Spaces of Memory: The Construction of Colonial
and Post-Colonial Spaces in the Memories of Former
Portuguese Colonizers

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ABTRACT: The question of the intricate relation between memory and history has become even more problematic in the post-colonial condition. The role of memory in the shaping of history, understood as a strategic reading of the past, is now a deeply contested one, for we are confronted with plural, conflictive and politicized narratives, which erupted from the identities that co-existed in the tensional field of colonial power relations. My paper addresses a segment of this new landscape, focusing on the memories built by former Portuguese colonizers who occupied different positions in the structure of colonial power. I question the strategies of nostalgia and resentment and the work of mourning that are ingrained in those memories. They will also be considered in their close relation to the imaginary construction of colonial and post-colonial spaces, since they disclose particular representations of Portugal, Angola and Mozambique as sites for identity-building, which symbolically extend the motherly body and the family relationships (Mother-Father/Child). Cleavages between "good" and "bad" spaces, but also the ambivalent swaying between the two, are pervasive in the memories analyzed in this paper.

RESUMO: A questão da relação intrincada entre memória e história tornou-se ainda mais problemática na condição pós-colonial. O papel da memória na formatação da história, entendida como leitura estratégica do passado, sofre, nos dias de hoje, uma contestação profunda, pois somos confrontados com narrativas plurais, conflituais e politizadas, que irrompem a partir de identidades que coexistiram no campo tensional das relações de poder coloniais. Este texto aborda um segmento desta nova paisagem, focando as memórias construídas por antigos colonizadores portugueses que ocuparam diferentes posições na estrutura do poder colonial. Interrogo as estratégias de nostalgia e de ressentimento e o trabalho do luto inscritos nessas memórias. Estas são também encaradas na sua relação estreita com a construção imaginária dos espaços coloniais e pós-coloniais, na medida em que, através delas, se manifestam representações particulares de Portugal, Angola e Moçambique enquanto lugares para a elaboração identitária, que expandem, simbolicamente, o corpo materno e as relações intrafamiliares (Mãe-Pai/Filho). As clivagens entre "bons" e "maus" espaços, bem como a oscilação ambivalente entre essas duas categorias, percorrem igualmente as memórias analisadas neste texto.

The question of the intricate relationship between memory and history has become even more problematic under the post-colonial condition. The role of memory in the shaping of history – understood as a strategic reading of the past – is now a deeply contested one, for we are confronted with plural, conflictive and politicized narratives which erupted from the identities that co-existed in the tensional field of colonial power relations. My paper addresses a segment of this new landscape, focusing on the memories constructed by former Portuguese colonizers who occupied different positions in the structure of colonial power. It is my contention that the memories and narratives produced by those who integrated the formerly dominant side, defeated in the process of the colonial wars, must be conceived as part and parcel of post-coloniality. This must be the case if we conceive the post-colonial as a historical frame whose relation with its intercalated times – including the colonial past – is a complex intertwining of continuities and discontinuities, consonances and dissonances, which are by themselves at the root of a new regime of signification. Since the latter is implied in the displacement and reconfiguration of what is represented as 'Portuguese space', there is no strong rationale to exclude from post-coloniality the memories and narratives of those who belonged to 'the other side', the one that was overthrown in the course of the historical process. By thinking the present through a reconstruction of the colonial past, those discourses are a different way of articulating the prefix of post-colonialism, even when they strive to keep themselves out of it. In fact, only within the limits of our current historical condition are they pronounced and understood.

This kind of discourse has been produced mainly by former members of the Portuguese Armed Forces, European as well as African, but also by civilians who played significant roles within the colonial system and its military apparatus. Far from what we could expect, such voices are not necessarily variations around a single theme of resentment, immersed in an impossible process of mourning, and therefore condemned to reproduce the ideological and symbolic schemes of colonialism in some sort of 'compulsion to repeat'. Neither are these other discourses confined to the 'discourse of trauma', no matter how relevant this might be in a country where a huge psychic repression allowed the Portuguese society to deal with the independence of its former African colonies and the loss of an overseas dimension without any significant social upheaval (Lourenço 1982: 41-46). Such repression, on the other hand, has been blocking the catharsis of remembrance among the traumatized veterans of African wars, hindering an appropriation of memory that is only now taking its first steps, namely through the spread of blogs and websites by former members of the Portuguese Armed Forces in which personal narratives are articulated.

