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DECOLONIZING MEMORY AND SPACES

CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVES ABOUT PORTUGAL'S COLONIZING PAST

ABSTRACT The article aims to show contemporary artistic interpretations of colonialism in Portugal as expressed by Afro-descendants from former Portuguese colonies. The primary focus of this study is the ongoing debate surrounding two monuments in Lisbon. The first monument, the Padrão dos Descobrimentos, was originally created in 1940 and subsequently rebuilt in 1960 and is still one of the city's most recognizable landmarks. The second monument, the Memorial to Enslaved People, is currently under development and seeks to give voice to African communities in Portugal. The analysis is grounded in a theoretical framework that incorporates concepts such as postmemory, multidirectional memory, and dissonant heritage. The broader context for this study is the UNESCO Decade of People of African Descent (2015-2024).

Keywords: postmemory, dissonant heritage, African cultures, Portugal, post-colonialism

The aim of this article is to synthetically describe contemporary postcolonial narratives in Portugal within the context of postmemory and art. Specifically, it focuses on the artistic interpretations of Portugal's colonial past through the examination of two monuments in Lisbon. The first monument was erected in 1940¹ and remains one of the city's most recognizable landmarks. The second monument is currently in a development and intends to give voice to Afro-descendants, a broad category of individuals of African descent originating from former Portuguese colonies. These two memorials serve to illustrate how diverse memories coexist within social and urban spaces. The broader framework that informs this analysis is the UNESCO Decade of People of African Descent (2015-2024),² an initiative that has facilitated various projects in Portugal aimed not only at combating racism and intolerance, but also at promoting African cultures. This article is part of an ongoing research project that explores contemporary interpretations of African cultural heritage in Portugal.³

MEDIATED EXPERIENCE OF COLONIALISM, MULTIDIRECTIONAL MEMORY, AND POSTMEMORY PRACTICES

The concept of postmemory, introduced by M. Hirsch, can refer to various contexts of intergenerational transmission of trauma or knowledge thereof. Initially, it was employed to analyze the experiences of descendants of Holocaust survivors and victims.⁴ More broadly, postmemory has also been used to examine generations that did not experience the Holocaust first-hand but grew up in an environment shaped by narratives of the event. Over time, the concept of postmemory has expanded its scope and, as Hirsch herself argues, may now encompass other contexts such as wars, acts of mass violence, slavery, and colonialism. As such, the notion of postmemory may be applied to individuals who have not directly experienced these events but nonetheless feel a deep emotional connection and grapple with experiences inherited from their ancestors. Such events can significantly impact their perception of both the past and the present.⁵ Traumatic events from the past, transmitted intergenerationally not only in family narratives but also through cultural texts, public images or media discourses, are etched in these people's minds as a form of cultural memory, which at the personal level can evoke individual feelings and reactions. Various postmemory practices can be used to rework, redefine, and bridge the gap between these indirect victims and the distant

¹ See <https://padraodosdescobrimentos.pt/padrao-dos-descobrimentos/>, 1 April 2023.

² See <https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent>, 1 April 2023.

³ The research reported herein relies on existing sources (scholarly publications, press materials, reports, websites of selected associations and projects) and, partially, data collected by the author during participant observation in Lisbon in 2015-2019.

⁴ M. Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2008).

⁵ Ibid.

events they inherit. The process of experiencing and reinterpreting inherited traumas also applies to the postcolonial context.

Individuals from former Portuguese colonies in Africa,⁶ raised in a time when the colonial system was no longer functioning,⁷ have a mediated experience of colonialism. They grapple with inherited memories and received histories.⁸ Their experience of colonial violence⁹ is mediated. Giddens defined mediated experience as an inclusion of temporally and spatially distant events in the area of human experience, which is possible thanks to the civilizational and technological amenities of the late modern era.¹⁰ In the context of postmemory, this experience is mediated through family narratives or cultural texts that are objectified in public discourse. Due to the temporal distance separating the generations of Afro-descendants from the colonial era, their experiences fit in with the model of affiliative postmemory, which *encompasses a larger collective in an organic web of transmission*.¹¹ As Hirsch *Postmemorial work [...] strives to reactivate and reembody more distant social/national and archival/cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression*.¹² What is crucial is the sense of living connection, as highlighted by Hoffmann and elaborated upon by Hirsch.¹³ Postmemory practices help to *reembody and to rein-dividualize 'cultural/archival' memory*.¹⁴

Afro-descendants employ diverse approaches to reinterpret their difficult past. References to colonial history and reflections on contemporary forms of racial discrimination are recurring themes in the social debates they initiate. Their narratives echo the observations of de Sousa Santos, who emphasizes that colonialism as a form of social relations has outlasted colonialism as a political system.¹⁵ In recent postcolonial studies, the center of attention has shifted away from the colonized vs. colonizer or center

⁶ Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe.

