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# To Link Life Histories to Historical Narratives

The Place of 'Memory' in Post-1974 Portuguese Society

*Lier récits de vie et récits historiques : La place de la « mémoire » dans la société portugaise post-1974*

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## Introduction - 'strong' versus 'weak' memories: an imperial past that can't pass ?

The Portuguese Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974 was an historical rupture that brought an end to almost fifty years of a dictatorial regime (1926-1974), to a colonial war (1961-1975) and one of the major European colonial empires.<sup>1</sup> Forty years later, in April 2014, a text by the essayist and philosopher Eduardo Lourenço was published under the title *Do colonialismo como nosso impensado* or, colonialism as our 'unthinkable' (LOURENÇO, 2014).<sup>2</sup> Forty years was the time needed to 'return to recent painful memories' (STORA, 2005). Yet Lourenço's book addresses neither the return to, nor the recovery of the colonial past: he writes rather of silence and concealment. Portuguese society continues to be permeated by the imperial imaginary of an 'innocent colonialism' (LOURENÇO, 2014). This imperial imaginary 'remains a fundamental pillar of Portuguese nationalism' (DOMINGOS, 2016), fuelled until recently by a hagiographical historiography of empire memories.<sup>3</sup>

## Nostalgia and Imperial Nationalism

The history and the memories of the empire were essential in the production of the Portuguese national identity, since the 19th century. The empire functioned as a guarantor of national independence in the face of the Spanish menace, beginning with the Iberian union of 1580-1640, as well as threats from other European nations, and as a

legacy of the golden age of 'discovery'. Updated since 1974,<sup>4</sup> the positive vision of the history of the colonial empire is based on nationalist myths (ALEXANDRE, 1979) that have been very widely disseminated during the *Estado Novo* (1933-1974) through the channels of propaganda (and censorship), and articulated to the idea of the divine essence of Portugal's civilizing mission: the idea that the Portuguese were the first to abolish the slave trade;<sup>5</sup> the myth of a 'pluricontinental' and 'multiracial' nation associated with the idea of greater Portuguese tolerance and adaptability<sup>6</sup> and, from the 1950s, of miscegenation.<sup>7</sup> One of the specificities of Salazar's policy was also to make imperial nationalism, the 'only thing linking the community together' supplanting in an authoritarian context 'a refusal of or even struggle against political citizenship' in both Portugal and the colonies (MANYA, 2006, 196).

The official memory of the empire has not been linear over the last two centuries, but it nevertheless contains a core ideology regarding 'the high-point of the imperial Portuguese state' (SOBRAL, 2007). This transcends various regimes and political cultures. <sup>8</sup> On 25 April the consensus on the place of the empire in the construction of national identity broke down. But the 'imperial nostalgia (LEAL, 2006) has not disappeared. According to Alexandre, this narrative of the identity of the Portuguese nation is still today 'the expression of a wounded or even diseased collective memory - wounded by its inability to carry out the task of mourning for the ruptures and losses of its history and to be reconciled with them' (ALEXANDRE, 2005-2006, 40).<sup>9</sup>

A reading of 'traumatism' of a former European colonial empire that deploys the psychoanalytic viewpoint of the 'destiny' of the Portuguese nation of Eduardo Lourenço (1999); a destiny rooted both in an inferiority complex - based on historical events tied to empire (the humiliations experienced during the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 and the British Ultimatum of 1890) - and a sense of superiority tied to the 'discovery' of the world, revealing an 'obsessive preoccupation with foreign recognition, and a place in the hierarchy of nations' (ALEXANDRE, 2005-2006, 40).

The imperial nostalgia also founds a 'banal nationalism' (PERALTA, 2011, 232). It is characterized by everyday respect for national identity, implicitly mobilising the stereotypes of *saudade* - 'we are small, but we have already been big' - and hospitality as distinctive features of Portuguese culture' (LEAL, 2006, 78-79). It is conveyed through history books, museums, monuments, the tourism industry<sup>10</sup>, television and, also, Portugal's foreign policy towards an imagined post-colonial Lusophone community and the Portuguese diaspora.

This national narrative, based on the idea of imperial tradition, on a 'hypermagnesia of the age of discovery' (LEAL, 2006, 79) and the representation of a country that is 'a pioneer of cultural dialogue on a global scale, cosmopolitan and modern' (PERALTA, 2011, 232-234), reproduces an official memory in which the processes of conquest, the transatlantic slave trade and the colonial domination are erased. This self-image also explains the low level of awareness of otherness, as well as the racism of contemporary Portuguese society.<sup>11</sup>

## Relationship to recent past: Dictatorship and colonial war

The 'trauma' (ALEXANDRE, 2005-2006; MACHAQUEIRO, 2015), the 'public' or 'collective amnesia' (CARDINA, 2014, 38; JERÓNIMO, 2016: 81) and the 'silence' (SOBRAL, 2007; LOURENÇO, 2014; PERALTA, 2014; DOMINGOS, 2016),<sup>12</sup> do not only have to do with the loss of the

colonial empire. In the democratic society that was constructed, after forty-eight years of dictatorship, on a foundation of forgetting (RIBEIRO 2012: 90), there is also 'historical memory' of repression and anti-fascism that is struggling to emerge (CARDINA, 2014).

Historians and anthropologists<sup>13</sup> have deployed the concept of 'weak memory', borrowed from Enzo Traverso (2005), as well as his analysis of the process of historicisation of memories, to describe a society with 'little interest' in the repressive and dictatorial dimension of the *Estado Novo*<sup>14</sup>.

This 'weak memory' also concerns the violence of the colonial war in Africa - Angola (1961-74), Guinea Bissau (1963-74), Mozambique (1964-74)<sup>15</sup>: the « (...) silence on the Portuguese colonial war is one of the most structuring elements of the democratic and post-imperial reconstruction of Portuguese society » (105) ; a society where a memory of the violence inscribed in the bodies of ex-combatants and its denial by common sense, but also by historians, coexist (MARTINS 2015).

The lack of research on the colonial war until recently<sup>16</sup> sheds light on another aspect of the relationship that Portuguese society has with the decolonization. On the one hand, the fact that the protagonists in the 'Carnation Revolution' were young captains, officers in the colonial army, constitutes a key element in understanding why the thirteen deadly years of war against independence movements 'have never been the subject of broad-ranging public debate' (RIBEIRO and RIBEIRO, 2018, 95).<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, the opposition to the Salazar regime - the elites from which were widely incorporated into the state bureaucracy after 25 April - became predominantly anti-colonial quite late (ROSAS 2015).<sup>18</sup> And no left-wing movements has claimed desertion in the colonial war as a political heritage (CARDINA, 2020, 195) <sup>19</sup>.

In this post-dictatorial and post-colonial situation of double historical rupture, in which the links between anti-fascist and anti-colonial struggle are confused, the figures of 'victims' and 'perpetrators' are even more scrambled together, complicating the collective work on intimate, individual and family memory: that which is needed to facilitate the emergence of a public memory of dictatorship and (de)colonization linked to democratic values (RIBEIRO, 2012).<sup>20</sup>

## On the “disruption”: memorial claims and epistemological debate on “memory”

The extremely homogeneous representations of the history of the colonial empire, and the silences and the lack of interest in the recent violent past that characterise Portuguese society, contrast today with the emergence in the public sphere of critical accounts of this past - dictatorship, colonialism, decolonization - circulated through diverse 'vehicles of memory' (CONFINO, 1997). These include literature, theatre and the performing arts, popular history and documentary films (some broadcast on television).<sup>21</sup> In the meantime, the quantity of research in history, sociology and anthropology has increased, as well as in the trans-disciplinary trend of postcolonial studies, that is focuses on Europe and its 'memories' of wars, totalitarianisms, genocides, imperialisms and colonialisms. In the Portuguese case, this research is also part of a general historiographical 'turn'. This is linked to the transfer of part of the archives from the period of the dictatorship (the PIDE/DGS archive, Salazar's papers, the National Information Secretariat materials) to the Torre do Tombo in Lisbon,

including the archives of the PIDE/DGS present in the colonised territories. These materials have been open for public consultation since 1994.<sup>22</sup>

## The work of memory in the public sphere: from nostalgia to critical public memory

### Narratives and counter narratives of decolonization: the 1990s and the late 2010s

The turn in the relationship to recent violent past(s) took place gradually, at the end of the 1990s and first of all from the experience of decolonization (colonial war and repatriation) considered as a 'major historical rupture' followed by a 'long period of silence' (ALEXANDRE, 2005-06: 38). The silence in the public sphere<sup>23</sup> was first broken by works of literature, which in some cases mingled fiction and reportage about the colonial war,<sup>24</sup> as well as by a multiplicity of stories and testimonies published by former soldiers who fought in the colonial war.

At the same time, the stories of former settlers from Angola and Mozambique, known as the *retornados de África* (1974-75), have also been disseminated via books for a general readership and via photographic essays on the Internet. These narratives are organised around the trauma of loss, of the chaotic departure by airlift in 1975, but also around nostalgia for a lost way of life, a lost space and a lost utopia.<sup>25</sup> These people, living with memories of experiences that they had lived through or heard about, wished to break silence and reject illegitimacy (PERALTA, 2017b), to demand recognition of this 'negative' remembrance (ROUSSO, 1987; MEDEIROS, 2012) driven by a 'sense of being on the margins of history, a sense of not belonging to Portugal, and of not having a right to belong to the place where [they] were born and had lived' (RIBEIRO, 2012, 96).<sup>26</sup>

The end of the decade of the 2000s marked a second 'turn' in the relationship of Portuguese society to its own recent past. Again, this originated in literary works, but also in the performing arts, which deployed official and private archival sources (sometimes belonging to the families of the young artists families) (for example, SCHEFFER, 2017), as well as debates with researchers in the social and human sciences.<sup>27</sup> This second 'turn', following the one in the late 1990s, has two aspects. Some of the counter-narratives of memories of (de)colonization have been published by self-described *retornadas*, or by the children of *retornados*,<sup>28</sup> and these texts denounce the violence of the colonial situation, especially the daily violence in relations between "Whites" and "Blacks". The most exemplary, and perhaps the first, is the autobiography *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais* (A Notebook of Colonial Memories) published in 2009 by the writer Isabel Figueiredo. The coloniser is personified in the person of the father, a settler. The text was originally published as a blog, and appeared in book form only after the father died: 'this testimony to the other face of colonialism as practiced by the Portuguese was supposed to stay silenced, but as the narrator quickly noticed, in Portugal, nobody cares what happened to the blacks, or even to the whites' (RIBEIRO, 2012, 96).