In fact, the discourses in question have a much more complex and ambiguous nature. *Ambivalence* is the key word to understand them, and it is not the result of mere theoretical stubbornness if this concept will be recurrent in the following analysis.

To begin with, I am going to focus on the strategies of memory developed by Fernando Amaro Monteiro, a scholar who worked as an assistant in the Services for the Centralization and Coordination of Information in Mozambique, the branch of Portuguese Intelligence in that region during the colonial war, from 1965 to 1973. Born in Lisbon in 1935 and having grown up mostly in Angola before moving to Mozambique, where he lived from 1962 to 1974, Amaro Monteiro is a crucial figure that has yet to be the subject of detailed study. Although, as a liberal monarchist, he was opposed to Salazar and subjected to constant surveillance by the political police, Monteiro believed that the survival of opposition against Salazar's dictatorship demanded the existence of an 'Overseas Portugal'. His past did not prevent him from being hired as a full member of the intelligence department. Maintaining a low profile and preferring to remain behind the scenes, he worked extensively in the Mozambican intelligence services to help counter the anti-colonial guerrilla. Between 1965 and 1973, he became the architect of a plan designed to seduce the Islamic leadership of Mozambique into an alliance with the Portuguese authorities against the nationalist movement. Amaro Monteiro also produced several fictional works, as part of a movement of authors who aspired to create an African literature in the Portuguese language, and these texts also give us hints about the way he appropriated his own relation with Africa.

After the independence of Mozambique, Monteiro assumed a public voice to claim what he considered to be his place in history. This drove him to rebuild his own memories in order to rearticulate historical events. The starting point of this process can be found in a text published in 1975, *Open Letter to the Muslims of Independent Mozambique*, in which the author establishes an imaginary relation between the former colonizer and the former colonized. To the best of my knowledge, such an attempt is absolutely unique in the Portuguese post-colonial order and gives the text all its singularity. Addressing Mozambican Muslims, Monteiro displays a peculiar form of legitimization and self-assessment, a form that he insists must not be mistaken for any kind of remorse or self- justification:

> '*Should I apologize to you in any way, and would it be hard for me to do so? Do I have any guilt buried deep in my conscience, and is it hard to let it come to the surface as would a body plunged into the salt ocean water? No. It's not that. ... For I say to you: I have no apology to offer. I have no reason to apologize. But I am sorry indeed, for the time wasted. I am sorry indeed for the chains that,*

from a certain moment, kept me tied to the strict loyalty to a specific idea of Fatherland, an idea that was mine and mine alone' (Monteiro 1975: 27-28).

To this Amaro Monteiro adds a note of self-awareness: *'At the time, I had already understood that I was lost in a generous but impossible dream.'* Such a confession is followed by an appropriation of memory and history, one that points to a partial reconciliation with the present. The passage that I am going to quote, written by a former member of the colonial staff, is probably unrivalled as it represents a work of mourning that is quite unusual in Portuguese post-coloniality. All the more so as it was written in 1975, when the debate around the process of decolonization was still raging. My reference to the idea of mourning is not out of place: Amaro Monteiro himself uses the metaphor of a 'dead body' to suggest the defeat of his colonial project and to describe how he came to terms with that. I will quote the entire passage because only in that way does it make perfect sense:

> *'Wounded, but calm and clearheaded, I stand. My arms open to you, in total fraternity, I stand, wounded but calm and clear-headed. And I declare that I have been defeated, and I understand so at a great distance, with sacrifice of spirit and with no reason for remorse...*
>
> *So I stand, at peace with myself, greeting the dead body of my idea, open before all of you in the reality of what had to be. And so I salute the independent Mozambique. I do not deny that it was hard for me to reach this point; the hardship of the defeated warrior that addresses his victor. I do confess: my pride is affected. ... But I force myself to speak. Yes. Having crossed this frontier, the fraction of a second in which I realize what I have just written, I salute the independent Mozambique with all my good will. I salute the dead and the maimed that linger in my mind. But I also salute those among you, dead, invalid, or in perfect health, who fought, with strong belief, for everything they wanted. I salute the valour of the warriors on both sides, now that there is no side and earth fills the holes left by the bombs. I salute the widows, white and black or black and white, and I salute the orphans of all colours. I pray to God that Mozambique may become a great country, made of fertile land, schools full, factories blowing the whistle of progress in peace and unity. This I ask, defeated but with my head held high, looking everyone right in their eyes'* (1975: 28-29).