⁷ It should be noted that not every person from a former Portuguese African colony was born after 1974, and some of them were not raised in Portugal but in Africa and migrated to Portugal afterwards.

⁸ See J. Young, "Toward a Received History of the Holocaust," *History and Theory*, vol. 36, no. 4 (1997), pp. 21-43.

⁹ For reasons of space and the purpose of this paper, I only recall general facts related slavery. From the second half of the fifteenth century, Portugal led the slave trade on a global scale. The Portuguese (and later their successors, the Brazilians) practiced slavery even after the introduction of official bans. About 12,5 million people (men, women, and children) were transported from Africa on traffickers' ships. The final destination for the majority of them was the American continent. About 5,8 million were transported by the Portuguese, see B. Sena Martins, A. Moura, "Portugal e década internacional de afrodescendentes: a educação e os tempos da violência colonial," *Educação em Revista*, no. 34 (2018), p. 10.

¹⁰ A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge 1991.

¹¹ M. Hirsch, "The Generation...", p. 115.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105, 109-110. See also E. Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust*, New York 2004.

¹⁴ M. Hirsch, "The Generation...", p. 115.

¹⁵ B. de Sousa Santos, "Prefácio," in: M.P. Meneses, B.S. Martins (eds), *As Guerras de Libertação e os Sonhos Coloniais: alianças secretas, mapas imaginados*, Coimbra 2013.

vs. periphery dichotomies. Instead, the emphasis lies on the uncertainty and unpredictability of postcolonial encounters. According to this perspective, the experience of colonialism can nowadays be understood as a challenge leading to encounter, mutual interdependencies, and transformation for both the colonizing and the colonized. The practices of postmemory facilitate the construction of new narratives and the assumption of new roles in this process.¹⁶ The postcolonial perspective entails more than simply talking back; *it implies the operation of transformation and contamination that affects the different agents, organizations, and ideas involved.*¹⁷ As such, it requires continuous renewal and critical alertness. One of the ways of grappling with a difficult history is artistic creation. Expressing one's own emotions and reflections through art allows for the creation of an embodied, affective relationship with the events of the colonial era. According to Hirsch: *Commemorative artistic practices can themselves function as the connective tissue between divergent but related histories of violence and their transmission across generations. The arts offer a fruitful platform to practice the openness and responsiveness that allow such connections to emerge for the postgenerations.*¹⁸

In contemporary realities, marked by inequality and racial discrimination, colonialism assumes new meanings. When examining the experiences of Afro-descendants, the perspectives of postmemory and postcolonialism intertwine. The term "post" in this context does not imply a *linear temporality or consequential logic*;¹⁹ rather, it refers to the complex oscillation between continuity and rupture, the dynamic interplay between proximity and distance. Postcolonialism extends beyond a mere *chronological transition from a colonial to a postcolonial status, but [...] a theoretical tool that aims to critically assess the operations of empires and their lasting legacies and effects in present day society.*²⁰ Similarly, postmemory operates as a *generational structure of transmission embedded in multiple forms of mediation.*²¹

The postcolonial perspective and postmemory practices are linked to the phenomenon of multidirectional memory, as defined by M. Rothberg.²² Unlike collective, generalized, and abstract memory, multidirectional memory is relational, *it is a narrative among other narratives and it refers to them.*²³ Analyzing the dynamics of remembrance,

¹⁶ See L. Gandhi, *Teoria postkolonialna. Wprowadzenie krytyczne*, przeł. J. Serwański, Poznań 2008, p. 111 and following. Since the main theoretical framework of my considerations is the concept of postmemory, I do not develop the topic of postcolonial studies. The postcolonial perspective is here only the background for the analyzed cases.