### Towards a politicization of memory: the interweaving of memories of dictatorship and decolonization

These literary narratives, sometimes autobiographical, are part of a broader context of memory, a context that affects Portuguese society. Artists born after 1974 question

their relationship to the country's recent history: the dictatorship of the *Estado Novo*, the Revolution of 25 April 1974, and the period of democratic transition<sup>29</sup>, as well as the emigration of 1960-70 and decolonization. The title of the play *Um Museu Vivo de Memórias Pequenas e Esquecidas* (A Living Museum of Small and Forgotten Memories) sets the tone: it involves questioning

hegemonic narratives that circulate about these events, counter-narratives, memories that have been constructed from consensus, then replicated, rewritten and revisited over the years – by *counter posing* a 'small memory', personal and private, based on the testimonies of anonymous people who lived through those times and who also have their stories to tell.<sup>30</sup>

Joana Craveiro explains that for five years she collected 'memories' – objects and testimonies – from individuals who had direct experience of the recent history of the country, but also from people of her own age. The artist thus poses the question of transmission, and above all, of the absence of transmission to a generation – his own generation, born after 1974 – that wishes to inherit the past.<sup>31</sup> We thus see the emergence of a 'work of memory' aimed at deconstructing official memory and intimate memories (individual and family), embedded in a highly politicised relationship to the past.<sup>32</sup> If it aims to denounce and demonstrate responsibility for a political system that specifically supported colonialism, it also aims to make people aware that their narratives passively transmit ideologies. These 'actors of memory' also assert a 'politics of memory' (GENSBURGER and LEFRANC 2017), particularly regarding the patrimony of places that symbolise the yoke of the dictatorship under which Portugal lived for nearly half a century.<sup>33</sup>

## Combating historical exclusion: the role of memory under debate in the social and human sciences

### End of Empire and resistance to dictatorship

The prevalence of literary accounts of decolonization explains, to say the least,<sup>34</sup> why a critical look at the country's colonial past was first made an appearance in an academic field within Portuguese postcolonial studies: literary studies or social science studies, and sometimes a mixture of the two.<sup>35</sup> By way of example, the seminal book of this critical thinking *Uma História de Regressos: Império, Guerra Colonial e Pós-Colonialismo* (A Story of Returns: Empire, Colonial War and postcolonialism) (RIBEIRO, 2004) is a reflection based on the analysis of literary texts, some of which deal with the colonial war and the return to Portugal of wounded soldiers. The 'returns' discussed are both those of the soldiers and settlers from the former colonies, political exiles (in France, Algeria, Sweden) and more generally the return of Portugal to its European roots at the end of the empire. The book refers to a broader reflection on Portuguese identity and the country's place in the world, and on the collective Portuguese imaginary – the 're-imagination' of a postcolonial Portuguese nation.<sup>36</sup>

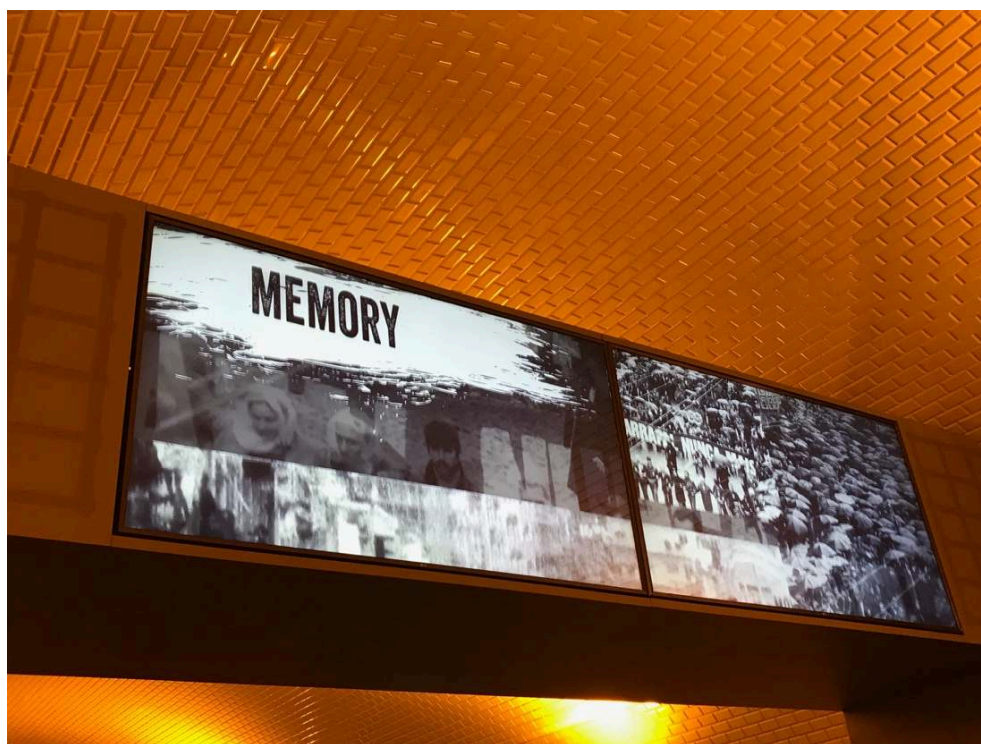
At the same time, the use of 'oral testimonies' or 'oral sources' (BAIA, 2012; CARDINA, 2012) and 'memory' (GODINHO, 2001) was the terrain of research by historians and anthropologists, who studied movements of resistance to the dictatorship (students, workers) and the revolutionaries that followed on after 25 April 1974. The concept of 'memory' deployed in the Halbwachsian sense of social memory and discussed in relation to history (CARDINA, 2012 and 2014),<sup>37</sup> permits us to interrogate ruptures and

moments of fracture (GODINHO ed., 2012, 19).<sup>38</sup> In such a post-dictatorship context – there is no explicit reference to a historical context that would be post-colonial – it is a question of rehabilitating *vozes silenciadas* or 'silenced' voices (CARDINA, 2012, 34). These are the voices of subaltern, devalued, defeated groups, and especially the voices of women (GODINHO, 2001, 2012; FERREIRA, 2010). These researchers seem to have joined a consensus that the past cannot be limited to history:

'... the preservation of the memory of the majority, far from official memory and poorly represented in the sources of written history, must be understood as a duty of democratic citizenship, which makes it possible to *combat the historical exclusions* to which this majority has been subject (SOBRAL 2007; my emphasis).

If the democratization of Portuguese society must pass through 'memory' – insofar as heuristic method and engaged research both deny the silences and evasions of official history – some suppose that it also relies on a 'decolonization' of knowledge. New research on decolonization and the colonial war in particular therefore allows us, from now on, to debate the complexities of our relationship to Portugal's recent and violent past.<sup>39</sup> This was done by articulating the anti-colonial and anti-fascist struggle and by integrating the point of view of the former colonised territories.

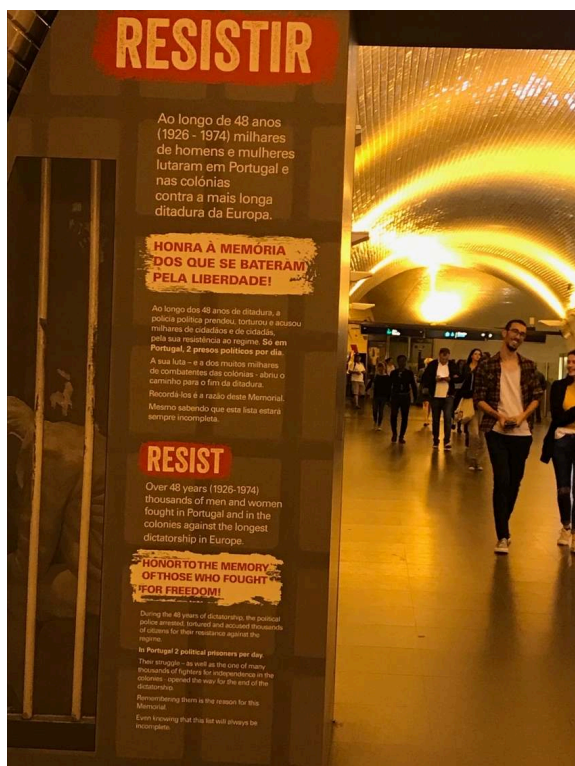
### III. 1-a. Installation « Resist »



Lisbon subway, June 2019  
Irène Dos Santos



### III. 1-b Installation « Resist »,



Lisbon subway, June 2019

Irène Dos Santos

### Memory, democratisation of Portuguese society and decolonisation of knowledge

Many recent studies by historians have provided a critical perspective on the historiography of the Portuguese Empire, particularly on the idea(ology) of the exceptionality of the Portuguese colonization (JERÓNIMO and PINTO, 2015; CURTO, 2011), or on violence of colonial war through the example of the massacres committed by the Portuguese army, in a context where research focused on the colonial system as such – on race relations, forced labour... – is still in its infancy (MENESES and MARTINS eds., 2014; CARDINA and MARTINS eds., 2018; KHAN, CARDINA and MARTINS eds., 2019).<sup>40</sup> This project of “decolonising history” (CARDINA, 2019; HENRIQUES, 2020) has made explicit the epistemological discussions around the concepts of history and memory.

