

Autofictional Trauma in Post-Imperial Portuguese Literature



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Abstract

Autofictional Trauma in Post-Imperial Portuguese Literature

This thesis aims to situate the work of three contemporary Portuguese female authors, Lúcia Jorge, Isabela Figueiredo, and Dulce Maria Cardoso, within the autofictional genre in order to interrogate how the trauma of their own personal experience of the Colonial Wars and decolonisation era is reflected within their writing. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Vincent Colonna, I propose that each of the works investigated can be positioned along a spectrum of autofictionality, due to the proximity or distance of the authors from their respective narrators and protagonists. I contend that an autofictional blurring of fact and fiction within *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (1988), *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais* (2009, 2015), and *O Retorno* (2011) is a productive strategy for the depiction of trauma and enables the traumatic memories of the authors to bleed onto the page, albeit from a protected distance.

This study draws on close textual analysis to assess the breadth, and severity, of the physical and mental trauma experienced during the Colonial Wars and decolonisation epoch. This thesis is careful to give equal weight to protagonists of different genders, with an integral dimension of the analysis being its innovative focus on masculinities. My close reading develops across four chapters, traversing themes of photography, gender, and sexuality, and examines the traumatic implications of this period ranging from PTSD and suicide to sexual assault. My assessment of a range of protagonists highlights that, through their depiction of trauma, Jorge, Figueiredo and Cardoso explode and problematise nostalgic notions of the Portuguese empire and *Estado Novo* ideologies of imperial power. This study questions the possibility of survival and recovery proposed by the three authors, not only for their traumatised characters, but also for themselves, and culminates with a reading of these works as a “protected” and cathartic re-living of trauma.

Extended Abstract

Autofictional Trauma in Post-Imperial Portuguese Literature

This thesis aims to situate the work of three contemporary Portuguese female authors within the autofictional genre - Lúcia Jorge's *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (1988), Isabela Figueiredo's *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais* (2009, 2015), and Dulce Maria Cardoso's *O Retorno* (2011) – so as to observe how the trauma of their own personal experience of the Colonial Wars and decolonisation era is reflected within their writing. This study draws on close textual analysis to assess the traumatised protagonists of each work to consider the breadth, and severity, of the physical and mental trauma experienced during the Colonial Wars and decolonisation period, and the possibility of their recovery and survival. My assessment of these protagonists aims to highlight that, through their depiction of trauma, Jorge, Figueiredo and Cardoso explode and problematise nostalgic notions of the Portuguese empire and *Estado Novo* ideologies of imperial power. The main arguments of this thesis develop across four chapters, which traverse themes of autofiction, gender, trauma, photography, and sexuality.

In the first chapter, entitled 'Hiding in Plain Sight: Strategies of Autofictional Self-Camouflage', I situate *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais*, and *O Retorno* within the genre of autofictional literature. In the first instance, I map the theoretical debate surrounding the term since its conception by Serge Doubrovsky in 1977, and contend that the genre lacks a single, unified definition. My examination then explores the wide range of female authored literature that has made use of the experimental style of autofiction, arguing that the hostile genre of autobiography has historically precluded women from publication. The experimental characteristics of autofiction are productive in the construction of varying female experiences, and in particular hybrid identities. I then outline the sub-genre of trauma autofiction, and the suitability of autofiction to explore and problematise the "truth" of traumatic events. I propose that the autofictional characteristic of blended fact and fiction acts to redefine traditional notions around "truth", in turn, rendering any objective truth an impossibility. I do not present

this impossibility as a stumbling block however, but rather an opportunity to obtain a deeper and more empathetic understanding of trauma.

I then turn my attention to the corpus of this thesis, and highlight the intersections between Jorge, Figueiredo, and Cardoso's own experiences and their literary work. It is not my intention to position the three works as straight-forward autobiographical accounts of trauma suffered during the decolonisation period, but rather investigate the texts along an autofictional continuum. My discussion is centred upon Colonna's theoretical framework of biographical, fantastical, specular, and intrusive autofiction. I argue that the three authors employ varying degrees of autofictionality and that, through the creation of multiple versions of the Self, a sense of potential mastery over experienced trauma is enacted. I investigate how a use of trauma autofiction within *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais*, and *O Retorno* allows the authors to explore and interrogate trauma on their own terms, whilst remaining "protected" through a strategy of self-camouflage.