Overall, the first paragraphs of this *Open Letter* seem to negate the possibility of peaceful reconciliation, conveying in its stead a sense of disorientation, as if the author was absolutely out of place in the revolutionary Portugal of 1975. We see the idea of inner exile together with the opposition between the 'heat' of Africa and the 'ice' of Portugal:

In the half-light of the exile I am stranded in, of this air, so strange to me, in which I look for myself, I search for a sign, no matter how small, of twilight in Africa…

… I would like to call my closest friends there by their first names, and tell them that I am bitter in the cold afternoon of these days, and nothing, absolutely nothing tells me a single word in which I may find an echo of the warmth in which we lived, my children, me and our dead, seven generations of Africa. That I am alone, that I search but cannot find, that I feel confused in the face of an identity that has always been mine, an identity that I am now fumbling for.

… I look around and I cannot find other faces, other eyes that speak to me. I can only see blurry faces hidden in the shadow. All the same, all standardized (1975: 7-8).

The exclusion from Africa is thus linked to the feeling of self-seclusion, to the sense of being expelled from a certain identity and to its necessary reconstruction. As the agent of a colonial order that was at the core of national identity, his post-colonial condition plunges him in a sort of post-identity. Amaro Monteiro says: *'My Fatherland is dead. Now I feel that I am merely a national of this country.'*

In this imagination of a lost Fatherland or Motherland, there is a distinction between a good and a bad space. In Monteiro's discourse, the good space is clearly the idealized Angola of his childhood and adolescence. His relationship with the representation of that Angola is dominated by a desire of pre-Oedipal fusionality, essentially dual, investing in that space the images of uterus and Mother as primordial model:

'Despite the fascination of Mozambique, Angola for me still was the Earth-placenta through which all other lands are loved. No man can reject his link to mother-earth. And the mother-earth is the one through which we learn the first realities of the world around us' (Monteiro 1975: 49).

A few lines below he writes, *'Born and raised in Angola: the soil that slips through my fingers if I write anything with love. // I listen to its womb and wait.'*

It is worthwhile to recall that a significant part of the imagination underlying the conflict between colonizers and colonized stood on a symbolic dispute for the control of a motherly space. A conflict within what we might call a colonial Oedipal scene, in which the colonizer Father and the colonized Son fought for a territory imagined under different figurations of motherhood. This is quite perceptible in the discourse of the colonized, reinventing himself as the liberator of an oppressed Motherland. Some of the poetry that emerged in the Portuguese colonies developed this kind of fantasy as we can see, for instance, in a famous poem by Agostinho Neto, the historical leader of the major nationalist movement in Angola:

'Tomorrow
We will sing anthems to freedom
When we celebrate
The date of abolition of this slavery.
We are looking for light
Your children, Mother
(all the black mothers whose children
are gone),
They search for life' (Neto 1979: 10)

The same imagery is also apparent in the following verses by Noémia de Sousa, a prominent Mozambican poet also related to the anti-colonial drive:

'Oh my mysterious and natural Africa,
My raped virgin,
My Mother!' (Noémia de Sousa, in Ferreira 1977: 92)

On the other hand, the discourse of power articulated by Salazar, the Portuguese dictator, had also invoked a motherly space to represent the identity of a colonial empire: *'Everywhere the Motherland succeeded in imprinting its image and fixing some basic character traits, and therefore the unity of the Empire is no artificial creation'* (Salazar 1959: 334).

Such family-based metaphors – Mother, Father, Children –, so recurrent in political discourse, only illustrate the phantasmatic source of the identity strategies that are inherent to them. Returning to Fernando Amaro Monteiro's memories, we can see how much, in his 1973 memoir, he fantasized Angola as Mother, uterus or placenta, referring to a *'fertile land spawning, giving birth to the future, promising greatness and even more greatness'* (1979: 205). However, this image was far from being peaceful and non-ambivalent. Recalling the way he faced the impending collapse of Portuguese colonialism, the author tells us how he perceived Angola as a space torn apart by tensions and conflicts that threatened its unity, the idealized wholeness of the Mother's body:

'... There was a strange tension in the different social strata, an aggressiveness in the way people talked to one another, a viciousness insinuating in the most trivial things. White people engaged ...in boasting wealth and power. Black people engaged ... in asserting individuality and arrogance' (1979: 205).

