

## INTRODUCTION

### Portuguese film

#### Colony, postcolony, memory

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This Special Issue has its origins in a symposium hosted by the Institute for Modern Languages Research (IMLR) in London, January 2016. Bringing together a team of researchers from Portugal and the United Kingdom, ‘Portuguese film: Colony, postcolony, memory’ aimed to investigate scholarly engagement with the colonial and postcolonial in Portuguese cinema. The discussion addressed the concerns of both postcolonial studies and memory studies, and was centred on films from different periods in Portuguese cinema, from *Feitiço do Império/Spell of the Empire* (António Lopes Ribeiro, 1940) to *Yvone Kane* (Margarida Cardoso, 2014), as well as photography and television in the work of Filipa César and the RTP (Portuguese Radio and Television) series *Depois do Adeus* (2013).

In addition to the presentation of a number of papers on the topic and open discussion about the questions these raised, the event was marked by the presence of Margarida Cardoso, a Portuguese filmmaker working in fiction and documentary. Cardoso’s work is concerned with issues including Portugal’s colonial past, the cinematic representation of postcolonial societies, particularly Mozambique, and the different ways in which memory is shaped. A screening of Cardoso’s latest fiction film, *Yvone Kane*, launched the event and was followed by a Q&A with the director, available online on the School of Advanced Study’s YouTube channel.<sup>1</sup> Before framing the articles in this Special Issue in terms of how they explore colony, postcolony and memory,



we will first contextualize not just this film in particular but Portuguese film more generally.

### ***Yvone Kane* and key issues in Portuguese film**

*Yvone Kane* tells the story of Rita (Beatriz Batarda), a woman who returns to the African country where she grew up to investigate the death of Yvone Kane, a political activist and guerrilla fighter. Haunted by her own past, Rita stays with her mother, Sara (Irene Ravache), and embarks on a journey recovering her family's memories, the collective memory of a nation, and the divisions that arise from the nation's postcolonial status.

On the one hand, *Yvone Kane* is a typical contemporary Portuguese film, particularly from the point of view of its art cinema credentials and production history. In 2016, in London, Cardoso spoke at length about the challenges she faced while trying to secure funding and support for her project, challenges that were only overcome when the Brazilian actress, Irene Ravache, agreed to join the cast. Although screened internationally, the film had limited release and was shown mostly in the festival circuit, counting a meagre 2,718 admissions according to the Lumière database.<sup>2</sup> The financial backing of *Yvone Kane*, a co-production between Portugal, Brazil and Mozambique, testifies to the difficulties that 'the cinema of small nations' (Hjort and Petrie 2007) in Europe, and in Portugal in particular, increasingly face (see Kourelou et al. 2014).

On the other hand, *Yvone Kane* is exceptional in the panorama of contemporary audiovisual production in Portugal. It is a film made by a woman and about women (the question of gender in Portuguese film and TV is yet to be fully explored, although it has been addressed in recent publications, including Owen and Klobucka 2014, as noted below);<sup>3</sup> it is a postcolonial film about colonialism, and it is not a historical film but set mostly in contemporary times. The engagement of Portuguese film with colonial issues has been on the increase but remains limited. Not many fiction films are produced in Portugal each year (ten is the annual average) and even fewer focus on the nation's colonial past. Another film by Cardoso, *A Costa dos Murmúrios/The Murmuring Coast* (2004), is perhaps the closest to *Yvone Kane* in terms of its head-on cinematic questioning of the interconnections between gender, power and memory in the postcolonial era. Other films about Portuguese colonialism often divert their attention towards matters of form and cinematic language – spectacle and entertainment in the cases of *Inferno/Hell* (1999) and *20,13* (2006), both by director Joaquim Leitão, or world-cinema cinephilia and self-reflexivity in the case of Miguel Gomes's *Tabu* (2012) (see Faulkner 2015; Nagib, forthcoming). In addition, *Yvone Kane* is an *auteur* film, with a slow-paced narrative that seems to privilege form over

content. Yet, its form, like its content, is deeply intertwined with the question of colonialism as it foregrounds ideas of time and rhythm, visibility and opacity, which are key in the exploration of postcolony and memory.

As stated, the symposium focused on film but several papers also examined photography and visual art, considering both fiction and documentary. For a cinema and a culture that is small, peripheral and with limited projection beyond national borders, it is important to situate the different forms of (audio)visual representations of Portuguese colonialism, postcolonialism and memory within a wider cultural process of remembering, reconstructing and re-thinking the past. Broadening the analysis from an exclusive focus on cinema to take into account the wider field of visual art makes it possible to examine a larger number of case studies and to explore the issues these raise in greater depth. The focus of this Special Issue therefore is Portuguese film, photography and television, and several articles examine the intermedial and intertextual strategies used to represent and deconstruct Portugal's colonial and postcolonial past.