*Portuguese history must be decolonised!* These comments by Miguel Cardina came in conclusion to a presentation on deserters during the Portuguese colonial war in Africa, during which the historian returned to his epistemological position considering memory of desertion as an “alternative model” for the memory of colonial war (CARDINA, 2019, 2020). This “alternative” was promoted as a way to move beyond the memory associated with the experience of violence lived by ex-combatants, in order to understand colonial violence as a whole, including from the perspective of the colonised. The historian thus called on the political role of the researcher, who has a “moral responsibility” to “decolonise their own history” (CARDINA, 2019).<sup>41</sup>

For Valentim Alexandre, precursor of the history of Portuguese colonization, and belonging to the generation before 1974, although Portuguese historiography has been

marked by the doctrine of the *Estado Novo* regime and fed by the enthusiasm of certain guardians of the faith working in academic institutions (ALEXANDRE, 2008, 703), it has nevertheless been constructed since 1974, largely in opposition to the “dominant myths of collective memory [...] made up of omissions, of black holes”. For him, history as a science has played its role – it has provided an alternative to the dominant myths of collective memory; the problem lies elsewhere, in the spread of the historical studies whose conclusions have not managed to reach general history nor education (ALEXANDRE, 2005-2006, 41).

But for the post-1974 generation, the delayed emergence of critical questioning of colonialism in the academic field is due to the longevity of the dictatorship which explains the fragility of anticolonial historiography. For this generation of historians, the fact that “the agents of the revolutionary rupture of April 25, 1974 – the army – were simultaneously the main agents in colonial repression” contributed to the silence, or in any case the obscuring of colonial violence (massacres of populations) and decolonisation (CASTELO, 2005-2006, 18). Given this, there is nothing surprising in the fact that the memory of desertion should also be silenced – confined to individuals and associated in collective representations with cowardice compared to the patriotism, courage, loyalty of those who fought – in the context after April-25 where the Carnation Revolution was organised by soldiers who had themselves fought in colonial wars (CARDINA, 2019). But the vision shared by these young historians born after 1974 of the absence of a critical history of colonization and of the role played by the actors of the democratic revolution and its direct consequences on the relationship Portuguese society has with its recent violent past ends there.

Indeed, the relevance of the concept of memory to analyse this attitude towards the past seems to be controversial today. However, in the mid-2000's a double issue of the journal *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos*, edited among others by Cláudia Castelo, was entitled “colonial memory” (CASTELO and OLIVEIRA eds., 2005-2006). This special issue was part of reflection taking place at the European level from comparative perspective (*Politique africaine* 2006), on the “construction and reworking of memories of the colonial past” (CASTELO, 2005-2006). What seems to hold the attention of the historian here refers to the absence of an “official memory policy”, but such a policy does not exist in Portugal at the time (CASTELO, 2005-2006, 14): “colonial memory does not feature on the political agenda of immigrant or repatriated groups” and, unlike in France, “the diagnosis of the “colonial fracture” is not straightforward” (CASTELO, 2005-2006, 12; 14).<sup>42</sup> This does not prevent historians from giving a detailed list of civic and associative initiatives demanding recognition for ex-fighters in colonial wars, people repatriated from colonies, and victims of the dictatorship. From an epistemological perspective, a hierarchy is established here between history and memory<sup>43</sup>: the role of history being to “thwart the tendency of memory to simplify the complexity of experience, to reduce memory to what is essential, in order to this exalt that which the group needs to remember, and forget the more negative aspects of its action” (CASTELO, 2005-2006, 17).

In a national academic context in which critical historical knowledge on colonisation is yet to be consolidated, “memory”, involved in the reproduction of “official history” and particularly the narrative of Portuguese colonial exceptionalism, is seen as an “serious obstacle for the production of rigorous historical knowledge” (JERÓNIMO, 2016, 82).

The MEMOIRS ERC project, entitled “Children of Empires and European Postmemories” led by Margarida Calafate Ribeiro<sup>44</sup> aims to consider of the history of contemporary Europe based on its colonial heritage (based on a comparative perspective between France, Belgium, and Portugal).<sup>45</sup> It is based in the conceptual framework of holocaust studies and research on violence and traumatic memory in post-WWII Europe (RIBEIRO and RIBEIRO, 2018, 93). It draws on postcolonial thought because it “reintroduce the notion of the plurality of the world and the plurality of forms of knowledge, subjecting the unidirectional narrative of modernity to intransigent criticism, as well as generally all approaches that tend towards the imposition of a “single history” model [...]” (RIBEIRO and RIBEIRO, 2016, 7). In this pluridisciplinary approach to the way European societies consider their past, history – as decolonised knowledge – and memory – critical public memory – shed light on each other (10).

The researchers in MEMOIRS have adapted the concept of postmemory, proposed by Marianne Hirsch (1997), to postcolonial studies and contexts.<sup>46</sup> Their objective was to analyse the “impact of colonial memories and processes of decolonisation” on subsequent generations by combining the study of life histories from interviews – drawing on letters, photographs, amateur films, various objects – on the one hand, and on the other hand from narratives – or “public memories” – through artistic production, visual arts, cinema, literature and performing arts... Focused on the narratives of the children of colonial war, the children of people exiled or repatriated in the colonies, it draws on very different experiences of decolonisation and postcolonialism for the Portuguese case.<sup>47</sup>

Although the point here is to study the memories transmitted by the generation that lived through these violent processes of historical rupture, and their reappropriation in the family environment by their descendants (this process reflects the first memorial shift mentioned above, characterised by a nostalgia for the past), the goal of this research is broader. Indeed, it above all aims to use the concept of “post memory” to understand how these individual memories which are reconstituted in the family environment are transformed by “public memory”: “The question could thus be raised of whether a public postmemory is possible at all and, concomitantly, whether such a public postmemory can be truly transgenerational, in a sense that would extend beyond the notion of a ‘second generation’” (RIBEIRO and RIBEIRO, 2018, 94). In other words, research looks at how representations of the second and third generations marked and influenced by “vibrant” family memory can, later and outside the family sphere, be influenced by a “intergenerational memory” without a direct family connection, based on “recognition” and “compassion”:

“(…) a sense of recollection gives way to a sense of investment, negotiation and reconstruction across the unbridgeable gap that separates the real actor – whether victim or perpetrator – from those who, not having participated, are willing to take the option of merging deeply enough into the experience of others (...) the ‘post’ in ‘postmemory’ comes to signal a gap, a reflective moment, it is a mark of distance, pointing at something that is never simply ‘already there’, but is the product of. Particular kind of labour through which the contemporary relevance of the past can be enacted. Thus, postmemory literally represents an act of translation, if one understands translation as being an epistemological model for strategies of relating to and incorporating discourses and experiences that belong to a framework of reference that is by definition strange and inassimilable.” (RIBEIRO and RIBEIRO, 2018, 94-95)

In this conceptual reappropriation, postmemory spills over into the private sphere to become a “public postmemory”, inseparable from the notion of political engagement illustrated by the artistic and political project of Joana Craveiro rapidly mentioned above.<sup>48</sup> Other research conducted on attitudes towards the decolonisation – or the “end of the Empire” – are in keeping with this, situated within the “archival shift” (BASTO 2017, 37) or the shift to public history (PERALTA, GOÍS and OLIVEIRA eds., 2017) of which the ultimate goal is to deconstruct-reconstruct the past to multiply narratives and make future sharing possible.<sup>49</sup>

With only a few exceptions, this profound work on the past based on “memories”, “sensitive archives”, revisited historiography and “counter narratives” is structured around violence, “loss”, and democracy, from the point of view of the former colonial power, but much less around the political hopes provoked by independents, and the subjectivities of formerly colonized countries. Moreover, being focused more on “cultural memory”, these approaches also do not focus much on the social dimension and in particular the intricate social trajectories of those who transmit it. Their past and present experiences, interconnected identifications and belongings, ethno-racial assignments in context of mobility in which transnational links are reconfigured in the wake of the independence of formerly colonised countries (DOS SANTOS 2016; 2017a). Analysing these individual and family trajectories and the subjective narratives of experience that is lived and transmitted through them, makes it possible to break down the barriers between narratives of the past that are “shared” between the ex-colonial power and the ex-colonies.

## Interwined history and belonging: Memory as a connection between what official history and historiography have separated

The two narratives discussed here concern individuals from different historical and social generations. One was born in Portugal before 1975, the other born in Portugal after 1975.<sup>50</sup> These two case studies were chosen from among around twenty interlocutors met in Portugal, Angola, Brazil, and France, from people who were intimately connected to the history of the Portuguese presence in colonial Angola. Their life histories were collected as part of nondirective interviews associated with the ethnographic observation of social practices. They reflect the experiences of individuals belonging to social groups with specific memories, largely excluded from official narratives, and from research in social and human sciences. Their choice is based on the heuristic potential of breaking down the barriers between official/national narratives of the past associated with Portuguese colonisation in Angola and the fractures that resulted from decolonisation.

### Anti-colonial struggle and belonging: Ricardo’s narrative<sup>51</sup>

I met Ricardo (aged 70) in Paris during the exhibition “Refusing Colonial War” which he participated in as an eyewitness.<sup>52</sup> During a video recording filmed by the association *Mémoire Vive*, he told the story of his clandestine flight from Portugal to France where he was recognised as a refugee in the early 1970s. This testimony presented to the

public by a screen and headphones ([illustration 2](#)) particularly attracted my attention during the exhibition. Ricardo describes himself as from a Portuguese family “who fought for the independence of Angola”. This is a subject that I have long been interested in, drawing on life histories collected from different generations of *retornados* met in Portugal and Brazil, and particularly from families who had been in Angola since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in order to move beyond the focus on history and memory of more recent colonization (DOS SANTOS, 2021).

