist identity in Africa.

There is another film, also from the 1970s, and curiously, which was also produced in the same studio in Mozambique (Estúdios Somar) as the previous film, launched a new form of looking at the cultural identity of the Portuguese in Africa (and of the significant Others around, such as the Brazilians, the Blacks and the Chinese). We refer to the film *O Zé do Burro (Donkey Joe)*, made in 1971 (and first shown in 1972), by Eurico Ferreira (Ferreira, 1971). The comedy can be considered as belonging to the Portuguese satirical theatre genre ‘*revista à portuguesa*’, but in its disconcertingly simplistic rhetoric and visual exposition, it clearly forms for us a representation of the cultural identity of the Portuguese in Africa which is markedly different to that which we had previously observed.

The plot focuses on the story of a man from Ribatejo, namely José (Joe) Bandeira, who, whilst still in Portugal, had bought an excellent piece of land in North Mozambique,

<sup>11</sup> Cf. <http://www.buala.org/pt/afroscreen/deixem-me-ao-menos-subir-as-palmeiras-um-filme-da-frente-de-guerrilha>

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

for a very low price. Thus, he travels with his donkey to Africa, trying to reach his house, which in the end is an old shack in the middle of an arid desert, because the local blacks simply refused to work on it. With his tenacity, humility and hard work, he manages to conquer everything and everyone, surviving the attacks from the Chinese communists whom he meets on his rounds (and thus Donkey Joe also ends up as a victor). The film ends with the foundation of a village and the wedding of the prosperous Donkey Joe from Ribatejo to a Portuguese lady, who was already living in Mozambique.

It is understandable that this is generally considered ‘an atrocious film’. In the words of the director Lopes Barbosa<sup>13</sup>, “casting aside the technical imperfections and the artificial silliness of the plot, the film is absolutely worthless”<sup>14</sup> — however, due to the fact that the memory of this character is not part of the ‘Great History’ (of either Portugal or Africa), but is situated at a level which is only slightly distinguishable from that of the donkey (who is Donkey Joe’s alter-ego — a principle character who is also shy, simple, affable and sweet, ignorant and without malice). The character does, however, address the memory of Portugal ‘immemorial’, unconscious and telluric, of a ‘deep’ Portugal, illiterate, presenting the humility of a person from the lowest socio-cultural level, but a friend to all, beginning with animals (the donkey) and children.

This memory of rural, slow Portugal would oppose that of the Portuguese in Africa, already considerably urbanised and contaminated by the pleasures of city life, without the memory of a deeper Portuguese culture, traditional and authentic (lost in a city like the two Brazilian characters, who also emerge during the film), which allows the re-founding of the Portuguese identity in Africa in other terms.

In a form which is somewhat negative (and even uncomfortable, as we see from the words of Lopes Barbosa), the Portuguese cultural identity represented by the native of Ribatejo who arrived at Lourenço Marques transforms itself into an exotic creature, which is characteristic of the way in which the blacks were seen in the eyes of Europeans. This very interesting inversion was, in our opinion, only possible because the filming took place entirely in Mozambique and was the responsibility of the local production company (Somar Filmes). We must ask ourselves if this audacity would be possible if this film had been made by metropolitan directors. The ironic allusion, that is shown in the film, of the Portuguese crossing the African jungle by foot and using an umbrella as weapon, seems to us only to be possible to address in a film produced in Mozambique.

In any case, the Portuguese man that we introduced to in this film is naïve, simple — to the point of being ridiculous — with weaknesses that also constitute his strengths, as they are accompanied by values such as persistence, hardworking the land, his conviction in, for example, a simple, austere life. Thus, the Portuguese man in the colonies abandons force and instead persuades with the enthusiasm of the example which he shows, apart from explicitly demonstrating that not all of the Portuguese knew how to colonise: for this, it is necessary to follow one’s own instinct and to have the purity and naivety of ‘deep Portugal’, rustic and instinctive.