The idea of the 'exceptionality' and the singularity of Portuguese colonialism accompanied the history of the *Estado Novo* [New State]<sup>4</sup> dictatorship and its view of colonialism most prominently, as described below, in the development of Lusotropicalism (see Ferro 1996: 177; Sousa Santos 2002). This view is of course extremely problematic and has been widely challenged (Klobucka 2008; Vale de Almeida 2004). Although it is not exceptional, the Portuguese case has proven to be particularly fruitful for an examination of colonial and postcolonial relationships throughout the twentieth century and the new millennium, including debates on collective and cultural memory. These debates shape different nations and societies within the Lusophone space, and are key to the development of individual identities in an increasingly globalized world.

The fact that the Portuguese empire lasted a long time and that a calamitous decolonization process ensued, including the failed attempt to create a 'Commonwealth-like' space glued by language, presents Portugal as a particularly incompetent coloniser and 'post-coloniser'. Yet the duration and geographical extension of this empire and the subsequent Lusophone space, even though weak, makes the Portuguese case relevant for an exceptionally large number of people and nations, spanning five different continents. Despite the increasing attention given to Portuguese cinema abroad, the precarious and peripheral position it occupies within European and world cinema means that, although it is not unique, it presents a particularly interesting case study for the examination of the cinemas of small nations and their international projection – possibilities that are born out of limitations, be these financial, political or linguistic (see Liz, forthcoming). Articles in this

Special Issue therefore highlight the contrast between Portugal's old 'glorious' history and dismal present on the one hand, and between a globally awarded cinema that struggles to survive in financial and creative terms on the other.

### **Colony, postcolony and memory in the Lusophone context**

The colonies, or *províncias ultramarinas* ['overseas territories'] as they were officially designated by the New State, were an integral part of the dictatorship's strategy, both ideologically, in the creation of a national identity, and financially, as the regime saw these colonies as vital economic resources. Portuguese colonialism can be divided into three phases. The first phase was centred on economic expansion. In this first stage, colonialism was founded on a pragmatic ideology based on trade. The New State's vision was that Portugal and its empire would become self-sufficient by becoming less dependent on imports and generating economic development. This strategy was founded on cotton cultivation and the exploration of minerals, diamonds and oil, but was soon shown to fail: for instance, in 1945 famine led to rebellion in cotton plantations in Angola (Birmingham 2003: 171).

The second phase of Portuguese colonialism in Africa is best characterized by growing economic and political crisis, both in the 'overseas provinces' and at a home. Of course, this concept of crisis was in opposition to the official regime ideology. This ideology reflected the notion of 'Lusotropicalism', a term coined in 1933 by Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre which has been widely used to express the idea that Portugal was supposedly a better coloniser than other European nations. In fact, Portuguese colonialism was not only financially ruinous but also extremely violent: the escalation of the crisis culminated in the Colonial Wars. While Britain, for instance, abandoned its colonies in Africa in 1960, Portugal struggled to maintain its control over Angola, Guinea and Mozambique by fighting a bloody guerrilla war. Portuguese rulers remained *orgulhosamente sós* ['proudly alone']<sup>5</sup> as the representatives of the sole colonialist European nation into the mid-1970s.

The Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974, which led to immediate calls for the independence of the former colonies, marks the start of the third phase in Portuguese (post)colonialism. Despite putting an end to the forty-year dictatorship of the New State, in power since 1933, and although positively associated with the end of colonialism, this was not an altogether celebratory period. After the Revolution, Portugal had to resolve two problems at the same time: first, how to devise a stable new order for itself and, second, how to put an end to its rule in Africa. The former concern was prioritised, which meant the Portuguese process of decolonization in Africa was little short of disastrous. There was no serious attempt to negotiate the terms of the handover

– for instance, Portugal never insisted on genuine elections being held. With no legal or economic framework in place, civil war was the obvious outcome, and indeed war broke out, first in Angola (1975–2002) and a few years later in Mozambique (1977–1992).

The brief history of Portuguese colonialism sketched here is marked by a sense of crisis, violence and failure. This prevented serious engagement with its narration and a probing of its consequences for a large period of time after the turn to democracy. The years after the Carnation Revolution were occupied by a concern with the immediate present, and a general disregard, in Portuguese culture, for the nation's colonial past (present and future). For years, Portuguese colonial and postcolonial history became a political, social and cultural taboo, a silence that was particularly noticeable within the sphere of cinema and audiovisual production (Sabine 2009). Although in literature a number of writers turned to the history of Portuguese involvement in Africa and other corners of the former 'empire' relatively quickly after the end of colonialism, films representing Portugal's (former) empire (as the case studies examined in this Special Issue show), date either from the New State era or from at least ten years after its demise. *Um Adeus Português/A Portuguese Farewell* (João Botelho, 1986) and *Non, ou a vã glória de mandar/No, or the Vain Glory of Command* (Manoel de Oliveira, 1990) probably constitute the earliest examples of film's engagement with Portuguese colonial history, and the case studies examined in this Special Issue date from the new millennium onwards.