The analysis of these narratives shows the lack of references to past political social connections, as well as an attitude towards the history of the Portuguese presence in this area that is not strongly politicised. The lack of explicit references to the Salazar regime, or the actions of the political police in the colonies (dictatorship and censorship were generally mentioned to compare Portugal and colony, or to refer to the comparatively more relaxed mores in Angola, with Portugal described as “grey”, “sad”, and removed from “modernity”). However, in these narratives, there are occasional references to a hypothetical Angolan independence, modelled on the white supremacist system in Rhodesia’s, held as the illustration of an existence of a “Afro-European nationalism” (PIMENTA, 2008).<sup>53</sup> The fieldwork I conducted in Brazil (Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte), also revealed the idea of an “exile” based on a desire to escape from the “Communist peril” in Portugal after April 25. This idea was widespread in the generation that left Angola as adults in 1975. Beyond these narratives that justify a non-return to Portugal, politics was also visible in the social connections constructed in the present. In Lisbon, a *Retornado* who was aged around 10 in 1975, and the son of a former colonial administrator, was friends with a girl who was the daughter of a historical member of the MPLA exiled in Portugal.<sup>54</sup> These different cases reveal very varied positions in terms of the political issues that have surrounded the moment of decolonisation, and which have remained marginal in the official narrative on the *retornados*.

Ricardo’s exile in France in 1971, at the age of 22, involved biographical, historical, and historiographical fractures. The historiographical one, which joins here the official narrative, can be seen in the exhibition “Refusing colonial war” (Paris, April-May 2019). The exhibition had a twofold objective. It sought to propose an “alternative narrative” (CARDINA, 2019) of colonial war rather than simply presenting it through the heroic figure of the soldier fighting against the “loss” of Empire, incorporating rebellious figures (who were not all anticolonial), deserters, and resisters. But it also looked at Portuguese migration to France, offering a narrative that looked at this intra-European migration not only in its socio-economic but also political dimensions (the context of dictatorship and colonial war in which it was inscribed). Ricardo was among the young men who chose to leave Portugal in the late 1960s-early 1970s to avoid forced mobilisation in the colonial war (he was to have been sent to Guinea-Bissau): but to what extent does he identify with this generation?

Ricardo considers his refusal to participate in the war as in keeping with his family history of anticolonial struggle, and does not see himself as being part of Portuguese immigration to France; in fact, he does not even consider himself as “an immigrant”, but rather as “refugee”. He is particularly attached to this identity, although his “camarades” told him “that wasn’t what should be done, that it was important to remain an immigrant” to blend into the Portuguese population and politicise it for the antifascist and anticolonial struggle.<sup>55</sup> This is not the place to discuss at length the relevance of the

distinction between economic migration and political migration in a context of dictatorship (PEREIRA, 2007), but simply to demonstrate that this status of refugee gave Ricardo a subjectivity that sets him apart from other young Portuguese people of his generation who “refused the colonial war”. His experience of rebellion and as a refugee do not situate him in the collective experience of his historical generation who fled Portugal’s *Estado Novo* as migrants in France. But perhaps his (recent) membership of the *Mémoire vive* association will eventually constitute a “social framework” (HALBWACHS, 1994) for a memorial and identity reconstruction based on new social belonging within French society that is also interconnected to Portuguese society.

### III. 2. Audio installation to listen to eyewitness accounts



Exhibition “Refusing the colonial war”, Paris, April-May, 2019

Irène Dos Santos

Ricardo’s life history, which he shared with me after this first account collected by the association *Mémoire vive*, also reflects other fractures. Not to do with the writing of history and migration of the late 60s-early 70s and the history of colonial war, but rather the writing of the history of decolonisation and the roles played by “colonisers” within liberation movements in Angola.

Before his exile in France, Ricardo’s life was marked by another biographical break, when he left Angola in 1967. He was then 18 years old, and this departure took him to Lisbon, along with his mother and brothers and sisters. His father had been a political prisoner there for ten years after what has been called the Trial of the Fifty.<sup>56</sup> It is this story, told during an interview conducted in his apartment in Paris, that we will look at more closely here. It takes us to colonial Angola in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

When Ricardo explained that he was not a *Retornado*, he justified this non-identification by his family’s historical presence in Angola over “several generations”. Yet, as he

admitted himself, some of the families repatriated in 1975 had also been established in Angola for generations. But for Ricardo, his family was different from those who emigrated to Angola as part of the colonial population policy after the Second World War. His was one of these “*mestiço, even mixed-race families founded by Portuguese men back in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.*”

The distinction between the history of the *retornados* and his own history is based on other elements of the narrative he gave about himself and his family (parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters). Ricardo’s father<sup>57</sup> was born to a Portuguese father, “white”, and a “*mestiço*”<sup>58</sup> mother, in 1921 in Huambo, Angola. Ricardo’s paternal grandfather was a Republican, a military doctor who had participated in several military campaigns since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but was nevertheless “*opposed to a certain type of colonist [...] many of whom were delinquents who had come from Portugal, who were given lands by chasing off people who had owned them for generations. [...] They had a right of life and death, it was another form of slavery [...] Which is why there was such hate during the armed struggle, in February 1961, those people killed children, cut off heads – they hated that type of colonist!*” His grandfather married a “*mestiço*” woman and the family (with 11 children) went backwards and forwards between Angola and Portugal depending on his father’s authorisations. His grandfather died in Portugal in 1949, the same year that Ricardo was born. He was born in Portugal rather than Angola because the family had come over for the grandfather’s funeral. “*But we went straight back again, so in my heart of hearts I was born in Angola. It is exactly the same, and I prefer it like that!*”

Ricardo’s father spent his childhood and youth moving between the two territories, up until his father’s retirement in Portugal. As an adult, around 1944-45, he decided to return to Angola where his father sent him to see a woman who was looking after the family assets in a town in Huambo. This woman was Ricardo’s maternal grandmother, she was also “*a little mestiço*”, married to a Portuguese man (his maternal grandfather) from Goa: she “*had a shop where she sold tobacco, oil, typewriters, Chinese porcelain, wardrobes...*”<sup>59</sup> He eventually married one of her daughters. Ricardo continued with the tale of his father, who worked as an accountant for his parents-in-law and later as a manager in a major company exporting coffee, but also as an “*intellectual*” surrounded by comrades he met in Lisbon at the *Casa dos Estudantes do Império*, which was a site for political socialization (CASTELO and JERÓNIMO eds., 2017). His father was “*expelled from Huambo and sent to Luanda for political activism*” when the political police (PIDE/) arrived in the colonies – according to Ricardo in 1958 – to monitor Angolan liberation movements.<sup>60</sup>

Ricardo said he only later discovered the specific reasons for his father’s arrest by the PIDE in 1958, along with several other comrades, the most well-known of whom was the Angolan writer and poet José Luandino Vieira (also known as José da Graça).<sup>61</sup> The history of this trial was not told in the family sphere, a non-transmission that can be attributed to Ricardo’s exile (in 1971, rapidly following his father’s release from prison), but the fact is that this history was not part of the Portuguese official narrative of decolonisation. Ricardo’s father would eventually be imprisoned in the suburbs of Lisbon (Caxias prison) for several years. In 1966 (or possibly 1967), Ricardo’s mother left for Portugal with her children to join her husband.

It was also in Lisbon that Ricardo’s own political involvement began within the MDP-CDE (Portuguese Democratic movement/Democratic Electoral Commission)<sup>62</sup>, an antifascist movement created in 1969. After his arrest by the PIDE/DGS, and having

being imprisoned for a month in Caxias, and then refusing to be conscripted for Guinea-Bissau (in 1971, he was then 22 years old), he decided to escape towards Sweden.<sup>63</sup> He went via France, where he eventually settled and raised a family.<sup>64</sup>

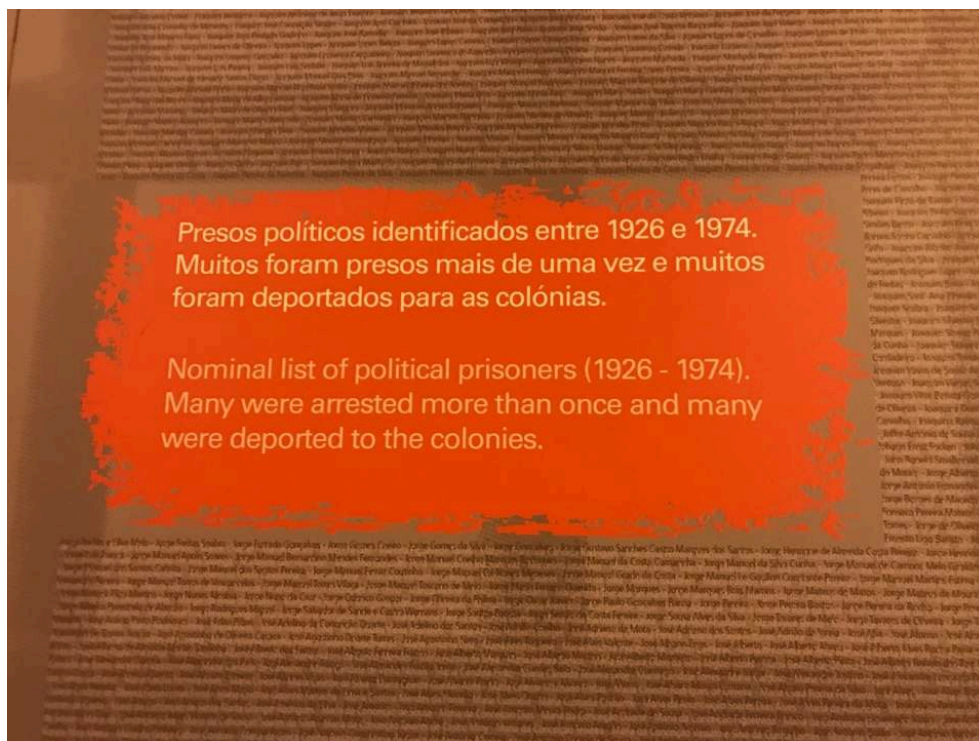
But if we go backwards in Ricardo's tale, and more specifically to the places where he mentions the role of the Portuguese Communist Party in the organisation of the Angolan Communist Party in Luanda. At the head of this movement were the old guard, the "top shelf white men", in other words those born in Portugal, unlike his father.<sup>65</sup> Ricardo's memories as an adolescent depict this sphere of anti-colonialist political activism as a very festive social circle – picnics, and garden parties. He also depicts it through racial categories, "*it was a black milieu, mestiço, but there were also lots of Whites*". He also emphasized the lack of racism and violence in the relationships between his family and the black population, and by contrast the human behaviour he observed among other colonists.