The 'good space' was under lethal threat. Which brings Amaro Monteiro back to his uterine metaphor, re-enacting the myth of Paradise Lost: *'Was it really necessary for humans to bully one another so, as if the promise of a vast and pregnant womb did not promise enough for everyone?'* (1979: 206)

To the 'good space' of Angola, on the verge of becoming lost to Portugal, Monteiro opposes a bad space, one just as ambivalent as the imagined colony was. And the 'bad space' is Portugal, reduced to nothing more but a 'European rectangle,' the post-colonial Portugal to which any 'uterine' return is unthinkable since no 'placenta,' no real life is attached to it. On the contrary, the European or mainland Portugal can only be redeemed and overcome its smallness through a relationship with its colonies, and Angola above all. In an autobiographical short-story he wrote in 1979, Amaro Monteiro suggested that such a relation to Angola would shame the 'little European rectangle' but would also redeem it by tying Portugal to a stream of life, one that could only be found in Angola (1979: 207). In Monteiro's view, as in so many other perspectives of former Portuguese colonizers, the original sin of the revolution that brought democracy to Portugal, in 1974, lay in the fact that it cut the umbilical cord to what was known as the Overseas, restoring Portugal to its simple European dimension, perceived as 'too small.'

The 'smallness' or 'pettiness' of Portugal is a bogeyman that has been haunting the Portuguese mind at least since the nineteenth century, especially among the *intelligentsia* and political leaders. We cannot properly understand this obsession without taking into account Portugal's position in the hierarchy of the world-system. According to the sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Portugal was, for many centuries, both the core of a colonial empire and the periphery of Europe, performing the systemic function of intermediary between core and peripheral countries; this gave it the double character of a simultaneously colonial and colonized country (Santos 1994: 58-59, 130-132; 2002: 42-45). Trapped in a double condition of 'modernity' and 'backwardness', Portuguese identities could only reflect that halfway position, always wavering between megalomaniac self-images of imperial designs, and shameful, depressing or self-debased representations, the former compensating the latter in a symbolic and rhetoric strategy.

As far back as the nineteenth century, ideologues and politicians were forced to acknowledge how much Portugal depended on foreign capital and aid to improve its colonies, and how little the country counted in the larger picture of true imperial power. Whereas Portuguese colonial practices did indeed show the external signs of colonial domination, at the same time they concealed the fact that Portugal, as a colonial power, was merely a semi-peripheral intermediary

of Western core countries' interests in Africa. When those interests began to shift, in the 1960s and 1970s, to a neo-colonialist strategy, Portugal inevitably lost most of its foreign support. That Salazar refused to renounce the colonies against the whole world only reveals the importance colonialism had on the national self-image of authoritarian political elites. However, even here one comes across astounding contradictions, expressive of identities not at ease with their 'semi-peripheral' condition. Until 1961, the year of the nationalist upsurge in Angola that triggered the colonial war, Salazar's colonialism had been conspicuous for its ambivalence. When the dictator rose to power, one of his first gestures was to drastically downgrade the colonial ambitions that politicians of the first Portuguese Republic (1910-1926) had nurtured (Pereira 1987: 92-94). Salazar was aware that Portugal could not afford such dreams. For three decades, he managed to be a reluctant colonialist, raising a wall of bureaucratic intricacies for everyone who wanted to migrate to the colonies, and ambivalently playing with two opposite discourses: one that reinforced the image of the Portuguese as a 'small and humble people'; the other indulging in a mythomaniac compensation which redrew Portugal as an exemplary country, puffed up to become a trans-European and multi-racial empire:

> *'We are a strange country, in various senses contradictory: small within the European continent, but vast Overseas; poor in its actual production, but with great potential richness; sweet and peaceful in its customary way of life and, at the same time, able to fight bravely and unselfishly for its ideals...'* (Salazar 1967: 23).

We may say that the structural troubles that undermined Portuguese colonial dreams were compensated by an ability to become symbolically de-centred, i.e., to displace the symbolic core of the empire. As the above-quoted sociologist emphasizes (2002: 76), Portugal became the only colonial power ever to move the capital of the empire from its metropolitan territory to a colony when the Portuguese royal prince and his family fled to Brazil to escape the French invasion in 1808. Hence the fact that, even within the hyper-centralized politics imposed by Salazar, some fantasies emerged that supported the idea of moving the symbolic core of national identity. They all had in common a disdain regarding the 'European Portugal' and the wish to circumvent its alleged pettiness. This idea is expressed, for example, by Lobiano do Rego, the nom-de-plume of Catholic priest Albino da Silva Pereira (1908-1993), a Portuguese missionary in Mozambique and an eager supporter of Salazar's dictatorship and his colonial project. In the 60s, Lobiano do Rego deemed offensive, for the Overseas Portuguese, that the name of Portugal should be limited to a rectangular portion of the Iberian peninsula in Europe. Resorting once more to