The rise of scholarly literature on postcolonialism in the Portuguese and Lusophone context testifies to the growing interest in understanding and defying the nation's (post)colonial status (see Castelo 1998; Ferreira 2012; Lourenço 1999; Ribeiro 2004; Ribeiro de Menezes 2011; Owen and Klobucka 2014; Vieira 2015). Recent decades have also seen an unprecedented growth in popular music and theatre, photography, television and cinematic works produced in Portugal focusing on the history and culture of Lusophone Africa. For Fernando Arenas (2003), this might be explained by the accession of Portugal to the European Union (EU) in 1986, as well as the organization of mass scale events, such as the Lisbon World Exhibition, Expo '98. According to Patrícia Vieira, this 'postcolonial turn' stems from the economic ties the country has to Portugal's former colonies, as well as the 'arrival of many lusophone African immigrants to the country from the 1980s onwards [that] also lent visibility to this postcolonial condition and gave rise to a vibrant Portuguese-African subculture' (2015: 276). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and into the twenty-first century, as democracy matured in Portugal, national identity was re-thought within a growing transnational

context, in a process that necessarily meant also a re-thinking of the past. In this sense, Portuguese culture seems to have moved from a colonial state of oblivion, deeply attached to the legacy of the dictatorship (what Vieira [2015] describes as a 'fetishization' of the colonial period), to a postcolonial attitude.

Graham Huggan defines postcolonialism as 'a performative mode of critical revisionism, consistently directed at the colonial past and assessing its legacies for the present' (2013: 10). Crucial to examinations of Portuguese cinema dealing with the colonial period is this notion of critical revisionism. Postcolonialism is concerned with power relationships (for example, coloniser vs. colonised), with notions of submission, repression and oppression, and compares the past existence of such terms (and realities) with their evolution into the present. New approaches to film and history and expanding scholarly work on the relationship between the two dismiss discussions about realism to focus instead on questions related to how cinema evokes and represents history (see Landy 2015). Similarly, a growing number of contemporary historical films raises questions about the collective memory of people and nations, about how past events are remembered, as well as what recollections cinematic representations leave aside or choose to ignore.

As Huggan also notes, postcolonialism is performative, that is, it has the capacity to change the reality it describes. Lusophone cinema that rethinks colony and postcolony aims to shape a new narrative of national identity and to have an impact on mentalities, individuals and societies. As such, the articles in this Special Issue look into the possibility of the emergence and definition of a Portuguese postcolonial cinema. As Sandra Ponzanesi and Verena Berger write:

The 'postcolonial' in postcolonial cinema functions, therefore, not simply as an adjective or declination of the migrant condition, but as a framework of analysis – an epistemological or optic standpoint through which films emerge in engagement with and as contestations of colonial dynamics and their legacies in the present, as well as epistemic devices capable of implementing a substantial departure from colonial paradigms of knowledge. (2016: 112)

It is in this performative mode that postcolony engages in a particularly clear manner with the issue of memory, a topic which has been increasingly examined across the humanities and social sciences, and that is equally vital for an examination of the Portuguese case.

Memory Studies has come to define Cultural Studies of the new millennium, and scholarship on Portuguese audiovisual culture is no exception. As Alison Ribeiro de Menezes noted in 2011, the cases of both Spain and Portugal are particularly acute. Emerging from four decades of

authoritarian dictatorships in the mid-1970s, the post-dictatorship cultures of both countries have engaged in multiple ways with the legacies of authoritarianism, even if that engagement is sometimes one of seeming amnesia. In Portugal, the legacy of Salazar's dictatorship (António de Oliveira Salazar 1932–1968; Marcelo Caetano 1968–1974) is also, as we have seen, intertwined with decolonization: the Carnation Revolution of 1974 brought both the return of democracy to Portugal and an end to the Colonial Wars. As Ribeiro de Menezes has shown, Portugal's postcolonial experience has proved more traumatic than its post-dictatorship one. The relatively peaceful nature of the 1974 Revolution meant that the legacy of dictatorship was addressed relatively early, whereas 'the arguably more traumatic legacy of the Colonial Wars that ended five centuries of empire' (2011: 13) has been 'unmastered' (27).