In the second chapter, named 'Photographic (Re)collections: Visual and Verbal Disruptions in *Caderno* and *A Costa*', I examine how Jorge and Figueiredo play with the medial boundaries between text and image. In the case of *Caderno*, I interrogate the interaction between the nostalgic childhood photographs and explosive text, specifically questioning whether a corroboration or contradiction exists between the two. I argue that, at first glance, the photographs reinforce the colonial and familial myth enforced by the *Estado Novo* regime, however, when considered alongside the damning written content, these nostalgic myths are exploded, and the violent backdrop of the photographs revealed. I propose that the intermedial strategy applied by Figueiredo forces the reader to look beyond the initial visual presentation of the photographs, and excavate the layers which reveal the deceit of colonial mythology and of her own family.

Turning to *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, this chapter then considers how images illustrating war crimes function as a productive tool to compel the reader to bear witness to colonial atrocity.

Jorge utilises a strategy of mock ekphrasis as a means of bringing the horrors of Portuguese war crimes to the fore, going one step further than her already provocative narrative. I argue that, in doing so, the inclusion of these imagined images acts as a political strategy to unveil colonial hierarchies and unpick a male imperial gaze. I propose that the presentation of these ekphrastic images functions as a critical reminder that images of Portuguese war atrocity and soldier brutality are yet to come to light.

In the third chapter, entitled ‘Precarious White Masculinities: The Traumatic Shattering of Salazar’s Men’, I question the manner in which Jorge, Figueiredo, and Cardoso construct and deconstruct masculine norms through the traumatic implications of the Portuguese empire on male bodies. Initially, I map the theoretical landscape of hegemonic masculinity, and then move specifically onto a discussion of the masculine nationalist figure of the “*homem novo*” idealised by the *Estado Novo* regime. I position the primary male characters of each text along a spectrum of masculinity, moving from paternal figures to military subjects, examining how, and if, they may be considered disruptive of a hegemonic standard. My initial line of enquiry considers the paternal and military figures of the three texts and their successful upholding of a colonial and patriarchal ideology regarding issues of race, sexuality, and gender norms. Of particular interest here is the depiction of Uncle Zé in *O Retorno*, whose homosexuality portrays, from the outset, a disruption of his role as a soldier within the Colonial Wars.

The second section of this chapter builds upon the varying degrees of hegemonic colonial masculinity projected by the male protagonists, and questions how encounters with trauma interrupt this. I argue that, although previously presented as impenetrable pillars of colonial strength, the physical and mental trauma suffered by the male subjects in the three texts ultimately shatters the “*homem novo*” ideal. I reflect upon the possibilities for survival offered by the three authors for these men, with a particular focus upon the changes of personality and identity demonstrated by Mário and Uncle Zé in *O Retorno*, who, out of the three texts, are the only male protagonists to survive. I contend that any possibility of survival from the multiple and varied

traumatic experiences encountered within the Portuguese decolonisation process requires an acceptance of fluidity and difference within depictions of masculine identities.

In the fourth, and final, chapter, named ‘The Traumatized Female Psyche and Search for Solidarity’, I interrogate the intersections between trauma and the female mind, focusing upon the impact of the Colonial Wars and decolonisation period upon women’s psyches. The first section of this chapter examines the entanglement between traumatic experiences and dreaming within *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais* and *A Costa dos Murmúrios*. Primarily, I locate three dreamscapes within *Caderno*, and argue that these moments facilitate the enactment of a series of unresolved familial traumas. I contend that, whilst these dreamscapes do indeed reveal traumatic themes demonstrated throughout the entire text, they should not be considered simply as haunting nightmares, but rather as productive strategies for the therapeutic navigation of trauma.

This chapter then turns more specifically to depictions of mental trauma suffered by female protagonists within *A Costa dos Murmúrios* and *O Retorno*, focusing upon Helena, Evita, and Glória respectively. Firstly, I plot Helena’s worsening mental health, manifested through depression and suicidality due to an abusive marriage, and explore the depressive similarities between Evita and Helena. I then interrogate the unsympathetic narratorial stance of Eva, and propose that the judgement extended to Helena’s suffering ultimately denies the two women any opportunity for inter-female support. A similarly unempathetic narrator is present within *O Retorno*, and, in my consideration of Glória, who suffers from psychotic episodes and fits, I analyse how Rui attempts to “control” his mother’s outbursts. I contend that, although both Helena and Glória are experiencing resolutely different realities of the late colonial period, they share a common theme of mental illness and, notably, an uncomprehending narrator.