motherly symbols, he said that '*the Iberian peninsula is no longer the mother-land.*' Therefore, he maintained that the name of Portugal should extend to an imagined space comprising the African colonies of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea, Cape-Verde, and S. Tomé and Príncipe, and that Lisbon should no longer be the capital of such an enlarged Portugal. According to him, the core of Portugal was located not in Europe but in Luanda or Lourenço Marques (currently Maputo), and these were the sites that deserved to be the administrative centre of a transcontinental nation (Rego n.d.: 65-67).

Strange as it may seem, his idea of an African site for the capital of Portugal was not an isolated delirium amongst the ideologists of Portuguese colonialism. It was the logical consequence of a propaganda design that had renamed the colonies as provinces of Portugal. And it was also a sign of the apocalyptic stubbornness of the right-wing fringes of the political system, who insisted on believing that Portugal could only survive as a nation if it kept control of all its African colonies. When the colonial war in Mozambique was reaching its peak, Kaúlza de Arriaga, the Commander-in-Chief of the Portuguese Armed Forces in that region, confided to the Consul General of France that '*Portugal could drop an atomic bomb in the international still-waters*'. And such a metaphorical bomb was precisely the decision to replace Lisbon with Luanda as the capital of Portugal[1] – a decision that was destined to remain on paper alone.

Despite all that set him apart from Lobiano do Rego, namely the fact that the former was fiercely Islamophobic, Fernando Amaro Monteiro shared in the fantasy that attempted to compensate the narcissistic flaws of Portugal by expanding its space and displacing its symbolic centre. A process which was very close to the famous map conceived by Henrique Galvão in 1935, one that denied the 'smallness' of Portugal by projecting its African colonial extensions over Western and Central Europe, resorting to non-European territories to create a supra-European identity and suggesting a sort of reverse colonization – Portugal 'colonizing' the main countries of Europe (Spain, France, Switzerland and several regions of the former Austro-Hungarian empire, with the meaningful exclusion of the United Kingdom) over which the outlines of Angola, Mozambique and other Portuguese possessions were superimposed.

All this was, of course, a huge operation of denial in the symbolic field. Later, when the dictatorship persisted in leading a war on three fronts – Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-

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[1] Letter by Jacques Honoré, General Consul of France in Lourenço Marques, to the French Ambassador in Portugal, 18 December 1969 (Diplomatic Archives of la Courneuve (Paris), Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Afrique-Levant, Mozambique 1966-1972, *Politique intérieure – Politique portugaise au Mozambique et en Afrique*, 59QO/28, April 1966-January 1970).

Bissau –, it became increasingly clear that Portugal had neither the means nor the external conditions to emerge victorious. In his *Open Letter to the Muslims of Mozambique*, Fernando Amaro Monteiro portrays the agony of the Portuguese dictatorship, recalling that in the end nobody inside the regime believed in it. The colonial wars dealt the final blow:

> *The colonial wars accelerated the inner combustion of the system, in spite of the costly façade it maintained. The hesitation and incompetence that undermined the regime clearly came to light in those wars'* (1975: 38-39).

In this instance, fire and combustion are funereal symbols related to the end of Portuguese colonialism. In one of Monteiro's literary texts there is a character, Gonçalo Rios, bearing some resemblance to the author, who marks the end of his life in Luanda in late 1974 by setting fire to his own house:

> *'At night, that fire was beauty crackling in the waters of the bay and Bishop's beach. The huge blaze was visible from both sides; but even so it was not completely prodigal, so that even the fire would be an accomplice in the way a certain era was coming to an end* (Monteiro 1979: 226-227).

A metaphor for the end of coloniality, which does not forsake colonialism as a system, but embraces its sacrificial immolation. Destruction, reassessment, funereal ceremony, and farewell in a single gesture. A pro-colonial way of moving into post-colonialism?