These categories also mark the narratives of the protagonists in this story on the Angolan side, who are today part of an association for the members of the Trial of the Fifty. They emphasise the different categories of actors as being "Angolan", "Portuguese of white skinned", who were seen as being less suspicious for the PIDE than "Blacks" or "Mestiço". When Ricardo showed me passages from a book that retraced the history of Angolan nationalist struggle – written from the perspective of one of the founders of the MPLA based on his personal archives (LARA, 2006)<sup>66</sup> – I saw that he was very attentive to the way in which his father was identified and categorised in the history of the Trial of the Fifty. He was first identified through his wife (a member of the former creole elite), and then as a "European"; Ricardo insisted "*even though my father was born in Angola...*". Lúcia Lara categorises those on the list of the guilty as "Africans", but according to Ricardo "*there are also white people on that list*". Is there a place for "white Africans" in Angolan contemporary society and its official history or struggle for independence? Why, given he talks of his grandmothers as "mestiço", does Ricardo never described his father as one? This question around his father's ethno-racial categorisation in the history of the Trial of the Fifty (Angolan society was marked by deep ethno-political antagonisms) sheds light on the issues surrounding recognition. It raises the question of his father's "Angolan" belonging, but also fundamentally his own (he emphasises his connections to "Angolans" in France, "*who hate the Portuguese*"). But it also reveals the historical and memorial issue of the inclusion of this history into the official narrative of Angolan independence, for which the anti-colonialists who remained Portuguese after independence (distancing themselves from Angolan nationalists) fought fiercely.

Recently, the name of Ricardo's father was included alongside those of many other political prisoners under the dictatorship (ill. 3). The installation piece entitled "Resist" presented in the Lisbon subway reads, "Honour to those who Fought for Freedom". But what freedom is this? Are Ricardo's father and his comrades also honoured for their anticolonial struggle? Will the ongoing process of historicisation of 'weak memories' in Portuguese society succeed in articulating the anti-fascist and anti-colonial struggles? One more question. While Ricardo invited me to UNESCO's annual and very festive celebration of "Lusophony" in Paris, I wondered: what place in this controversial space of "Lusophony" crossed by imperial nostalgias and (post-)imperial utopias – (MEDEIROS, 2018) for plural memories and for the recognition of the plurality of historical narratives on the common colonial past?



### III. 3. Installation “Resist” (Lisbon subway)



List of names of political prisoners during the dictatorship, including that of Ricardo's father Irène Dos Santos

### Repatriated families, miscegenation and attitudes to Angola's recent past – Rita's tale<sup>67</sup>

I met Rita (aged 33) in Luanda in November 2012 while I was beginning fieldwork on the arrival of young qualified Portuguese expatriates. Rita is a Portuguese researcher working on the recent history of Angola, particularly the Civil War (1975-2002) which followed the country's independence.<sup>68</sup> Rita was born in 1979 in Lisbon, where her parents met and then married in 1978. Both here parents were born in Luanda (Angola) and were repatriated by air bridge with their respective families in 1975. They “*didn't have much contact*” with Angola after that. Until one day when Rita's brother decided to go and work in Angola as an expatriate.<sup>69</sup>

Like Ricardo's, Rita's tale leads to several ruptures. There is the biographical and historical rupture experienced by her parents and grandparents with decolonisation – the “loss” – of Angola and Empire. There is also a biographical break with her generation's attempts to “return” to Angola. And finally, there is a historiographical break linked to the writing of the history of the Civil War from the perspective of the vanquished (UNITA).<sup>70</sup>

Rita's family history can be seen here through the narrative that she constructs, based on her own memories and the family memory that circulated on both the paternal and maternal sides (the latter linked more to Angola because of the transnational connections maintained after independence). This is a slightly different history from that of the *retornados*, often told from the perspective of the whites.<sup>71</sup> However, we must

question, and I will return to this, the relevance of the ethno-racial aspect of the *retornado* experience, particularly as a Rita by no means expresses it in relation to self-identification, or the lived experience of an assigned racialised identity. She never talks about herself as a “mestiça”, or as a racialized person. Nor does she mention political, or activist involvement that could associate her with Afro-descendant activism emerging in Portuguese society.<sup>72</sup>

Rita presents a family history that begins in a European colonial power (Portugal) and moves towards a colony (Angola), beginning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. “My great-grandfathers on my mother’s side were Portuguese, they had children with very low-born native women, and the children had a very Portuguese upbringing. They were educated in the seminary and in a school run by nuns. My grandparents met in Luanda, at church, in the choir [...] they were assimilated Mixed Race”, born in the 1930s; “my mother’s family was more Angolan than my father’s”. On her father’s side, the history is a little different, her grandfather having “left home” – in Trás-os-Montes north-east Portugal – as a 17-year-old in the 1930s. In Luanda he worked as a civil servant in the post office, where he married a woman who was also a migrant from the continent: “my grandmother had run away from her family by emigrating [...] She made the choice to get married, in a colony, to an emigrant man she did not know.”

When independence came, both families, maternal and paternal, were repatriated to Portugal; all the women left, but some men, Rita’s maternal uncles who had remarried locally, remained.<sup>73</sup> Transnational connections were able to survive thanks to these family members who remained in Angola over the years of civil war and after (2002). Thus Rita emphasized the fact that they did not marry “black” women, an element that was not solely discursive and which also reflected the social relations based on class and race between this family of *assimilados* and the families of “black Angolans” (*angolanos pretos*) in her immediate entourage. “[...] my family was educated, they had had a colonial Portuguese education. They did not eat *funge*<sup>74</sup>, they did not eat with their mouths open, and all sorts of other things.” At no point in the interview did Rita explicitly mention the colonial situation, the system of oppression and the racial and social hierarchy upon which it was based.

Rita’s narrative is above all focused on the return of her family to Portugal in 1975, and she reveals different integration processes between her maternal and paternal families, even though her parents both managed to pursue higher study in Lisbon in the late 1970s and 1980s. “It was more difficult for my mother’s family because they had no connection to Portugal [...] My grandparents received help from the Red Cross. My mother suffered a lot at university in Lisbon, her friends were daughters of *latifundists* in Alentejo [...] and she was dressed in clothes from the Red Cross, so she always felt ...” The element that Rita emphasized to distinguish the cultural and social integration between the families reflects the historical depths of the initial migration towards the colony, and its impact on the lack of family connections with the continent. In 1975, when they arrived in Lisbon, these families were entirely dependent on the emergency policy<sup>75</sup> set up to deal with the massive arrival of nearly a half million repatriated citizens (for a total population of 9 million inhabitants and in a context of economic crisis and political instability post-1974).

It is interesting to note that at that point in the narrative, talking about integration in Portugal, Rita does not mention any difficulties faced by her maternal family and in particular her mother, which may be the result ethno-racial discrimination. She only

briefly mentions the fact that *“the departure itself was not told, nor was the arrival. Yet these memories are very present, the living conditions...”* “Rita does mention her mother’s “racist prejudice” (*preconceitos racistas*) towards the husband of one of her sisters, a university professor from Guinea, but who was *“macho and black”*. It is at this point in the narrative that Rita makes the connection with her own story: *“I know that I would have problems if I went out with a black man. For sure, I would have problems with my mother!”* This remark led to a break in the narrative, which I provoked by asking a question, because I was interested in gaining a better understanding of the social representations associated with the African ancestry on her mother’s side. *“Didn’t having mixed ancestry in the family help [your mother’s attitude towards you dating a black man]?”* Rita’s answer: *“[silence] No, because [silence] It is as though she did not see her own colour. She did not see it and she had to whiten herself when she arrived in Portugal [...] When we lived in Porto which is a more provincial town than Lisbon, where there were no Blacks, I remember that she was always worried about straightening her hair. But these concerns decreased over time. When she arrived in Lisbon, the Afro community was already more visible. But in that period, no, there was significant pressure on appearance. It was one thing to be a relaxed white person but another to be relaxed mulatto, right? Automatically, people were confused, and she was always worried about her being mistaken for another kind of woman. And I also remember... From time to time she talked about people’s reactions to them, my parents, as a mixed-race couple, a mulatto woman and a white man. At the time that still attracted a lot of attention. It was only when I began to work in this area [Master in African studies] that we began to talk about it. She told me herself: ‘it does me good to be aware of prejudice. But ultimately, it is buried very deep down...”*

Prejudices, both suffered and practiced in this specific case of a mixed-race family, should be seen within the colonial historical continuity of the racial categories and social hierarchies that resulted from it, this remained a taboo in a postcolonial society that struggled to conceptualise the issue of race outside the ideology of lusotropicalism (VALE DE ALMEIDA, 2006; VALA, LOPES and LIMA, 2008). Mobilising the figure of the “internal strangers” to refer to *retornados* when they returned to Portugal, Lubkemann evokes the “preponderance of race as a pivotal element” for overcoming this status: *“The atrophy of the label of *retornado* in public discourse has not translated into the treatment of this minority as ‘Portuguese’, but paradoxically has resulted in their increasing conflation with other populations of African origin (...)”* (2003, 92).

If we return to Rita’s narrative, we can see that the racial and social distinction of Rita’s family - as mixed-race -, between African population from post-colonial immigration in Portugal. This is interesting given that Rita’s family, and Rita herself, self-identify as “Angolan origin”. *“Even though my mother’s family was here [in Angola] longer, they always experienced the fact that they were Angolan in the same way. They always talked about Angola with the same feeling of belonging.”* A singular “Africaness” that distinguishes Rita’s family from (other) “Africans” but also from other *retornados* (whites) - *“my parents never identified with the *retornados* community”*-. This constitutes an interesting element in analysing a final aspect of Rita’s narrative, the “return” to Angola.