¹⁷ S. Ponzanesi, "The Postcolonial Turn in Italian Studies: European Perspective," in: C. Lombardi-Diop, C. Romeo (eds), *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, Basingstoke 2012, p. 61.

¹⁸ M. Hirsch, "Connective Arts of Postmemory," *Analecta Politica*, vol. 9, no. 16 (2019), p. 174.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

²⁰ S. Ponzanesi, "The Postcolonial Turn...", p. 59.

²¹ M. Hirsch, "Connective Arts...", p. 172.

²² M. Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford 2009.

²³ K. Chmielewska, "Pamięć wielokierunkowa i agoniczna a polityka pamięci," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, no. 17 (2021), p. 425.

Rothberg argues against “competitive memory” and proposes instead a non-zero-sum logic stating *that memory works productively through negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing [...]*.²⁴ In this approach, a memory is always mediated through another memory, *always polyphonic, always a little bit one's own and a little bit someone else's*.²⁵ It comprises individual experiences and one's personal record of the past while also incorporating *signs, figures, images and narratives common to many and co-created by many, and used to frame/capture the past*.²⁶ However, as K. Bojarska observes, it remains challenging to determine the extent to which this “relationality” of multidirectional memory can be creative and productive, i.e. how dichotomies such as pride vs. shame or us vs. others are to be overcome, or how the emergence of diverse memories of the past and projections for the future can be successfully managed.²⁷

TWO MONUMENTS: DISSONANT HERITAGE AND NEW PERSPECTIVES

In spring 2021, the project “ReMapping Memories Lisboa – Hamburg: (Post)Colonial Places of Remembrance” was launched under the auspices of the Goethe-Institut. It aims to examine how the experiences of colonialism and anti-colonial resistance are transmitted in collective memory and what traces remain in the public spaces of the port cities of Hamburg and Lisbon. The project's initiators intend to encourage reflection and dialogue on various decolonization strategies within urban spaces. One of the main goals of the project is to create digital maps of both cities, highlighting locations associated with their colonial and imperial past, which constantly causes ideological disputes. Accompanied by descriptions prepared by specialists such as researchers, journalists, and activists, these maps offer a new contextual framework for analyzing these places through alternative narratives. The project's initiators strive to approach the past and present of these cities from what they claim to be a non-racist, multicultural perspective.²⁸ The postcolonial map of Lisbon, developed as part of the project, includes the Padrão dos Descobrimentos (Monument to the Discoveries) and the Memorial to Enslaved People, which, although designed and approved by municipal authorities, has yet to be implemented.

The Padrão dos Descobrimentos situated on the bank of the Tagus River in Lisbon's Belém district, is one of the symbols of Portugal's colonial past. It portrays a romanticized image of Portuguese exploration, featuring a procession of notable figures from

²⁴ M. Rothberg, “Multidirectional Memory,” *Témoigner. Entre histoire et mémoire*, no. 119 (2014), p. 176.

²⁵ K. Chmielewska, “Pamięć wielokierunkowa...”

²⁶ K. Bojarska, “Polska pamięć wielokierunkowa? (Kto nie pamięta z nami, ten nie pamięta przeciwko nam),” *Teksty Drugie*, no. 6 (2016), pp. 316-317.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 315-316.

²⁸ See the webpage of the project: <https://www.re-mapping.eu/pt>, 2 April 2023.

the “Age of Discovery,” including explorers, missionaries, scientists, and artists atop the prow of a caravel.²⁹ Originally erected in 1940 for the Portuguese World Exhibition, the monument was later reconstructed in 1960 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Henry the Navigator’s death. Adjacent to the monument extends a marble mosaic depicting the map and travel routes of Portuguese sailors during the era of colonial conquests. Constructed during the Salazar dictatorship, the monument has been a tourist attraction for several decades and a frequent destination for Portuguese school trips as part of history lessons. The Padrão dos Descobrimentos exemplifies a contested heritage, characterized by *dissonance/incompatibility of interpretative strategies created by various entities valuing it*.³⁰ As a result, the monument is subject to revision and reinterpretation from political, cultural, and artistic perspectives, sparking controversy and giving rise to divergent and often incompatible narratives, some of which are discussed in this article.