Considering these literary works together for the first time, this thesis defends their categorisation as examples of trauma autofiction and argues that this authorial strategy permits

Jorge, Figueiredo, and Cardoso to present elements of their own experienced trauma through a camouflaged position. Rather than a simple repetition of trauma, the autofictional capacity of each work grants each author the opportunity to not necessarily master, but rather excavate, their traumatic memories without demanding full vulnerability from them. Through the combination of fact and fiction, the authors permit readers to better understand the wide-ranging traumas encountered during the decolonisation period. In exposing the traumatic reality of this violent period of Portuguese contemporary history, the three authors likewise create a space to engage with the trauma experienced by so many members of Portuguese society at the time.

Notes on Abbreviations

The following abbreviations shall be used henceforth for ease of reading:

A Costa dos Murmúrios – A Costa

Caderno de Memórias Coloniais - Caderno

All quotations from primary sources will use abbreviated titles, followed by the relevant page number. Quotations from secondary sources which are not in Portuguese or English will be translated.

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Introduction - Looking Back: Memories of the Colonial War and Decolonisation Period

Por favor, evite todas as sombras. Tem-se feito um esforço enorme ao longo destes anos para que todos nós o tenhamos esquecido. Não se deve deixar passar para o futuro nem a ponta duma cópia, nem a ponta duma sombra.

Lídia Jorge, *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, p. 136

‘Manuel deixou o seu coração em África’, writes Figueiredo, with a sarcastic allusion to Manuel Arouca’s romantically exoticised novel, *Deixei o Meu Coração em África* (2005), ‘Também conheço quem lá tenha deixado dois automóveis ligeiros, um veículo todo-o-terreno, uma carrinha de carga, mais uma camioneta, duas vivendas, três machambas, bem como a conta no Banco Nacional Ultramarino, já convertido em meticais.’ (2015: 37). So starts *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais* (2009), and her shattering and condemning depiction of the violent decolonisation period in Portuguese colonial Mozambique.

Between 1961-74, Portugal embarked upon an extensive military campaign against nationalist movements in Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau, known as the Colonial War.¹ Rather than negotiate independence for their African colonies and depart from their historical imperial rule, thirteen years of brutal conflict ensued. The Colonial War remains one of the most catastrophic events in twentieth-century Portuguese history, and marked, not only the demise of the Portuguese colonial project in Africa, but indeed of the last colonial power in Europe.

Under Salazar’s authoritarian dictatorship, beginning in 1932 and spanning across four decades, Portugal was shrouded by a dark cloud of state-enforced censorship. With exorbitant national spending and steadily rising mortality rates, Salazar’s struggling hold on the African colonies came at a far greater cost than he was willing to reveal to the Portuguese public. As such, of the many topics that the dictatorship sought to constrain, limiting public knowledge of the

¹ In Africa, these wars are referred to as the Liberation Wars.

Colonial War was critical. Consequently, any political critique of the Portuguese military presence in Africa was banned, and the rationale behind the war enveloped in silence. Salazar fashioned a rhetoric of denial around the occurrence of any military combat in the African colonies, positioning the army presence as a ‘Missão de Soberania’ (Cruzeiro 2004: 32) and an attempt to manage a series of small-scale revolts. According to Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, this censored narrative generated ‘uma opinião pública desinformada e controlada, distante dos problemas africanos, mas educada numa intensa mística imperial’ (2004: 174).

The end of the war arose with the *coup d’état* of 1974 which saw the Caetano government overthrown by the military. Notably this coup was undertaken by the same army personnel involved in the Colonial War itself, and resultingly, as Paulo de Medeiros notes, ‘[the] Portuguese soldiers never really faced public condemnation for their actions in war, and were celebrated instead as the heroes who had rescued the nation from authoritarian rule.’ (2000: 208). In a similar vein, this *coup* became known the Carnation Revolution.