Studies of postcolonial memories in Portuguese audiovisual culture have thus far turned around two areas highlighted by Mark Sabine in a 2009 chapter entitled 'Killing (and) nostalgia'. Sabine's study pairs exploring trauma, in all its horror, with investigating the sentimental pull of that same past, despite that horror, using Margarida Cardoso's *A Costa dos Murmúrios/The Murmuring Coast* (2004) as a case study, which stages 1960s colonial Mozambique from the perspective of a Portuguese postcolonial present. Writing in 2011, Ribeiro de Menezes noted that 'a new discourse on Portuguese colonialism may emerge more forcefully as the topic is reexamined in the next decade' (2011: 16). The films, TV series and works of visual art examined in this Special Issue suggest that precisely such a new discourse, on both colonialism and postcolonialism, is beginning to emerge. As our five case studies variously show, the questions that arise in particular all turn around those raised by Memory Studies, including (reflective) nostalgia, disavowal and trauma.

## Overview

This Special Issue begins with Mark Sabine's analysis of popular commemoration of Portugal's 1974 Revolution, which ended Salazar's New State and marked the beginning of the end of over five hundred years of Portuguese empire. In 'Lovers, not fighters: Left politics and *brandos costumes* in *Capitães de Abril*', he argues that Maria de Medeiros's 2000 film represents the military that overthrew Salazar's regime as peaceful, and especially influenced by women. In this way, *Capitães de Abril* re-deploys the notion of Portuguese *brandos costumes* ['gentle customs'], which is all the more significant as the Salazarist regime had itself co-opted this idea, especially in its Lusotropicalist apology for colonial aggression.

It is again to the role of women that Sally Faulkner and Ana Martins turn, though here in their analysis of a novel and film that look back to colonialism from the perspective of a military wife, Lídia Jorge's *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (1988), which was adapted to film by Margarida Cardoso in 2004. Rejecting approaches to adaptation that enclose the texts in a two-way comparison of novel to film, the authors analyse the deployment of a third medium in both texts, photography, to argue that both Jorge and Cardoso articulate postcolonial Portugal's engagement with its colonial past through Freudian *Nachträglichkeit*. In the novel, Jorge deploys photography to articulate the origins of trauma; for Cardoso, it is photography that allows a return to, and investigation, of that trauma.

While Miguel Gomes explores the 'taboo' memory of Portugal's colonial past from the perspective of its postcolonial present in his 2012 film of that name, *Tabu*, he also explores the alternative terrain of nostalgia and disavowal. In 'Filming ethnographic Portugal: Miguel Gomes and the last taboo', Hilary Owen shows that the director deploys multiple cinephile frames of reference (from Portuguese to 'world' cinema; silent, classical and contemporary film) to create an image of imperial Africa that explores various taboos, and that, as Owen's further analysis of Gomes's short film *Redenção/Redemption* (2013) shows, in fact projects Portugal's own fragile position in Europe.

In 'Out of the labyrinth? Television memories of revolution and return in contemporary Portugal', Alison Ribeiro de Menezes addresses the criticism of nostalgia that has been frequently levelled at historical recreations of empire in Portuguese culture. Ribeiro de Menezes's article significantly highlights the value of popular culture and forms of popular fiction in the postcolonial critical revision project that is seemingly developing in contemporary Portuguese society. Shifting our attention to television, Ribeiro de Menezes suggests that the 2013 series *Depois do Adeus* [After saying farewell] performs useful memory work as it projects what she terms 'reflective nostalgia' for Portugal's *retornados*,<sup>6</sup> though she cautions that further, critical perspectives on Portuguese postcolonialism are ever more necessary.

Some of these, finally, may be found in the work of documentary filmmaker Filipa César, whose work António da Silva compares with Cardoso's *Yvone Kane* (2014) in our final article. In 'Archives, memory and colonial resistance in the work of Portuguese filmmakers Margarida Cardoso and Filipa César', da Silva shows precisely how it is through an engagement with the archive that our access to historical truth may be understood. The Special Issue thus ends with a study that places centre stage a critical concern that is explored throughout: the very retrievability, or otherwise, of the colony through memory and through cinema.

## Notes

1. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xO8pFfoDqwA> (accessed 20 October 2016).
2. The Lumière database, with data collected by the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO) is available online at <http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/web/search/index.php> (accessed 20 October 2016).
3. This is the topic of the 'Transnational Portuguese Women Artists' conference, organized by Hilary Owen and Claudia Pazos-Alonso, which will take place at Oxford University in March 2017.
4. All translations are our own.
5. This expression was used by António de Oliveira Salazar, dictator at the head of the New State until 1968, in a speech on 18 February 1965. An excerpt of this video is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjcNjph-rWE> (accessed 24 October 2016).
6. Portuguese settlers in the colonies, who returned to Portugal following decolonization. 'Returned' is often placed in inverted commas, as many individuals had been born overseas and had never lived in Portugal.

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