An example of such a narrative can be found in the 2020 theatrical performance “Aurora Negra” by the National Theatre of D. Maria II in Lisbon, which has been presented in numerous venues across Portugal. This performance, an original project led by three Portuguese actors of African descent (Cleo Tavares from Cabo Verde, Isabel Zuaa from Angola/Guinea-Bissau, and Nádia Yracema from Angola), serves as both a personal testament to the experiences of three black artists living and working in Portugal and a broader examination of Portuguese society’s approach to issues of racism, stereotypes, and feminism. As stated in the performance’s synopsis: *In each woman, an essence, personality, and trajectory intersect with the certainty that nothing will ever be the same again. In this ‘Aurora Negra’, they search for the deepest roots of their cultures, celebrating their legacy and projecting a path where they assert themselves as protagonists of their own stories*.³¹ A visual projection during the performance presents the actors in front of the Padrão dos Descobrimentos, adopting a Pieta-like pose. Dressed in traditional African costumes and adorned with African tribal make-up, they cradle men (“sons”) on their lap. Frozen in this poignant act, they serve as a counterpoint to the Portuguese “explorers” (white men) towering above them. This juxtaposition provokes reflection on the contemporary consequences of the colonial past. As Nádia Yracema, one of the actors, explains, *We wanted to see how we could create a moment that would come to life in the present and, simultaneously, provoke a critical reassessment of this colonial structure*.³²

A dozen or so years earlier, a similar artistic “takeover” of the monument took place. In 2007, Angolan artist Kiluanji Kia Henda collaborated with Portuguese anthropologist Antonio Brito Guterres and an association from the Lumiar district to carry out a happening entitled “Descoberta/Discovery.” As part of the event, a group of around

²⁹ One exception is the female figure of Philippa de Lencastre, the mother of Henry the Navigator.

³⁰ M. Banaszkiewicz, *Turystyka w miejscach kłopotliwego dziedzictwa*, Kraków 2018, p. 53.

³¹ Synopsis of the performance Aurora Negra, at <https://www.tndm.pt/en/calendar/aurora-negra/>, 2 April 2023.

³² Speech entitled “Artista mo(nu)mento” delivered at the online conference *Memorializar e descolonizar a cidade (pós)colonial*, at https://www.goethe.de/ins/pt/pt/ver.cfm?fuseaction=events.detail&event_id=22179394, 10 April 2023.

a dozen young people of African descent from the outskirts of Lisbon arrived at the Imperial Square and ascended the Padrão dos Descobrimentos. The performance was documented through photography and video.³³ The happening drew the attention of the police. According to Kia Henda, the mere presence of a group of Africans in this emblematic and highly touristic location aroused suspicion among the police officers, leading them to question the reason for their presence and request identification documents. White individuals mediated the conversation with the police to dispel any doubts, *showing marks of coloniality in the city*.³⁴ For these 18 to 20-year-olds, who were born and raised in Lisbon, it was their first time visiting this part of the city – an actual “discovery.”³⁵ Kiluanji Kia Henda, a self-taught artist born in 1979 who divides his time between Luanda and Lisbon, serves as a symbolic link between the two monuments discussed in this article. Known for his works exhibited in Dakar, São Paulo, and Venice, uses various forms of artistic expression, such as photography, experimental theater, installations, music, and sculpture, to critically reflect on reality, including colonial history and memory. A decade after the “Descoberta” project, Kia Henda responded to an invitation from Djass, the Association of Afrodescendants, and took part in a competition for the design of a memorial dedicated to the victims of slavery.

Before delving into the initiative related to the Memorial to Enslaved People, it is worth briefly presenting Djass’s activities. Established in 2016, this association of descendants of Africans in Portugal has been actively involved in developing strategies for decolonizing memory and space for several years. Its core mission revolves around protecting the rights of Afro-descendants in Portugal and combating racism.³⁶ Djass activists challenge the Eurocentric version of history and propose its reinterpretation, emphasizing the African contribution to the development of knowledge and culture. They encourage people of African descent to participate actively in political life. Djass organizes debates, educational projects, and training courses on racism, colonialism, and African identities. It has undertaken various initiatives, including social interventions aimed at incorporating reliable information about African cultures into Portuguese history textbooks. The association has promoted the artwork of African artists as part of the Djass Arte series and organized a cycle of meetings with authors of African descent during the Book Fair in Lisbon in June 2017, supporting the promotion of their books.³⁷ Additionally, in collaboration with the Museum of Natural His-

³³ See ‘A Descoberta’: uma ação de 2007 que se estende no tempo. Registered and edited by Marta Lança, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wf26I7GuyG8>, 2 April 2023.