The memories of another prominent figure in the Portuguese colonial staff, Jorge Jardim, also associated the end of Portuguese colonialism with metaphors of fire in a book with the revealing title, *Mozambique: Burned Land*. Far from being the discrete stage director that Amaro Monteiro was, Jardim was a major player in colonized Mozambique. Born in Lisbon in 1920, he moved to that colony in 1952 after having been part of the government for five years. A close friend of Salazar, he acted in Mozambique as a kind of secret agent, surrounding himself with a mantle of mystery and power. He felt at ease in the most different arenas, promoting approaches to the USSR and China, friendly relations with Mozambique's African neighbouring States, such as Zambia and Malawi, as well as strategic alliances with the white racist governments of Rhodesia and South Africa. Despite the fact that he did not hold any official position or public office, Jorge Jardim led a private army in the Mozambican region of Beira and his influence went so far as giving orders to the political police. In 1973, in the face of the imminent collapse of Portuguese rule in Mozambique, Jardim pondered several desperate manoeuvres, some of them without the knowledge or actual support of the central government in Lisbon: backed by

Kenneth Kaunda, he tried to negotiate peace terms with Frelimo that might safeguard the white Portuguese presence in Mozambique; at the same time, he considered the possibility of severing all ties with Portugal in order to turn Mozambique into a new Rhodesia, ruled by a white minority that would be able to retain all its prerogatives over black Africans. Needless to say, none of these projects came remotely close to success.

Whereas Amaro Monteiro built his own post-coloniality on a void left by the impossibility of his return to a uterine Africa, Jorge Jardim still dreamed of a homecoming. Instead of being concerned with the quest for a transcontinental Portugal, he wondered about the possibility of returning to a post-colonial Mozambique where he could still have a role to perform. Therefore, the fire Jardim wrote about did not belong to a funeral pyre as Monteiro's. It was, instead, an ambivalent fire that could be either redemptive or simply destructive. In the prologue to his memoirs, Jorge Jardim describes the African fire which burns the grass, runs and grows across the savannah, fed by the blowing wind, beautiful and terrible. This is a redemptive fire for it causes the rebirth of the land. We are again confronted with metaphors of motherhood:

'Afterwards, the earth of this bountiful land seems to become more fertile. The soft grass sprouts vigorously when the ashes are scattered at the first blow of the wind, and a new life returns, in the everlasting cycle. Even the trees look younger, released from the useless and dry branches that the fire has scorched.' (Jardim 1976: 11)

But there is another kind of fire, a fire which burns everything down to the very roots of the land, *'preventing the spontaneous grass from being born again'*. In Jardim's mind, this metaphorical fire was not properly African. It was ignited by foreign hands, ignorant and criminal hands belonging to arsonists without colour. Jardim uses this image to sum up what he thinks decolonization was really about: a crime committed by Marxist-driven foreigners who persuaded some Africans into turning away from the righteous path. And this path is suggested by another ordinary metaphor: the image of an all-encompassing house, which, as we know from psychoanalysis, is another symbol of the mother's body:

'In my intentions and goals, Mozambique would have been the happy Fatherland of all Mozambicans, where everybody would feel at home and accept all those willing to contribute to the common task. A house with strong Portuguese foundations.' (Jardim 1976: 29)

This is clearly the mythology of luso-tropicalism. In the early 1960s, as an answer to the growing movements against colonial power, the Portuguese authorities resorted to the idea of

'luso-tropicalism', a concept invented by Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre (1961). By celebrating miscegenation with other races, which the Portuguese people allegedly promoted wherever they lived, 'luso-tropicalism' made it possible to present Portuguese colonial domination not as colonialism but simply as a 'special' kind of ethnic relation based on a 'natural openness' towards other cultures and peoples. This implied an image of Portugal as a multiracial society, a multicultural miracle *avant la lettre*. Former colonizers like Jorge Jardim were still clinging on to this mythological image when everything they used to know around them was falling apart:

> *'Our multiracial example, of peace and harmony, will be the best weapon to destroy the racism that persists around us. With the love of the new generations, who have to live and mix without prejudice, we will be more successful than those who resort to hatred and guns.'* (Jardim 1976: 414)

The ideologists of Portuguese colonialism re-enacted this mythology again and again throughout the decade of war in Africa, to the point of presenting the colonial war they were engaged in as a very special one, less aggressive and more humane, the Portuguese way of making war. Luso-tropicalism was brandished as a rhetorical reaction to the accusations that were being directed at the Portuguese state in international organizations, particularly the United Nations.