Through the termination of combat in Africa, the Carnation Revolution prompted a wave of “returns” to the Portuguese metropole, comprising of soldiers from the front and around 500,000 colonial settlers known as the *retornados*. These settlers were forced to embark on a journey of post-imperial repatriation, however, unlike their *pieds noirs* Algerian counterparts, the *retornados* returned to a Portugal that was politically unstable and economically crippled after fifty years of dictatorship. The influx of citizens arriving into Lisbon proved challenging for the revolutionary government, who needed to house, feed, and support the *retornado* community, many of whom had been airlifted out of the colonies with no possessions. As a result, the State began to create social policies to encourage *retornado* integration into Portuguese society. This process however proved more complicated than anticipated, and Morgane Delaunay estimates that by mid 1976 around 30,000 *retornados* were still temporarily housed in hotels (2020: 219–20). The community were poorly received in the newly post-imperial motherland and tensions

with the metropolitan population were rife. The *retornados* were considered the embodied vestige of the empire and unwelcome competition for jobs at a time of extreme economic crisis.

Similarly, the returning veterans did not arrive to enthusiasm or fanfare. After thirteen long years of brutal conflict, João Paulo Guerra estimates that, on the Portuguese side, there were around 8,800 dead, 30,000 wounded, 4,500 physically disabled, and over 100,000 soldiers suffering from post-traumatic stress disorders (1996: 32–4).² As such, physically and mentally traumatised soldiers arrived back onto the shores of Lisbon and were faced with a society taking its first steps as a post-imperial nation. Very few wished to confront the truths of the Portuguese imperial project or the brutalities of the Colonial War, and thus, the uncomfortable and thorny topics of the decolonisation period were steeped in shame. The veterans and *retornado* community returned to a societal demand for silence, alongside a government-approved “collective amnesia” towards the Portuguese imperial project.

With the ultimate fall of the fascist dictatorship, the restraints of the censorship which had gripped the country began to be dismantled, and with this came an emergence of writers seeking to shed light on subjects suppressed by the regime. As a result, questions surrounding Portuguese national identity arose from the wreckage of the imperial nation, and post-revolutionary scholarship, which rejected the previously held mythical image of Portugal, began to surface.³ Despite the reluctance of the Portuguese government to engage with the country’s colonial past, a new literary era materialised, questioning Portuguese involvement in the Colonial War and exposing hidden aspects of the time period; perhaps the most well-known of these works

² There are fewer concrete numbers available on Angolan and Mozambican casualties, but numbers estimate that around 10,000 soldiers were killed, and 50,000 civilian’s lost their lives in each case.

³ Thematic explorations of the Portuguese search for identity within literature are found in the work of Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, see: *O Sexo dos Textos e Outras Leituras* (Lisbon: Caminho, 1995), ‘Narrativas da Guerra Colonial: Imagens Fragmentadas da Nação’, in *Capelas Imperfeitas* (Lisbon: Horizonte, 2002); identity acts as a foundational theme in the expansive work of Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, see: “Empire, Colonial Wars and Post-Colonialism in Portuguese Contemporary Imagination”, *Portuguese Studies*, 18 (2002), *Uma história de regressos: império, Guerra Colonial e pós-colonialismo* (Lisbon: Afrontamento, 2004).

is António Lobo Antunes' *Os Cus de Judas* (1979), followed chronologically by João de Melo's *Autópsia de um Mar em Ruínas* (1984) and *Os Anos da guerra, 1961-1975* (1988), and Lídia Jorge's *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (1988).⁴ Rui de Azevedo Teixeira argues that these writers constructed a literary examination of their personal participation in the Colonial War, and as such became a generation of writers exploring not only the loss of the empire, but additionally their own role within that loss (1998: 96–7).

Historically, narratives depicting the decolonisation period were focused upon the Colonial War specifically, and most frequently explored the perspective of veterans, as with Lobo Antunes or Melo, or those with a direct relationship to the war in another capacity, such as military wives like Jorge.⁵ In comparison, the depiction of *retornado* experiences remained absent from literary representation. The arrival of Júlio Magalhães's (2008) novel, entitled *Os Retornados - Um Amor Nunca Se Esquece*, was ground-breaking in its depiction of the *retornado* experience, portrayed through a combination of fiction, autobiography, and the experiences of those around him. The publication of *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais* (2009) and *O Retorno* (2011) occurred shortly after and continued to pave the way for the current fledgling discussions within Portuguese society about the stigmatised status of the *retornado* community.