³⁴ B. Neves Alves, “Turned into Stone: The Portuguese Colonial Exhibitions Today,” *Parse Journal*, 13 February 2021, at <https://parsejournal.com/article/turned-into-stone-the-portuguese-colonial-exhibitions-today/>, 2 April 2023.

³⁵ “Kiluanji Kia Henda: ‘Eu crio arte para provocar emoções,’” *Esquerda*, 21 January 2021, at <https://www.esquerda.net/artigo/kiluanji-kia-henda-eu-crio-arte-para-provocar-emocoes/72362>, 2 April 2023.

³⁶ See the website of the DJASS Association, <http://djass.pt/>, 16 November 2022.

³⁷ *Vozes Afrikanas na Feira do Livro em Lisboa* (African Voices at the Lisbon Book Fair). The initiative was repeated in the following years, see *Vozes Afrikanas – Na Senda de Autorxs Africanxs*, <http://djass.pt/en/atividades-2019/vozes-afrikanas-na-senda-de-autorxs-africanxs/>, 10 April 2023.

tory and Science, Djass initiated a pilot project called “Djumbai Descolonial,” which seeks to recontextualize the collections exhibited in the Ethnographic Museum and Tropical Garden in Lisbon. The main objective is to present the history of various exhibits, brought from “anthropological missions” in the 1930s from former Portuguese colonies in Africa, from a different perspective.³⁸

As Serkowska observes: *precisely because it remains unconfessed or unheard, the colonial crime does not allow for its dismissal, and in order to heal, a reckoning is necessary, requiring its narration.*³⁹ The traumatic past reveals itself to subsequent generations, and cannot be easily marginalized. It requires a clear reference to what Sontag described as *the pain of others*,⁴⁰ bringing back the question of what responsibilities we have towards the victims.⁴¹ It seems that the recent initiative of Djass, i.e. the Memorial to Enslaved People, is an attempt to answer this question. In 2017, Djass, in collaboration with anti-racist activists and researchers, launched a project to create a memorial dedicated to the victims of slavery in Lisbon. Three artists of African origin responded to the invitation to design the future monument, and through a public vote conducted at various locations in and around Lisbon where the African diaspora is present, one of the artists was selected. Kiluanji Kia Henda, the author of the winning project entitled “Plantation – Prosperity and Nightmare,” envisioned an installation depicting a sugar cane plantation comprising 540 three-meter aluminum elements, with an amphitheater placed among them. The project received funding from the civic budget of the city of Lisbon, and the monument was scheduled to be erected at Campo das Cebolas on the Tagus waterfront in the first trimester of 2021.⁴² The artist completed his work and has since kept it in storage, and the exact date for its installation at the agreed-upon location with the city authorities remains uncertain. Particularly since the change in municipal authorities in October 2021, with socialist Fernando Medina losing the election and Carlos Moedas from the center-right PSD party taking over as mayor of Lisbon, questions have emerged regarding whether Lisbon will truly acknowledge its participation in slavery. These inquiries suggest that a center-right party may approach these questions differently than a center-left socialist party.⁴³ Nonetheless, it is

³⁸ Information from the Association Projetos em Curso – DJASS. See the description of the project: <http://djass.pt/projetos-em-curso-2/>, 3 April 2023. *Djumbai* is a social practice from Guinea-Bissau; a type of social or community gathering to discuss current issues. Ibid.

³⁹ H. Serkowska, *Dopo il romanzo storico. La storia della letteratura italiana del '900*, Pesaro 2012, p. 19.

⁴⁰ S. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, New York 2001.

⁴¹ M. Hirsch, “The Generation...,” p. 104.

⁴² See the project website <https://www.memorialescravatura.com/>, 16 November 2021. This information was already removed from the webpage.