In 2005, Rita was 25 years old and beginning her doctoral research in African studies on the Angolan Civil War (1975–2002). Her older brother could not find work in Portugal, *“I convinced him to try to come here. And from one moment to the next, the connections became much stronger, even though my parents were very detached - emotionally they were attached to*

*the past, but they were not among those who organised events [between retornados from the same province], they are not used to participating in get-togethers between Angolans, nothing like that [...] But well, their past, the idea that their life here was always present but more as something past, I think they never envisaged coming back... Now, with me and my brother who have strong connections to Angola, it has come back. In fact, they got enthusiastic about our enthusiasm!"*

The story of her brother reflects that of other young Portuguese people, skilled or unskilled, who emigrated or who were expatriates in the mid-2000s, when the Civil War ended and reconstruction began in the country. Among these migrants and expatriates, <sup>76</sup> some were children of *retornados*. Their presence on Angolan soil took the form of a return to the sites of their family memories. Visiting the old family house produced ambivalent feelings, on the one hand, an often inadmissible desire to return to how it was, and on the other, a desire to build a belonging in this postcolonial Angolan society, far removed from colonial heritage (DOS SANTOS, 2016; 2017a).

In 2012, and after her brother had preceded her through the administrative process of acquiring Angolan nationality, Rita began the process herself in Luanda. In the meantime, the nationality law had changed, making the process more difficult for children of parents born in Angola who chose Portuguese nationality in the independence (1975). Rita nevertheless managed to acquire Portuguese-Angolan double nationality.<sup>77</sup> In addition to the open sesame which meant she could “*go in and out more easily*”, this process included a strong identity aspect, involving a feeling of belonging to this post-independence Angolan society.

Initially Rita’s trips to Angola were limited to the Huambo region, far away from Luanda, in connection with her research.<sup>78</sup> She also travelled to Namibia (a neighbouring country which became independent in 1990 and from which South Africans supported UNITA) where she had academic contacts. Regarding her professional career, she said that she had long wanted to work on Angola. “[...] *Out of curiosity, I had this curiosity to know and to... come here.*” In 2012, Rita also began to discover the sites of her family memory in Luanda. “*My mother told me so many stories, swimming naked on an island, and so forth... So well, it is on that side of the family that the memories are reproduced... The memories of Angola, of childhood, of jokes, humour... So, for me it was very amusing when I came here for the first time because... There was a part of it that I felt like I already knew.*”

Although her professional choice sheds light on her desire to be involved in the reconstruction of this post-war society, her research subject was nevertheless curious. Why did she choose to work on history in which “*narratives are very difficult to obtain*”, a history of a nationalism divided, reflecting a past that clashes with the official history of Angola as it is told by the MPLA?<sup>79</sup>

## The Belonging of the Absent in History

Through their individual and family histories associated with a dual space, excluded from the official narratives, Rita and Ricardo both demonstrate the importance of shedding light on the plurivocality of the past in the present. This helps us to understand the identity issues in our postcolonial societies, beyond the national frameworks of ethno-racial categories passed down from colonial empires. In the

context of “heritage” (L’ESTOILE, 2008), what does it mean to be “African”, “European”, “Portuguese” or “Angolan”? How can these belongings be reconfigured?

In spite of their very different experiences, and the thirty years that separate them, Rita and Ricardo share a belonging to the history of a land that no longer exists, not as it was transmitted and represented in family and historical memories. Absent from public narratives of these “negative” pasts: on *retornados* and colonial war on the Portuguese side; on anti-colonial struggle, undivided nationalism, and on the Civil War on the Angolan side. Yet in different ways – by the testimony in Ricardo’s case, by scientific research in Rita’s case – they participate in rewriting a past that allows them to have a voice and to exist through belongings to be reinvented in the present. Unlike Ricardo’s exile, Rita and her generation use the return to Angola as a way of confronting the memories they inherited against the reality of postcolonial and post-conflict Angolan society and questioning the official historical narratives. In so doing, they give themselves the freedom to reinvent connections that are liberated from the negative legacy of the past.

## Conclusion

Since the 2000s, Portuguese society has been marked by the emergence of critical narratives in the public space, transmitted by various artistic productions on events of the recent violent past – dictatorship, colonisation, decolonisation – that challenge the intimate memories transmitted in the family sphere, as well as official history and history as a discipline. Research conducted in the academic sphere of postcolonial studies have looked at these “public memories” – historical counter narratives, sensitive archives – emphasising their disruptive potential to “destabilise or deconstruct established and noncontroversial narratives” (PERALTA, 2011) of an imperial and colonial past. The potential for these memories to create “connections” between former colonies and former colonial powers has not attracted very much attention for the moment, including in terms of transnational academic links. The study of the life histories and past and present trajectories of individuals who appropriate and circulate between these different spaces also shows us that other struggles against historical exclusions intertwined with social exclusions inherited from the past must be waged.

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## NOTES

1. Portugal was the centre of a colonial empire that lasted almost five centuries. Putting an end to late colonization of settlements in Angola and Mozambique (focused on the 1950s-60s), the Portuguese Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974 sounded the death knell of the Portuguese colonial empire in Africa (independence of Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Angola), plus, in Asia, it led to independence of East Timor (invaded by Indonesia in 1976). The African empire, also referred to as the 'third empire', followed the Asian and Brazilian empires. It was a surrogate after Brazil became independent in 1822.

2. The date of publication of this text (edited with a preface by Margarida Calafate Ribeiro and Roberto Vecchi) was not a coincidence. It brings together journalistic and scholarly articles published between 1974/76 and 2005, as well as unpublished articles from Eduardo Lourenço's archive.

3. Portugal is one of the oldest nations in Europe, stabilized within its borders since the 12th century. Since the end of the 15th century, Portuguese historiography has systematically integrated the history of the kingdom and the history of the empire (BETHENCOURT, 2003, 77).

4. See: MARGARIDO, 2000; VALE DE ALMEIDA, 2000, 2002; SANCHES (ed), 2006; PERALTA, 2011; DOMINGOS, 2016.

5. In April 2017, the visit of the President of the Republic Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa to Gorée Island gave rise to a platform signed by 55 academics and anti-racist activists. They denounced 'the idealistic and exceptional vision of the colonial heritage of Portuguese history, which is based on an alleged pioneering humanism, built in the 19th century and popularized during the *Estado Novo* (...)'. (*Diário de Notícias*, on line : <https://www.dn.pt/portugal/um-regresso-ao-passado-em-goree-nao-em-nosso-nome-6228800.html>)

6. On the role of Portuguese anthropology in the construction of national identity, in particular of a 'national personality' (plasticity, nostalgia and *saudade*): see LEAL (1999). Unlike the French and English cases, Portuguese anthropology did not play an obvious role in legitimizing colonization. There is, however, until today a 'hidden empire' (LEAL 2006) produced by Portuguese anthropology in its approach to Portuguese culture and national identity. For an analysis of the links between colonial practice and anthropology from the Portuguese case see : MARGARIDO (1975).

7. In Portugal even today the concept of miscegenation (*mestiçagem*) is strongly influenced by the theory of Lusotropicalism which affirms the propensity, presumably unique, of the Portuguese to mix in with other cultures. Formalized in the 1950s by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freire, the Lusotropicalism has been exploited by the *Estado Novo*, broadcast in the 1950s-60s (through music, football and beauty contests). It served as a scientific alibi to distinguish Portuguese

colonization from that of other European powers and to legitimize the continuity of the Portuguese colonial project in an international context of decolonization: see CASTELO (1999); on the circulation of ideas about Lusotropicalism see the dossier in the journal *Lusotopie* (1997) and for an analysis of current significance, see CAHEN and FERRAZ (dir. 2018).

8. The historian Valentim Alexandre, a specialist in the study of the Portuguese empire in the *longue-durée*, warns us against a critical analysis of the colonial and imperial question that limits colonial oppression to the period of the *Estado Novo*, thus 'leaving intact (in collective memory) the identity-narrative of the Portuguese nation, based largely on the imperial tradition' (ALEXANDRE, 2005/2006, 39).

9. Translated from Portuguese. The different episodes of loss mentioned are all tied to the imperial history of the Portuguese nation: the Battle of Alcácer Quibir in 1578 (see VALENSI, 1992), the 'loss' of Brazil in 1822, the British Ultimatum of 1890 putting an end to the Portuguese monarchy's plan to link Angola to Mozambique, and the independence of the African colonies in 1974-1975.

10. See: PERALTA 2011; and on the design of the World Exhibition in Lisbon in 1998 around the theme of the oceans, see CAHEN 1998. Historian Nuno Domingos examines how the imperial past has shaped the nation's memory and national identity since the 19th century. Using two examples, that of the architectural representations of the colonial space and that of the biographical construction of the footballer Eusébio (pantheonized in 2015), he shows how these fields of activity (architecture, sport, but also language, commerce...) function as spaces of mediation of an official memory of the empire updated since 1974, among the working classes as well as the elites (DOMINGOS, 2016; text published in French).

11. Notably towards populations emerging from post-colonial African immigration: see VALA et al. (2008). The question of the existence of institutional racism has recently arisen in the public sphere around police violence, brought about by the activism of Afrodescendants who have also mobilised around issues of memory in relation to the history of slavery.

12. The quotation marks indicate that these are expressions and concepts used by the authors mentioned.

13. Especially CARDINA (2014) and GODINHO (2012).

14. The historian Irène Flunster Pimentel draws a nuanced conclusion, recalling the existence, from the 1990s onwards, of 'occasional eruptions of memory' that denounced the repressive apparatus of the dictatorship. These claims to memory by victims became more visible in the public sphere from the mid-2000s, although expressed by a tiny minority, most especially around the movement *Não Apaguem a Memória!* (Don't Erase Memory) (PIMENTEL 2007b). There is a debate about the nature of the regime - must it be linked to other European Fascisms? - in the Portuguese case, according to Miguel Cardina, the question of numbers - the number of assassinations by the political police (PIDE/DGS), or the number of political prisoners - is often referenced to describe dictatorship that was 'softer' (*ditabranda*) than the others. In fact, however, it was above all the careful management by the regime of 'punitive violence' and 'preventative violence' - intimidation, deterrence, and fear - that allowed the regime to survive for forty-eight years (CARDINA, 2014: 32).