Personal Memories of Decolonisation

The chosen corpus of this thesis is Lídia Jorge's *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (1988), Isabela Figueiredo's *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais* (2009, 2015), and Dulce Maria Cardoso's *O*

⁴ Examples of first-hand Colonial War testimony are no longer just found within literature, but are also present in visual culture. Particularly salient examples are João Botelho's film *Um Adeus Português* (1985), Joaquim Furtado's striking documentary *A Guerra* (2007), and Diana Andringa and Flora Gomes' documentary *Guiné-Bissau: As duas faces da guerra* (2009). A visual representation of the *retornados* has appeared more recently, see the RTP television series, *E depois do Adeus* (2013), and Miguel Gomes' film, *Tabu* (2012).

⁵ For a detailed and chronological list of literary works created by veterans, see: João Medina, "The Old Lie: Some Portuguese Contemporary Novels on the Colonial Wars in Africa (1961-74)", *Portuguese Studies* 15 (1999): 146-161.

Retorno (2011).⁶ The reasoning behind my selection of this triad lies in each author's personal proximity and experience of the Colonial War and decolonisation period, which Jorge encountered in Angola and Mozambique as an adult, and both Figueiredo and Cardoso as children in Mozambique and Angola respectively. Although at different stages of their lives, all three women were resident in a Portuguese colony during this specific phase of contemporary Portuguese history and bore witness to the ensuing violence and turmoil. This literary trio presents differing accounts of the decolonisation epoch, but each contradict the official and sanitised version imposed by the *Estado Novo* regime. Concurrently, through interwoven thematic threads of mourning, guilt, blame, and betrayal, the three texts not only carve out a necessary space for the experiences and emotions encountered by so many Portuguese citizens, but more specifically, in the case of Jorge and Figueiredo, seek to better understand the gendered impact of the Colonial War and *retornado* migration on women in particular.

Born in 1946 in Boliqueime, Portugal, Lúcia Jorge is emphatically one of the most prominent authors of contemporary Portuguese literature. She is particularly renowned for her role as part of the "Post-Revolution Generation" – a group of writers who produced a range of modern literature after the fall of the dictatorship in 1974.⁷ *A Costa*, published in 1988 by Dom Quixote, highlights the realities of the Colonial War through a predominantly female gaze. The text is structurally divided and opens with a short piece entitled 'Os Gafanhotos', which depicts a wedding reception at a hotel in Mozambique, attended by military men and their wives, from

⁶All quotations are taken from the following editions: Lúcia Jorge, *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2004), Isabela Figueiredo, *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais* (Lisbon: Caminho, 2015), and Dulce Maria Cardoso, *O Retorno* (Lisbon: Tinta da China, 2011). In the case of *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais*, all page references should be assumed as from the 2015 edition, unless stated otherwise.

⁷ Jorge's literary production spans four decades, with twenty-five works ranging from fiction, short stories, poetry, essays, children's books, to a stage play. Her renown and accolades are far-reaching, and her work has garnered extensive critical praise and over twenty literary prizes of both national and international standing; in 2005 Jorge was awarded the prestigious Portuguese order of knighthood, the *Ordem do Infante D. Henrique*. Jorge also acts as a public intellectual, chosen by *The Guardian* to comment on Portugal's behalf on the UK's departure from the EU in 2020, and in early 2021 was invited to act as a member of the advisory Council of State by the Portuguese President, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. In December 2020, the *Cátedra Lúcia Jorge* was created by the University of Geneva and the Camões Institute to commemorate Jorge's contribution to literature, and September 2021 saw the first annual colloquium take place in Geneva, Switzerland. For more details regarding the *Cátedra*'s upcoming projects, see: < <https://www.unige.ch/catedra-lidia-jorge/index.php> >.

the point of view of an assumed male narrator. This short piece functions as a leitmotif throughout the second and principal narration by Eva Lopo, who “re-tells” the initial short story twenty-years later whilst identifying herself as the bride, whom she names Evita.⁸ In this second and principal portion of the text, Eva is positioned as both the reader and critic of ‘Os Gafanhotos’. Through what Ferreira qualifies as a ‘sweeping postmodernist move’ (1992: 271), Jorge interweaves theoretical musings on “History”, “knowledge”, and “truth” through revelations on the violent horrors of colonial history. The questioning of history within *A Costa* has been given much analytical attention amongst critics, as has Jorge’s structural and verbal strategy of division and irony to undermine the heroic military narrative promoted by the *Estado Novo* regime.⁹

In contrast to the fame of Lília Jorge, Isabela Figueiredo had only published one other work at the time of *Caderno*’s publication, entitled *Conto é como quem diz* (1988), under the name of Isabel Almeida Santos. Figueiredo was born in Lourenço Marques, today known as Maputo, Mozambique, in 1963 and is the only author out of my chosen three not born in Portugal. She “returned” to Portugal as a *retornada* in 1975, aged twelve, and lived with her grandmother whilst her parents remained in Mozambique for a further ten years.