⁴³ I finished working on this article in May 2023. On June 30, new information presenting the current state of affairs appeared on the project’s Facebook fan page. In a long post (in Portuguese), the initiators of the project described their struggles related to the implementation of the monument and the lack of agreement with the new city authorities. As they wrote: *This conduct reveals that the current executive of the Lisbon City Council chaired by Carlos Moedas not only does not value the project, but seems to want to prevent its implementation. We are facing what we cannot fail to consider a strategy of obstruction and boycott of the Memorial by the current municipal executive, which has resorted to*

hoped that the new city authorities will fulfill their commitment during the “Decade of Afrodescendants.”⁴⁴

The proponents of the project emphasize that the monument’s purpose extends beyond commemorating enslaved individuals and reminding people of Portugal’s involvement in the global slave trade. It also aims to raise awareness about various contemporary forms of oppression and discrimination while highlighting the contributions of African cultures to Portugal’s development. As the initiators of the project declare, the monument *should have an interactive and participatory nature, which calls for meeting, ritual, spirituality, mourning, but also celebration, notably of African resistance and cultural heritage. It must also be assumed as an instrument of education and critical reflection on the past, the present, and the future.*⁴⁵ The author of the installation believes that the monument serves as a symbolic voice for the silenced or their representation in the public space that has been absent in Lisbon until now. According to the artist, this commemoration and willingness to listen to those who have been historically discriminated against facilitates a process of symbolic reparation. As he asserts, *this memorial [aims] to prevent us from falling into collective amnesia.*⁴⁶ This approach exemplifies *the growth of the memory culture.*⁴⁷ According to Hirsch, such a growth/such a memory culture not only arises from the need to include in the collection of shared legacies multiple traumatic stories from the past – in their various interpretative versions, one might add – but also reflects a desire to take individual and societal responsibility for this traumatic past, which reverberates through subsequent generations. The various actions taken to preserve the memory of a difficult past are each a product of individual characteristics and the storyteller’s sensitivity. As Hirsch points out, *[p]ostmemory’s connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall, but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation.*⁴⁸ Therefore, postmemory practices result from diverse forms of mediation, influenced by multidirectional transfer and cultural translation.

successive dilatory expedients to hinder the process. Therefore, it can be concluded that the speculations that have been appearing for some time, concerning the reluctant attitude of the new government to the initiative, were justified. Since this is a new thread in the case, I leave it for further study and treat it as a starting point for further research on memory and postcolonial relations in the Portuguese context. See the whole post entitled *COMUNICADO: Câmara Municipal de Lisboa não quer Memorial de Homenagem às Pessoas Escravizadas*, at <https://www.facebook.com/memorialescravatura/>, 10 July 2023.

⁴⁴ J. Plácido Júnior, “Será que Lisboa vai mesmo assumir que escravizou?” *Visão*, 11 October 2021, at <https://visao.pt/actualidade/sociedade/2021-10-11-sera-que-lisboa-vai-mesmo-assumir-que-escravizou/?fbclid=IwAR1Wm36tJMGfZ7--rb47V190Xgsd4Lzuo3zJOIYIRNIIAOV9v2iYyR1FQfI>, 16 November 2021.

⁴⁵ See the project’s description at <https://www.memorialescravatura.com/english>, 2 April 2023.

⁴⁶ “Kiluanji Kia Henda...”

⁴⁷ M. Hirsch, “The Generation...,” p. 111.

⁴⁸ M. Hirsch, “Connective Arts...,” p. 172.

CONTESTED LEGACIES OF COLONIALISM AND NEW INTERPRETATIONS. ADDITIONAL REMARKS

The aforementioned art projects related to Lisbon's monuments serve as examples of challenging the dominant Eurocentric view of history and hegemonic narratives.⁴⁹ They also constitute interventions in public space, aiming to achieve a more democratic representation of African communities. Although these projects may not receive extensive coverage in mainstream media, they attract attention on social media platforms and among communities directly interested in this subject matter. In 2017, ten years after its creation, Henda's photograph "Descoberta" was included in an exhibition held inside the Padrão dos Descobrimentos.⁵⁰