Jorge Jardim imagined and cherished a certain post-colonial order for Mozambique, and he opposed it to the Marxist regime of Frelimo. His project, however, was nothing but an idealized version of an already glamourized image of the Portuguese colonial system. Evidence of the luso-tropical paradise the official propaganda insisted on parading was hard to come by in colonized Mozambique. In 1956 Jorge Dias, a well-known anthropologist, stressed how Portuguese colonists in Mozambique tended to adopt racist attitudes, in mimicry of their white counterparts in Rhodesia or South Africa. According to Jorge Dias, they did so in order to differentiate their identity from the blacks, thus avoiding the accusation of being too hybrid, of not being as white as Northern Europeans[2] – one made by Western foreigners that always tormented the bad conscience of Portuguese ideologues. Official support for luso-tropicalism was therefore unmasked as a large denial operation, whose aim was to gloss over the uncertainty of Portugal's identity position. Far from being comfortable and problem-free for the Portuguese

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[2] Relatório Confidencial de 1956, *Minorias Étnicas nas Províncias Ultramarinas* [Confidential Report of 1956, *Ethnic Minorities in the Overseas Provinces*], 10-12 (ANTT/AOS/CO/UL-37, 1, fls. 11-13 [National Archive of Torre do Tombo / Oliveira Salazar Archive]).

people, miscegenation or *mestizage* were disturbing experiences, even when the authorities encouraged them as a strategy to control territories too vast to be simply colonized. In 1958, the same author quoted above still complained that in Mozambique many children of mixed couples were classified under the category of 'natives', which meant that, whenever their white fathers did not recognize them, they were grouped with blacks according to the hierarchical ethnic labels created for racial discrimination. Besides this, Dias saw how the rest of 'white society' tended to marginalize mixed couples (1958: 75-76).

This brings me to the last and most impressive memoirs, this time not by a former colonizer, or someone who held a position of power in the colonial staff, in spite of the fact that the person in question was inevitably immersed in the power relations that were intrinsic to colonialism. The work I am referring to, *Notebook of Colonial Memories,* was written by Isabela Figueiredo, born in Lourenço Marques from a Portuguese couple who had settled in Mozambique, probably in the 1960s, to flee a life of poverty in their home country. She was 12 years old when the Portuguese military toppled the dictatorship, putting an end to the colonial wars. In 1975, her parents bought her a ticket to Portugal, so that she could escape the new Frelimo regime. Thus, she became one of a wave of *retornados* or returnees, a word used to label all colonists who were retracing their steps back to Portugal after the independence of the former colonies. The term was actually a misnomer, since many of them had been born in Africa (as was the case with Ms. Figueiredo), and their supposed 'return' was actually the first time they ever set foot in Europe.

Published in 2009, Isabela Figueiredo's *Notebook of Colonial Memories* is nothing short of a paradigmatic shift in writing on the Portuguese presence in Africa. It is the first testimony that completely breaks with each and every one of the 'luso-tropical' tropes that glossed over the power relations between white colonists and black Africans. In these memoirs, there is no masculine fantasy of a return to a uterine Africa, nor the harmonious multiracial society that Jorge Jardim dreamed of at the end of his book. It is rather the impossibility of return that underlies Isabela Figueiredo's writing:

'Outcasts like me are people who could not return to the place where they were born, who cut all legal bonds with it, but not the emotional ones. They are persona non grata in the places where they were born because their presence inspires bad memories' (Figueiredo 2009: 133).

Isabela Figueiredo uncovers the repressed memory of the racist order that prevailed in the unequal relations of colonizers and colonized. By doing so, she discloses the dirty hidden secret

that lies behind the nostalgia currently prevalent in several books about the 'good old days' of Luanda or Lourenço Marques. And that is surely the main reason why Isabela Figueiredo's book has been so disturbing, especially for the returnees that are now integrated and almost diluted in Portuguese society. She confronts the sweetened view of race relations in Mozambique during the colonial rule with the disclosure of pervasive violence. Violence in segregation, in the abyss the colonists put between themselves and black Africans, violence in the impossibility of dialogue or interaction between the young Isabela and her young black neighbour, symbolic violence in the worse seats that were destined to blacks in public cinemas, straightforward violence in the insults and beatings that black workers suffered at the hands of their white employers.

A violence that was also sexualized and gendered. The book begins with crude references to the obsession of white sexually repressed women regarding what they imagined to be the overt sexuality of black women, and the traditional mix of repulse and envy with which they conceived such sexual demeanour. As we all know, these are classic topics in white racist representations of black Africans. Ambivalent topics, for that matter, since in the eyes of their colonizers, blacks simultaneously became targets for rejection and objects of desire.