15. Or: wars of independence. An expression that change according to the point of view. One informant told me that the war was also called the 'overseas war' (*guerra do Ultramar*), the colonies having become (only from a discursive point of view) overseas provinces of Portugal in 1951. In this way he drew attention to the way in which words shape a worldview and a memory of empire that is still relevant today.

16. With the exception of works of military history on the war (see: ANTUNES 1995; AFONSO and GOMES 2000 [1997-1998]), and the work of the anthropologist Luís Quintais on the traumatic memory of ex-combatants: see QUINTAIS, 2000.

17. The armed forces were the support base of the dictatorship. From the end of the 1950s, in a context where clandestine resistance movements at the *Estado Novo* intensified (student, workers, communist and antifascist organisations), the armed forces were also faced with an opposition that increased with the beginning of the colonial war. Ending the colonial war was one of the elements that motivated the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) to overthrow the dictatorship.

18. Under the dictatorship, the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), which was banned and in exile until 1974, as well as Trotskyist and Maoist movements, were all involved in the anti-colonial struggle from the end of the 1950s (although in a non-linear manner). See especially MANYA (2004) CARDINA (2010).

19. The stories of rebellious young men/ deserters who emigrated in secret during the 1960s-70s (PEREIRA, 2014; CARDINA, 2020; FERREIRA, 2020)

20. Researchers working with veterans of the colonial army and repatriated former settlers point to victims who, with Primo LEVI (1989), have had to break away from the binary distinction between 'victims' and 'perpetrators'. The veterans consider themselves to be the victims of 'a preventable and unjust war' (MARTINS, 2015), while the repatriated settlers or 'exiles', see themselves as victims of the decolonization process (PERALTA, 2017a), or even of the revolutionary process of 25 April 1974, associated with the 'red peril'.

21. Documentary films, drawing on archival images and testimonies, play a vital role in this process of memorialising. *A Guerra*, a film by Joaquim Furtado (2007) is based on testimonies of combat veterans. On the dictatorship, see the film 48, by Susana de Sousa Dias (2009); and also, on the imprisonment of the political opposition in the Tarrafal internment camp in Cape Verde, see: *Tarrafal; Memórias do Campo da Morte Lenta*, by Diana Andringa (2010).

22. On access to these archives and the political and ethical issues connected to consulting them, see: PEREIRA MARQUES (2015). He is an historian, but his text is also the testimony of a former resistance fighter and political prisoner. The historiographical 'turn' based on the archival access gave rise to the publication of research carried out on the 'victims' of the dictatorship (PIMENTEL, 2007a), on the political courts (ROSAS *et al.* 2009), emigration policy (PEREIRA, 2012), and on the students of the *Casa do Império* (FARIA and BOAVIDA, 2017).

23. To clearly identify these private spaces, family or perhaps community events (such as meals to commemorate ex-combatants, festive meetings of former settlers from the same 'provinces' such as Angola), constituted from collections of objects, cultural behaviours, and narratives linked to the past.

24. The best known are the works of the writer António Lobo Antunes, whose immense literary oeuvre was initially based on his experience as a military doctor during the colonial war in Angola. See also Manuel Alegre, Lídia Jorge, and others. For an analysis of these works see: RIBEIRO (2004); and also: MEDEIROS (2000); VECCHI (2001).

25. On the relationship between nostalgia and utopia see: BASSET and BAUSSANT (2018).

26. Such memories are not only negative. In the case of returnees from the colonies, it is interesting to compare the French and Portuguese experience with regard to the positive representations of colonization. While in Portugal there was no 'Loi du 23 février 2005' recognising the contribution to the nation made by the returnees, nevertheless, the anthropologist Stephen Lubkemann argues that from the 1990s on the *retornados* have managed to appropriate the Portuguese state's narrative of post-colonial identity – regarding the presence of Portugal in the world – and have thus validated their past experience past (LUBKEMANN, 2002).

27. On the issue of the *retornados*, see the work on the construction of archives (images, documents, and objects) understood as a tool of 'popular history', led by Elsa Peralta as part of the collective research project entitled *Narrativas de Perda, Guerra e Trauma: Memória Cultural e o Fim do Império Português* (Narratives of Loss, War and Trauma: Cultural Memory and the End of the Portuguese Empire, FCT 2014-2019), available at <http://tracosdememoria.letras.ulisboa.pt /pt/>

projecto/. This project resulted in the exhibition *Retornar* (Lisbon, 2015-2016) (PERALTA, GOIS, OLIVEIRA, Ed. 2017); for an analysis of the processes of memory on which this research is focussed, see DOS SANTOS (2017b).

28. Among the most worthy of note, see: FIGUEIREDO, 2009; CARDOSO, 2011.

29. The *Processo Revolucionário Em Curso* (PREC), or Revolutionary Process in Progress, was the transitional period with political instability that ended with the adoption of the democratic constitution in April 1976.

30. Available online at <http://teatrovestido.org/blog/?p=8197>.

31. A graduate in theatre studies and anthropology, Joana Craveiro explains that she does fieldwork and collects life stories. She explicitly identifies herself as belonging to a 'post-memory generation', which does not mean that the concept is widely known within the generation (RIBEIRO and RIBEIRO, 2018). For a detailed analysis of her work see BASTO (2017).

32. An unanswered question with regard to these studies of alternate narratives, as well as exhibitions and so on, is how they have been received, and how widely disseminated in society.

33. At the same time, driven by claims to memory by victims of the dictatorship (PIMENTEL, 2007b), some museums have been established. This was the case in 2015 with the *Museu do Aljube: Resistência e Liberdade* within the confines of a Lisbon prison where opponents of the dictatorship had been imprisoned and tortured. It is 'dedicated to the history and memory of the fight against the dictatorship, and recognition of the resistance for freedom and democracy'; the *Museu de Peniche*, a former fortress that also became a political prison under the dictatorship: Museum of Resistance and Freedom, in memory of the political prisoners (2017). Other museum projects (municipal and national) have been announced: a *Museu das Descobertas* in Lisbon, provoking much controversies about its name and its objectives; a memorial to slavery (*Campo das cebolas*, central zone, located near the Tagus, where boats linked to the slave trade arrived between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) and, even more recently (2019) a very controversial *Museu de Salazar* in the dictator's village (Santa Comba Dão).

34. I return to the question of the historiography of the empire and of colonisation below.

35. See especially RIBEIRO (2004; 2012); SANCHES (2006); RIBEIRO and RIBEIRO (eds) 2019. The colonial and postcolonial situations as addressed through the analysis of anti-colonial literary and political texts by Angolan, and Mozambican authors, and others will not be dealt with here (see for example, the collection published since 2012 by Peter Lang "Reconfiguring Identities in the Portuguese-Speaking World").

36. Some of this works fit into the thinking of the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura Sousa Santos, picking up particularly on his concept of semi-peripheral countries (SANTOS, 1994 and 2001). They are representative of the studies carried out within the Centre for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra, a centre that focuses on postcolonial epistemology.

37. In the work of the historian Miguel Cardina there has been a noticeable epistemological shift from oral history to *memory* and *postcolonial studies*.

38. The journal *Arquivos da Memória* was published from 1996 to 2009 by the *Centro de Estudos de Etnologia Portuguesa* of the New University of Lisbon, and illustrates this academic interest in 'memory', deployed in socio-anthropological and historical research, but this does not are not included in postcolonial criticism.

39. Work carried out within the framework of a first project 'Children of the Colonial Wars: Postmemory and Representations' (2007-2011, FCT, Portugal), led by Margarida Calafate Ribeiro at the Center for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra. See especially CROME, *Crossed Memories, Politics of Silence: the Colonial-Liberation Wars in Postcolonial Times (2017-2022)* led by Miguel Cardina. The project is intended to analyse the historicity of memory processes associated with colonial wars/wars of independence from the point of view of Portugal and the former African colonies.