⁸ Throughout the course of this thesis, I shall use the name Eva when referring to the narratorial voice, and Evita when exploring the actions of the protagonist.

⁹ See Ana Paula Ferreira, “Lília Jorge’s *A Costa dos Murmúrios*: History and the Postmodern She-Wolf”, *Revista Hispânica Moderna* XLV 2 (December 1992): 268-78; Helena Kaufman, “Reclaiming the Margins of History in Lília Jorge’s *A Costa dos Murmúrios*”, *Luso-Brazilian Review* 29.1 (1992): 41-49; Ronald W. Sousa, “The Critique of History in Lília Jorge’s *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, or Helen of Beira Meets Luís of Troy”, *Cincinnati Romance Review* 16 (1997): 135-43, and “I Was Evita” or Ecce Feminina: Lília Jorge’s *The Murmuring Coast*”, *Lusosex: Gender And Sexuality In The Portuguese-Speaking World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002): 168-183; Paula Jordão, “*A Costa dos Murmúrios*: Uma Ambiguidade Inesperada”, *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 2 (Spring 1999): 49-60; Paulo de Medeiros, “Memória Infinita”, *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 2 (Spring 1999): 61-78; Hilary Owen, “Back to Nietzsche: The Making of an Intellectual/Woman Lília Jorge’s *A Costa dos Murmúrios*”, *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 2 (Spring 1999): 79-98; Hilary Owen and Cláudia Pazos Alonso, “Sexual/Textual Re-Visions in Lília Jorge”, *Antigone’s Daughters? : Gender, Genealogy and the Politics of Authorship in 20th-Century Portuguese Women’s Writing* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2011): 138-58.

Caderno itself originated as a series of posts on Figueiredo's personal blog, named *Novo Mundo*¹⁰. These posts were then combined and published, first by Angelus Novus in 2009, and later, as a reissued edition, by Caminho in 2015.¹¹ In this later edition, Figueiredo included new written content which is more damning of her father and offers the first insight into an incident of sexual harassment and assault by her uncle in Portugal. In terms of the visual elements, Figueiredo adjusted the previously integrated photographs; some were omitted and replaced, whilst others were retained with an altered textual positioning. Whilst these specific changes will be discussed in-depth within Chapter Two and Four of this thesis, more generally, this revision process speaks to the multifarious and mobile nature of the text, mirroring Figueiredo's working relationship with her own personal colonial guilt and trauma.

Dulce Maria Cardoso was born in Trás-os-Montes, Portugal, in 1964 and moved to Luanda, Angola, with her family at the age of six months to join her father, who had previously emigrated to the colony. Like Figueiredo, she came back to Portugal as a *retornada* in 1975, aged thirteen, with her mother and sister. *O Retorno* is Cardoso's fifth work, published by Tinta da China in 2011¹². That same year, the text was awarded the Prémio Especial da Crítica and named *Público*'s Book of the Year. Unlike *A Costa* and *Caderno*, the majority of *O Retorno* takes places within a newly post-imperial Portugal and offers a detailed observation into the stigmatised reality of the *retornado* community. Both *Caderno* and *O Retorno* hold a unique place within the ever-expanding collection of artistic production which deals with the messy topic of Portuguese

¹⁰ The blog was originally named *O Mundo Perfeito*, and the significance of this name change should not be underestimated. The blog is currently inactive, with the last entry dated 5th March 2018. See Isabela Figueiredo, *Novo Mundo* (2018b).

¹¹ Also in 2015, Phillip Rothwell and Anna Klobucka published their English translation of the (2009) work, providing comprehensive historical context and literary analysis in their detailed introduction in Anna Klobucka and Phillip Rothwell, "Introduction", *Luso-Asio-Afro-Brazilian Studies and Theory* 4 (2015): 7-26.