References to the Age of Discoveries as the golden era of Portuguese culture have been, and continue to be, significant elements in the national identification of the Portuguese for centuries. The opening words of the Portuguese national anthem are emblematic: *Heróis do mar, nobre povo, nação valente* (Heroes of the sea, noble people, valiant nation). During the authoritarian regime of the Estado Novo, the theory of luso-tropicalism⁵¹ prevailed, asserting that Portuguese colonization had beneficial effects on the conquered regions, and the myth of the Portuguese explorer was considered "indisputable." Salazar's dictatorship propagated the notion of a benevolent and praise-worthy Portuguese empire.⁵² As noted by Sena Martins and Moura, the *elimination of colonial violence from the Portuguese colonizing experience has been associated either with heroic tales of discovery or with the glorification of lusotropicalism*.⁵³ Consequently, it is difficult to reconcile this narrative with the perspective of those whose ancestors suffered as a result of colonialism. The ongoing social debate in Portugal concerning the legacies of colonial times underscores their contested and controversial nature. Within

⁴⁹ An issue worthy of further in-depth analysis is the role of the monuments in the public debate on the past, their communication potential and significance in relation to other movements and activities aimed at entering into a dialogue with history. On this topic see for example at <https://allmonumentsmustfall.com/>, 12 April 2023.

⁵⁰ See B. Neves Alves, "Turned into Stone..."

⁵¹ Luso-tropicalism was a "quasi-theory" created by Gilberto Freyre, a Brazilian sociologist, in the early 1930s, which emphasized the distinctive features of Portuguese imperialism. As Cláudia Castelo observes, lusotropicalism postulates a special ability to adapt to the tropics not by political or economic interests but due to an innate and creative empathy. The aptitude of the Portuguese to form relationships with tropical lands and peoples and their intrinsic plasticity was supposedly the result of their own hybrid ethnic origin, their "bi-continentality" and their extensive contact with the moors and the Jews in the Iberian Peninsula during the first centuries of nationhood, which was manifested primarily through miscegenation and cultural interpenetration. See C. Castelo, "Luso-Tropicalism and Portuguese Late Colonialism", at <https://www.buala.org/en/to-read/luso-tropicalism-and-portuguese-late-colonialism>, 2 April 2023.

⁵² B. Hatton, *Os Portugueses. A história moderna de Portugal. O verdadeiro retrato de um povo único, fascinante e contraditório*, Lisboa 2011, p. 95.

⁵³ B. Sena Martins, A. Moura, "Portugal e década...", p. 12.

contemporary Portuguese society, there are groups whose identities are built on and rooted in alternative memories of the same events which may be why considering the memory of Portugal's past as a "multidirectional memory" is still a challenge.⁵⁴ Portugal needs to reevaluate its relationship with the past in order to acknowledge that *the great Epic of Geographical Discoveries has as its flipside the history of colonialism, slavery and [...] wars*.⁵⁵ Africans from former colonies and their descendants continuously reassess this relationship. They not only share the legacy of trauma but also possess *the curiosity and urgency to know about the past*.⁵⁶ As members of the same memory community,⁵⁷ they engage in dialogue with the prevailing Eurocentric mindset, posing uncomfortable questions about responsibility and the contemporary consequences of colonization. Moreover, they emphasize the richness of African cultural heritage in Portugal and the contributions of Africans to the development of Portuguese society, thus transcending the "victim perspective" and accentuating their agency and subjectivity even more strongly. The artistic interpretations of colonialism discussed here illustrate how individual practices of postmemory may contribute to decolonization.

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⁵⁴ It is worth remembering that Rothberg's theory challenges the assumption, quite popular in memory studies, about the direct link between collective memory and group identity. The author states that *the borders of memory and identity are jagged*, M. Rothberg, "Multidirectional Memory...", p. 176.

⁵⁵ M. Świda, "Portugal como o país da não-inscrição em As Naus de António Lobo Antunes," in: R. Díaz-Szmidt (ed.), *Identidades Revisitadas, Identidades Reinventadas – transformações dos espaços sociais, políticos e culturais nos países de língua oficial portuguesa*, Warsaw 2019, p. 73.

⁵⁶ M. Hirsch, "Connective Arts...", p. 173.

⁵⁷ See A. Assmann, "Europe: A Community of Memory?," *GHI Bulletin*, no. 40 (2007), pp. 11-25.

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