40. The most recent publications on the massacres committed by the Portuguese army show an opening up of this “Portuguese” field of research to contributions from researchers working in Angola and Mozambique or from these countries, who question the “colours of research in Portugal” conducted on Africa (KHAN 2016). The de-segmentation between metropolitan and colonial history remains tentative however, as is the case in other European countries.
41. Isabel Castro Henriques and Miguel Cardina belong to two distinct generations of historians and work in very different fields. The first, trained in France in the 1970s in African history, which she taught at the University of Lisbon after 1974, takes a critical stance on the 'trivialized use' of the 'Eurocentric' notion of decolonization (HENRIQUES, 2019, 256).
42. Another specificity of the Portuguese case is that its ex-African colonies “do not seem to have a strong tension and/or opposition to the memories transmitted by the former colonial power” (16); it is also important to note that no researchers from these countries participated in the issue, which therefore remains Eurocentric.
43. For a discussion on the French debate concerning memory and history from the perspective of the sociology of memory see Marie-Claire Lavabre (2000; 2007); Sarah Gensburger and Marie-Claire Lavabre (2005).
44. *European Research Council*, H2020, (2015-2020).
45. [http://memoirs.ces.uc.pt/index.php?id=22153&pag=22154&id\\_lingua=2](http://memoirs.ces.uc.pt/index.php?id=22153&pag=22154&id_lingua=2)
46. “Conceptualising post-colonial Europe means understanding what is its defining feature,, as Europe had its imperial vocation – in its various manifestations – and as a result decolonisation is not only a movement in the South that affects decolonised countries. It is also a movement that has affected and still radically affects the colonial continent that Europe was, and which must be decolonised, in other words, it must, unequivocally, connect the past and the imperial language in which it has been narrated, in order to better understand the present and imagine the future [...] (RIBEIRO and RIBEIRO, 2016, 6)
47. It also reflects a range of trajectories, including as far as veterans are concerned (mutilated soldiers with psychiatric problems, deserters etc.).
48. For an analysis of the theatrical project, “Returned Children: returning to former Portuguese colonies through parents’ memories” (*Filhos de Retorno’: Voltar à ex-colónias portuguesas pela memória dos pais*): see BASTO (2017). The author looks at documentary theatre for its “ability to stage historiography”, and here as a “stage for performative post-memory” (39-42).
49. The concept of sensitive archives, which brings together the contributions of Michel Foucault, Jacques Rancière, Reinhard Koselleck, Arlette Farge and Ann Laura Stoler, reflects work on “intimate, family and domestic memories, whether individual or collective, a task that [...] comes up against emotional truth as a source of knowledge [...] to examine the structures of political, social, and cultural domination that are specific to dictatorial and former imperial frames” (BASTO and MARCILHACY, 2017, 8). It is considered as an “operational method specific to historiographical intervention” (BASTO, 2017, 38), or a “counter history” of late colonialism (SCHEFER, 2017).
50. A so-called historical generation refers to a group of people born in the same period, who share the same experiences, references and social influences, drawn from this shared time and which constitute their historical footprint and their generational identity. The feeling of belonging to a generation is an essential aspect of individual appropriation of social time and conditions the integration of individual biographies in collective time (ATTIAS-DONFUT, 2000, 644-645).
51. Interview recorded at the Ricardo’s house in Paris, in May 2019 (around three hours long), later followed by other more informal meetings.
52. This exhibition was launched by the association *Mémoire Vive*, in collaboration with the Portuguese stage design artist Ângela Ferreira de Sousa and the historian Victor Pereira, who was



the curator. The objective was to document the exile in Paris of 200000 Portuguese who fled the colonial war [...] giving the history of Portuguese rebels, opponents and deserters who immigrated to France a place in collective memory.” Maison du Portugal- Résidence Andre de Gouveia, Cité Universitaire Internationale, 19 April – 5 Mai 2019.

53. This political position is more poignant and salient in the (social) context of annual meetings between *retornados*.

54. This is João Luís (DOS SANTOS 2021). The MPLA, *Movimento popular de libertação de Angola*, the anti-colonial movement that became a hegemonic Marxist political party in 1976. Purges within the party (the biggest was in 1977) led to thousands of dead and exiled among its members, many of whom fled to Portugal.

55. Posture of many Maoist movements that said you have to be an immigrant like any other.

56. Several groups made up of activists involved in challenging the Portuguese colonial regime and the Angolan nationalists were arrested by the PIDE from March 1959 in Angola. This gave rise to different trials and prison sentences carried out in Angola and Cap-Verde (Tarrafal prison camp) and in Portugal (CUNHA, 2011).

57. Here I have respected the chronology of the narrative which began with the figure of his father.

58. I am using the categories my interviewees use. These are the categories historically constructed in the colonial context, based on the idea, among others, of the existence of the fusion of pure entities.

59. We can assume she was a woman from an old creole family, elites associated with slavery, as described by Christine Messiant (MESSIANT, 2006).

60. In fact, PIDE action was extended to the colonies from 1954 onwards.

61. Born in Portugal in 1935, he left for Angola with his parents in 1938 where he joined the independence movement (see RIBEIRO, SILVA, VECCHI eds. 2015). Like Ricardo’s father, he was tried and imprisoned (Tarrafal camp).

62. Which brought together a large part of the left.

63. A country that was known for helping deserters.

64. It was the tale of this clandestine exile in 1971 that he gave to the *Mémoire Vive* Association as part of the exhibition.

65. Distinction between "European Whites" and "Second (class) Whites" ( *brancos de segunda*) legally founded (MESSIANT, 2006)

66. Lúcio Lara was himself the son of a Portuguese colonist. He was the only representative of the MAC (anticolonial movement regrouping independentists from the Portuguese colonies) at the fifth congress of the Portuguese Communist Party in 1957, playing a decisive role in the positioning of the PCP against Portuguese colonialism: see the interview of Mário de Andrade by Christine Messiant (MESSIANT, 1999).

67. Interview recorded (four hours approximately) in Luanda in November 2012 in a public space, followed by informal exchanges in Angola.

68. From an institutional perspective, she did not conduct research in Portugal or in Angola, but in different European countries including Spain.

69. In early 2010, when Portugal was seriously affected by the global economic crisis and the country, which had had structural emigration since the mid-19th century, saw the departures reach the same dramatic levels as the clandestine emigration of the 1960s, under the dictatorship, and these North-South flows also accelerated. The fact that some young graduates refused intra-European migration suggests that this generation had interiorised a certain relation of domination regarding the “South” (DOS SANTOS, 2016; 2017a).

70. The war of independence (1961-1975) was replaced by a civil war between two liberation movements converted into armed parties in independent Angola: The UNITA (National Union for

the Total Independence of Angola *nião Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*), led by Jonas Savimbi and the MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola, *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola - Partido do Trabalho*), led by Agostinho Neto. The post-independence war only really ended in 2002 with the death of Jonas Savimbi the historical leader of the UNITA. The dichotomy of the conflict left a lasting mark on social relations which for the whole period of the civil war were structured according to and in relation to the enemy – between “them” and “us” (LIMA, 2019).

71. The research by the American anthropologist Stephen Lubkemann is, to my knowledge, one of the only ones to have looked at the way in which the population of *retornados* was differentiated. He has identified three factors that have an impact on the way in which the *retornados* were able to negotiate their social position in Portuguese society – race, class, and the strength of family connections (LUBKEMANN, 2003, 76).

72. For a beginning of questioning on the proximity between descendants of *retornados* and Afro-descendants in the denunciation of racism in Portugal (DOS SANTOS, 2017b).

73. The eldest of nine brothers. Rita did not explicitly go into their political positions but I understood from our discussions that they fought for Angola's independence.

74. This is a traditional dish made from cornflour or manioc, eaten with meat or fish.

75. Institute for the return of nationals, IARN (*Instituto de Apoio ao Retorno de Nacionais*) created in 1975.

76. Expatriate status should be distinguished from the status of migrant, in terms of work contracts but also social relations. On the expatriate category, in terms of professional mobility from countries in the North to Africa and the ethno-racialised debate that it reflects (QUASHIE, 2016).

77. A new law on nationality was later passed, in February 2016 which prevents foreign citizens and their descendants born in Angola before independence, who didn't regularise their situation, from acquiring Angolan nationality, losing this right at the date when the law was published (*Diário da República* 27 Março 2017).

78. Her research on the civil war is based on the collection of accounts from the region of Huambo, the second largest city in the country and the stronghold of UNITA.

79. According to the political scientist Juliana Lima, amnesties and encouragement to forgetting (self-censorship, repression) give the impression that there is no memorial policy. However, in reality, these two aspects are in fact part of a memorial policy that aims to depoliticise the past in the name of “national reconciliation” (LIMA, 2019).

## ABSTRACTS

Au Portugal la mémoire officielle de l'empire a jusqu'à très récemment occulté les passés violents plus récents de la dictature et de la décolonisation (guerre coloniale, rapatriement) moins fédérateurs pour l'identité collective. Cet article éclaire dans une première partie le tournant sociétal et académique que constitue l'émergence de contre-récits mémoriels. Il s'agit d'éclairer les acteurs de ces processus et de montrer comment peuvent s'imbriquer, dans ce nouveau rapport politique au passé, mémoire de la dictature et mémoire de la décolonisation. Étudier la recherche en train de se faire - historiographies, études postcoloniales - permet en outre de montrer les divergences qui traversent l'académie portugaise sur la place de l'histoire et de la

mémoire - de la post-mémoire notamment - pour appréhender ces passés. La seconde partie de l'article présente les trajectoires de deux individus reliés par leurs histoires familiales à la présence coloniale portugaise en Angola : un exilé en France, petit-fils d'un administrateur colonial et fils d'un militant des luttes anticoloniale et antifasciste ; la fille d'un couple mixte de *retornados*, chercheuse sur l'Angola. Tous deux sont impliqués dans l'écriture du passé à travers le témoignage ou la recherche scientifique. Ces études de cas permettent de déconstruire les représentations très homogènes de l'histoire de la colonisation portugaise et de la décolonisation de l'Angola, et de décloisonner les récits nationaux. Ils mettent aussi en évidence la complexité des appartenances sociales, politiques et ethno-raciales dans ce contexte post-colonial et post-impérial, questionnent les hiérarchisations sociales héritées de ce passé et les silences autour de ces héritages.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** In Portugal, until recently, the official memory of the Empire has overlooked the violent pasts under the dictatorship and decolonization – colonial war, repatriation – less unifying for the national collective identity. The first part of this article focuses on the societal and academic shift resulting from the emergence of memorializing counter-narratives. The aim is to identify the players in these processes, in this new political relationship with the past, the memory of dictatorship can be imbricated with that of decolonization. Studying current research – historiography, postcolonial studies – also highlights divergences in Portuguese academia on the role of history and memory – postmemory in particular – in the interpretation of such past events. The second part looks back on two case studies with a heuristic potential, and decompartmentalize national accounts. This relates to two individuals whose family histories link them to the Portuguese colonial presence in Angola, involved in writing about the past through eye-witness accounts or scientific research: an exiled in France, grandson of a colonial administrator and son of an anticolonial and antifascist militant actions; and the daughter of an interracial couple of *retornados* undertaking research on Angola. These case studies also reveal the complexity of social, political and ethno-racial affiliations in this postcolonial post-imperial context and challenge the social hierarchization inherited from the past and the silence surrounding this heritage.

**Geographical index:** Portugal, Angola

**Mots-clés:** rapport au passé, empire colonial, décolonisation, mémoires publiques, études postcoloniales, historiographie, étude de cas

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