¹² Publishing house Tinta da China has, in recent years, published an increasing number of texts that deal with the issue of remembrance of the decolonisation period and Colonial War, such as Maria José Lobo Antunes, *Regressos Quase Perfeitos: Memórias da Guerra em Angola* (2015), Catarina Gomes, *Furriel Não é Nome de Pai* (2018), and Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and Joana Pontes (ed) *Visões do Império* (2021).

decolonisation, and demonstrate the recent contemporary shift towards revealing the migratory experiences of the Portuguese *retornados*.¹³

Despite Jorge being twenty years Figueiredo and Cardoso's senior, the three women share an experience of the fall of the Portuguese empire, albeit through the lens of two different, and selective, historical moments: the Colonial War itself, and the return of colonial settlers to the metropole during the ensuing decolonisation period. Given the celebrated status of Jorge's *A Costa*, and that, in 2004, the text was adapted for the screen by Margarida Cardoso¹⁴, it is highly probable that both Figueiredo and Cardoso were aware of the content of the work and its damning exposure of female Colonial War realities. In this respect, one could view the triad of works as a literary lineage. Whilst my thesis is not intended as a comparative study per se, by placing *A Costa*, *Caderno*, and *O Retorno* together in critical conversation for the first time, my analysis considers the development of female-authored narratives of the decolonisation epoch.

Autofiction in Portugal

For the first time in Portuguese literary studies, this thesis considers *A Costa*, *Caderno*, and *O Retorno* as a triad and, crucially, as examples of autofictional narratives of Colonial War and decolonisation trauma. *A Costa* has historically, and with good reason, been read and categorised as a fictional historical novel; however, within the first chapter of this thesis, I go against this established classification, and aim to spark a new debate on the work's categorisation within literary historiography. Due to the biographical details of Figueiredo and Cardoso's childhoods, spent in Mozambique and Angola respectively, there is a generally held consensus that their personal experiences informed the content of *Caderno* and *O Retorno*, with *Caderno* in particular most often categorised as a memoir. By considering this corpus together, I aim to interrogate how

¹³ A particularly notable example is the 2015 photography exhibition *Retornar: Traços de Memória do Fim do Império*, curated by Elsa Peralta.

¹⁴ Margarida Cardoso, although born in Portugal, lived as a child in Maputo, Beira, and Nampula, where her father was a member of the Air force during the Colonial War. She returned to Portugal in 1975, aged twelve, as a *retornada*.

the positioning of *Caderno* and *O Retorno* along a spectrum of autofictionality might likewise lead us to retrospectively consider the possible autofictional elements of *A Costa*.

Most of the critical debate surrounding the genre of autofiction has historically taken place in France. However, in recent years investigations surrounding the term have elicited much debate across the Anglophone, Hispanophone, and Germanophone world.¹⁵ In contrast, the critical consideration of autofictional life-writing within Portuguese-speaking countries remains fledgling. Academic investigation of autofiction, and female autofictional works, has accelerated within the Brazilian literary academy in recent years,¹⁶ however, scholarship on autofictional production within Portugal is scarce. The shortage of scholarship on Portuguese female autofiction is in keeping with the limited, albeit developing, tradition of published female authored life-writing in the Luso-Hispanic world, as noted by Claire Williams and Maria-José Blanco (2017: 26).

Williams and Blanco's work, *Feminine Singular* (2017), offers a welcome overview of life-writing in the Luso-Hispanic world, and their 'Introduction: Singular Feminine Voices and Histories' (1-31) acts as an instructive starting point to delve into the genre of Portuguese life-writing more generally. This introduction gives particular emphasis to the Portuguese tradition of diary writing, an act complicated by the censorship of the *Estado Novo* regime. Of note are references to Irene Lisboa's poetry collection, *Um dia e outro dia...Diário de uma mulher* (1936), and diary, *Solidão*, (1939), published under the male pseudonym João Falco¹⁷; Maria Velho da

¹⁵ Hywel Dix provides a comprehensive corpus of autofictional texts in English, see: Hywel Dix (ed.), *Autofiction in English* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). Plus, the 2019 conference 'Autofiction: Theory, Practices, and Cultures – A Comparative Perspective', held at the Wolfson College, University of Oxford, further speaks to the growing interest in the genre across languages and fields, see: <https://www.torch.ox.ac.uk/event/autofiction-theory-practices-cultures-a-comparative-perspective>

¹⁶ See: Jovita Maria Gerheim Noronha, "Notas sobre autobiografia e autoficção" *Literatura, Crítica e Cultura IV: interdisciplinaridade*. (Juiz de Fora: UFJF, 2010); Eurídice Figueiredo, "Autoficção feminina: a mulher nua diante do espelho" *Revista Criação & Crítica* 4 (2010): 91-102, *Mulheres ao espelho: autobiografia, ficção e autoficção*, (Rio de Janeiro, UERJ, 2013).