All this led Isabela Figueiredo to conclude by writing, *'Please, don't talk to me about the soft colonialism of the Portuguese…Don't feed me that fairy-tale'* (2009: 131).

Contrary to the apparent good conscience of Fernando Amaro Monteiro, who insists on saying he does not feel remorse and has no reason to ask for forgiveness, Isabela Figueiredo's book is saturated with guilt. Her sense of guilt is multi-layered. First of all, there is an overwhelming regret simply for having been a colonist, or the daughter of one:

'In the land where I was born I would always be the colonist's daughter. That stain would be on me. Retaliation would be more than likely.' (Figueiredo 2009: 133).

But in the quest for her own identity, Isabela Figueiredo realizes that the unbearable stain can also be the very land where she was born, a land whose image corresponds to the core of her self. The guilt, the shame, the place of birth and the self in its own right are all but one:

'The land where I was born exists in me as a stain which is impossible to erase. I follow around sailors whose coat sleeve bears the word Mozambique!' (Figueiredo 2009: 133).

Meanwhile, a very different form of guilt crosses Figueiredo's book, this time caused by her relation to the memory of her father, a shadow that haunts the entire book. Guilty of exposing

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not only the violent racism of white Portuguese colonists, returnees from the old colonies as she herself is, but above all guilty of exposing the vile behaviour of her own father as the embodiment and true face of Portuguese racism and even of Portuguese colonialism. Not that she feels this particular guilt. But she is aware that most of the old returnees would accuse her of being unfair and, above all, of exposing a truth they would prefer to bury:

'People don't change. A white person who lived colonialism will be a white person who lived colonialism until the day he dies. And all my truth is a betrayal to them. An insult to the memory of my father, but the two of us can handle that' (Figueiredo 2009: 131).

Figueiredo's memories are actually also built around an Oedipal theme; in this case however Oedipus is not a metaphor. The whole book is long letter of love and hate written to a father who is no longer here. As Isabela Figueiredo stated in several interviews, she was only able to write it after her father's passing, and her book became a long-repressed catharsis. As her father encapsulates all the racism the Portuguese were capable of, it is through the relation with him that the author mediates her own relation to Mozambique and Africa. Throughout the book, she sways between two opposite images: on the one hand, the portrait of a handsome, caring and protective father, whose body replaces in a certain way the absent uterus of the mother; on the other hand, the picture of a brutal hateful man, always ready to scorn and strike the blacks around him. By writing these memories, Isabela achieves two objectives that are closely related: she performs a work of mourning for her father's death, and at the same time she comes to terms with her own past and identity.

Significantly, Figueiredo's book deals with the racism of the average colonists, those belonging to the poorer strata of Portuguese society, who sought in Africa their chance to climb the social ladder. Whereas Amaro Monteiro and Jorge Jardim moved among the upper classes, Isabela Figueiredo brings to light the perspective of people from the working classes, whom colonialism allowed to integrate the petty bourgeoisie.

I am going to close with a final word about this singular and relevant book. Despite being an indictment of Portuguese colonialism, these memories share a peculiar feature with Amaro Monteiro's texts. Both betray a deep disgust towards European Portugal and those who live there. Figueiredo devotes a full page to the recollection of her feelings when, for the first time, she met the Portuguese who had remained in Portugal, the so-called 'metropolis':

'The metropolis was dirty, ugly, pale, icy. The Portuguese of the metropolis were small in mind, so very small and stupid and backward and gossips. ... What a sad people! They amused themselves

mocking us, rubbing it in that life was hard, oh yes it was, that here we wouldn't have little blacks to wash our feet and our little asses, that we would have to work. Lazy bastards, who never lifted a finger in their lives, who never knew what it meant to build a life and to lose it, the sad, small, and resigned. What did they know about who blacks were, and what we were, and what we had just lived through, coward sons of a bitch. Meaningless bastards, if I had to say the truth, if I ever had to say the truth. ... So ugly, so narrow-minded, these Portuguese who stayed behind, these Portuguese of Portugal, tanned by the wine in their bottles. Ugly, dark, poor, with no light in their faces or hands. Small.' (Figueiredo 2009: 123).

Once again, we hit upon images of coldness – as in Amaro Monteiro's memories – and smallness to describe the Portuguese, as if the awareness of the peripheral or semiperipheral condition of Portugal descended on the young returnee who had just arrived, coming from the vastness of Africa. And we see, once more, the need to accept a post-coloniality which is also a reconfiguration in space. Not a physical space but an imaginary one: the space of identity.

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