<sup>13</sup> Lopes Barbosa was the director of the 1972 film, *Deixem-me ao menos subir às palmeiras* which exposed the violence of the colonial system and was banned by the PIDE.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.buala.org/pt/afroscreen/deixem-me-ao-menos-subir-as-palmeiras-um-filme-da-frente-de-guerrilha>

Regarding the role of the blacks in this film, we can verify that they appear with a face and a more defined identity, but there continues to be two types: the good, who collaborate in the development of the African land and the bad foreign traders (who are now neither English or French, but Chinese Communists who provoke a war, whereas the Portuguese promote peace). In the end, the bad, at least those that do not understand the ways of the Portuguese colonialists (the Chinese end up thinking that the secret to Donkey Joe's success with the blacks is due to the donkey, hence deciding that they should rob the animal), are converted to the good (Portuguese) side, without necessarily having more than Joe's example to follow.

For his part, Donkey Joe's character leads the whites to the conclusion that, in the end, the blacks are not lazy people, but they have to have the 'correct' models to behave correctly.

Hence, we are now in face of a model of colonial relations which we can describe as co-operative paternalistic, which is essentially characterized by the powers of persuasion replacing the power of physical force.

The film ends, as always, with the Portuguese founding a village in which the Portuguese and the African cultures can get co-exist without any difficulties (in an allusion to the multiculturalism of Freyre (Freyre, 2010 (1940))), which now includes the war-like but defeated Chinese, although they do not mix: the blacks marry blacks, and Donkey Joe marries a white Portuguese lady. The question of mixture, of hybridism and of the mixed-race people is not referred to in any of the films which we have had the opportunity to analyse, at least those made until the Revolution of April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1974.

### 1.3 EXILED FROM NO LAND

Reality was to impose itself violently with the revolution of the 25 April 1974 and the inevitable decolonization, pulling thousands of Portuguese to a place, a time, a society and a representation of their self-identity that could only make sense in a structured colonial context, even with all the absorption of the Luso-tropicalism reading.

Moreover, Luso-tropicalism was to be one of the major obstacles to redefining the identity of the Portuguese who returned to *Metrópole*, now called 'the returned'. Truth be told, many of them were 'returning' to a land that they literally did not know and to which they had never been. But even returning to a land where they still had family roots (which a large majority had) and in which they still remember having lived; now they were returning to another land, now a revolutionary country which was totally unknown to them. Their return was to a place where they had truly, never been.

More than 'returned', their identity for many years was to rub bitterly against their skin, they were to feel exiled from an African homeland, which has never belonged to them or even never existed. They were *exiled from nowhere!*

Deeply traumatized by this moment of identity change, from white 'emigrants to the colonies' to 'returned-colonialists', now in a revolutionary nation, even today, this event can not arouse one traumatic memory (Valensi, 1992), which begins now to be exposed, treated, considered and counted in the present, and in many different ways.

Only now, three decades later, is it possible to expose the wound which at the time was covered with refusal, denial, concealment and shame of admitting the act of violence and domination for which they were active agents in Africa, to start a moment of reconciliation with their/our memories through testimony, exorcism and even fables.

It is precisely in the context of an exercise of revisiting traumatic memories and trying to construct new identities, for ex-colonizers and the formerly colonized, which may collect the multiple and contradictory fragments of the memories of the Portuguese in Africa, that appears *A Tempestade da Terra* (Silva, 1997), a film directed by Fernando d'Almeida e Silva, with the excellent interpretation of the main character (Lena) by Maria de Medeiros.

The film, comprising numerous flashbacks, focuses mostly on the question of memories and identities. The narrative is set in Lisbon, where, in 1975, many white Portuguese, who had been based in Africa, 'returned'. From the disappearance of Lena the film parades the past life in Mozambique of a teenager/adolescent who, in the 1950s, had a little black friend, (Ningo<sup>15</sup>), who was a servant to her family. The plot of the story develops, showing the golden years of Mozambique, after the colonial wars, and finally, the independence of the country. Lena is transformed into an adult who revolts against being white, although neither is she convinced by the Mozambican revolution. The father, a successful engineer who acts benevolently towards the blacks becomes a convicted colonist when the colonial war begins. After, he returns to Portugal and passes away. Lena's mother, always a staunch colonialist is left alone in a small apartment in the suburbs of Lisbon, not ending the film without asking for Ningo's forgiveness in order to enlist his help in finding her missing daughter. Other characters have identities which don't fluctuate to such an extent, whether between those that support the regime and the repressive PIDE system and never leave it (Jorge) or between those whom support the African revolution (Geraldo) and who also, despite everything and all the difficulties in their paths do not change their position.

In our opinion, this film represents an excellent exercise regarding memory, or even better, regarding the memories which all those involved in the plot carry (white and black, the returning children of the empire and the Africans from counties whose official language is Portuguese), and still an exercise in the reconstruction of identities, which constantly oscillate for the duration of the film.

Thus, the memory at the end of the 1950s in Lourenço Marques — where the whites lived a bourgeoisie, happy life which was supported by a social and economic structure which dominated the blacks — is de-stabilised, due to its mono-thematic memory of resistance and the black revolt at the beginning of the war, as well as the memory of the persecution of those who opposed the regime (which was also done by the white Portuguese).

<sup>15</sup> In this film, the Negro has a name, which is not Portuguese; he is neither infantilised nor humiliated as is common in the other Portuguese films which represent Negros with names such as 'Soap' (*Chikwebo! Sortilégio Africano* - 1953) or 'Bijagós' (*O Costa de África* - 1954), revealing a change in attitude in relation to the identity of the Negro.

But, this reconstruction of contradictory memories and their equivalents moves to record the white regression to continental Portugal following the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, and the contradictions of two countries amidst a revolution as were Portugal and Mozambique (for example, Lena is stopped at the entrance to the cinema in Maputo and accused of being a prostitute).

In synthesis, the identities of the characters in this film, according to their dialectic nature (Barata-Moura, 1977:67-70) are very unstable, whether black or white (there are good and bad on both sides), varied by the historical circumstances in the dialogue to the personal characteristics.

This is countered by, for example the whites moving from the position of dominators (with some violence) to the dominated (after the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, whether as part of the great history or individual story), with pangs of regret, whilst the blacks lived a silent resistance whereby they were infantilised, within the model of paternal colonialism (they were not able to study, they were beaten and humiliated, etc.), which is proof of their great resilience, but which is not without resentment towards the whites. In any case, the whites end the film between repentance and death.

It is still possible to observe that in *A Tempestade da Terra* the interaction between the whites and the blacks, which is already much increased, reveals a strong and consistent affection (both negative and positive), in the diversity of relational models, which can go beyond the dominant paternalism to solidarity and complimentary relational models (whether in the initial scene of Africa in the 1950s or at the end of the film in post-colonial Portugal).

The final scene of Africa that the film show us is a view of the destroyed homes and belongings of the Portuguese who had escaped from Lourenço Marques, thereby expressing the memories of the whites returning to their heartland, that in Lisbon they felt uprooted, living with remorse and homesickness, or dying.

Thus, the film underlines the symbolic failing of the return to the province (Serra da Estrela), and the film ends tragically. The final sentiment is one of profound nostalgia... they are *exiled from nowhere*, those who return to look at Tejo's river, which they left by ship in sadness. This nostalgic feeling is expressed by the music of Madredeus and the voice of Teresa Salgueiro evokes the tragic ending of the Empire.

## 2. THE PORTUGUESE IN AFRICA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: MEMORIES, IDENTITIES AND THEIR REVERSAL

In synthesis, through the analysis of the three films which we have chosen to study, in order to appreciate the different models with which the Portuguese cinema has treated the identities and the memories of the Portuguese in Africa during the twentieth century, we may conclude that *Chaimite*, *O Costa de África*, *O Zé do Burro*, *Deixem-me ao Menos Subir às Palmeiras...*<sup>16</sup> compile an individual story and memory of the subjects and the groups which always serve the memories of the History of Portugal and of the Portuguese.

<sup>16</sup> It should be underlined that we do not consider here *Deixem-me ao Menos Subir às Palmeiras...* a postcolonial film because in our view it also fully participates in the logic of identity and work of the typical memory of colonialism.

On the contrary, the film that we analysed which was made post-April 25th, *Tempestade da Terra*, addresses the 'History', the individual story and the national memory that comprises multiple individual stories and diverse memories (Ricoeur, 2000). It is truly a post-colonial film.

We may also verify, through the course of this research, that the white people have had the only say in relation to the colonial context, as the blacks are silent, without a face, identity or memory. The white people are pictured as 'modern' (continuing with the Great Story of the fatherland, the History of Portugal). The black people are not 'modern' or up to date in this historical process, because they are not civilised. Thus, they are both outside and before History<sup>17</sup>, because these views can only exist in the eyes of the whites, whose objective was to conquer and rule them according to their laws — disciplining their bodies and their minds, appropriating their time, their space, their wishes, their memories and their identities, in accordance to the mechanisms, which constitutes the exercise of power, as explained by Foucault (Foucault, 1975, Martins, 2002), but also by Hegel in his well known dialectic of the Slave and the Lord (Hegel, s/d).

This movement, which cinema itself identifies and discusses, at times in a very indirect fashion, corresponds to the journey through the relational model of aggressive-paternalism and the other model, which we term co-operative paternalism (up until the Colonial War, despite international pressure to decolonise, the intention of luso-tropicalism remained). We must simultaneously consider the fissures in identity that create and install doubt within a colonial system which lasts for decades, and practically until the end, tried to function without the shadow of a blemish or ill-conscience. In terms of the question of identities, whether white or black, they are founded precisely in contexts and dynamics of very definite memories.

One can verify, for example, that at the beginning of the Portuguese colonisation of Africa, the identity of the blacks, is, in the best case scenario, an object of curiosity, which is transformed into exoticism by the whites (Sanchez and Serrão, 2002). Thus, in the final decades of colonisation we can deduce that the European whites had a consciousness of their own exoticism in Africa, turning the 'mirror' on themselves.

Finally, our study reveals to us the possibility of representing the reality of colonialism and post-colonialism in terms of the great diversity of relations between one side and the other. This is demonstrated in the last film which constantly analyses the possibility of sustaining and maintaining a discussion of multiplicity and equality, based on the relations which are constructed from the lives and daily lives of concrete people who participated directly or indirectly in the European colonial experience (Sherzer, 1996), and which in part, contributed to the implosion with the immediate identification of the subjects in stereotypical black and white categories.

*A Tempestade da Terra* inevitably directs us towards the idea that, even within a system which rigorously codifies identities and infinitely manipulates the memories (the colonial *Estado Novo*), it is always possible to construct other views (with tension and contradiction, which also implies moving and dialectical identities) which subvert the

<sup>17</sup> However, in *Deixem-me ao Menos Subir às Palmeiras...* the blacks are represented as almost ready to make History and assumed a position as authors of their own destiny.



hegemony of the view of the colonist. This other views are activated by categories such as age, generation, gender, education, the time in history, the history of each life, political stance, amongst other dimensions comprising the concrete life of the individuals.

In conclusion, this journey along the Portuguese cinema of the twentieth century, directs us from the mono-thematicism of identity and the official memories to the difficult and unstable pluralism which still are struggles conducted by individuals, groups and societies in order to sustain the possibility of keeping a degree of openness and flexibility in terms of the multiplicity and pluralism of memories and identities (Martins, 1996).

These works of Sísifo may be considered part of the process of humanisation, along with the tireless and rigorous exercise of individual and collective struggle for freedom, endless by nature. ✍

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