¹⁷ As Hilary Owen and Cláudia Pazos Alonso contend, despite the use of this male pseudonym, both texts display sub-titles that highlight their female authorship, *Um dia e outro dia...* (1936) is sub-titled 'diário de um mulher', and *Solidão* (1939) 'notas do punho de uma mulher' - Hilary Owen and Cláudia Pazos Alonso,

Costa's *O Mapa Cor-de-Rosa: Cartas de Londres* (1984), a collection depicting her life in London; Natália Correia's *Não Percas a rosa: Diário e algo mais* (1978); and Maria Gabriela Llansol's three diaries (1985, 1987, 1996) and five *Livro de Horas* (2009, 2010, 2013, 2014, 2015) published posthumously. Llansol's five *Livro de Horas* offer a background perspective on her literary works and were written whilst in self-imposed exile in Belgium during the *Estado Novo* regime.¹⁸

These diaries highlight women not only grappling with their identity, but, in some instances, attempting to navigate the trauma that they have encountered. Irene Lisboa's *Solidão* (1939) hints at shattered familial relationships and challenging formative years, themes which are later developed in "twin-texts" *Começa uma Vida* (1940) and *Voltar Atrás Para Quê?* (1956). Within this work, Owen and Pazos Alonso highlight that, to describe the traumatic years spent living in rural Portugal with her father, new stepmother, and grandmother, Lisboa utilises a 'fictional alter-ego' (2011: 172). Whilst then, Pazos Alonso defined *Começa uma Vida* and *Voltar Atrás Para Quê?* as 'autobiographical novellas' (2011: 74), today, with a new vocabulary for literary works which blend the autobiographical and the fictional, they could indeed be considered as examples of autofiction.

Within the comprehensive outline offered by Williams and Blanco, there are certainly mentions of autobiographical works and diary entries that interact with fiction, whether through their publication under pseudonyms like in the case of Irene Lisboa, or through the incorporation of fictive elements, such as Maria Ondina Braga's *Estátua de Sal* (1969), named as an 'autobiografia romanceada' (2017: 12). Yet, again, none have been classified as autofictional. Therefore, despite the limited engagement within the academic milieu regarding Portuguese

Antigone's Daughters?: Gender, Genealogy and the Politics of Authorship in 20th-Century Portuguese Women's Writing (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2011): 56.

¹⁸ This selection is by no means exhaustive. For more detail on Portuguese life-writing, see: Paulo de Medeiros, "The Diary and Portuguese Women Writers", *Portuguese Studies*, 14 (1998): 227-41.

examples of female autofiction, modes of writing that blend the autobiographic and fictional do seem to have historically existed within the female life-writing space.¹⁹

In situating *A Costa*, *Caderno*, and *O Retorno* as examples of the autofictional genre, I argue that the depiction of their own individual “truths” and traumas, ultimately enables others to better understand and navigate the collective experiences and effects of the decolonisation era. Jorge and Figueiredo themselves met for the first time in 2018, during a panel session at the International Literature Festival, held in Guadalajara, Mexico. Speaking of the three texts together, Jorge stated:

Somos três mulheres com três visões diferentes, de facto. O meu livro, *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, fala de uma culpa, da minha culpa. O livro da Isabela Figueiredo, através da figura do seu pai, culpa os colonos, culpa os brancos, culpa-nos. E a Dulce Maria Cardoso, em *O Retorno*, dá conta do seu grande ressentimento contra os portugueses concretos que não souberam acolher os que chegaram, o que vê como uma traição. (Coutinho 2018)

Whilst Jorge positions the three works along a spectrum of blame and resentment, she defines all as ‘livros de urgência’ (Coutinho 2018). This thesis demonstrates that this “urgency” pertains to their vehement exposure of the trauma suffered during the Colonial War and decolonisation period, and in doing so stresses the inextricable link between the personal and the political. Indeed, Jorge’s specification of ‘minha culpa’ nods to the possible personalised autofictionality of the work, as will be explored in the following chapter. This study examines the ways in which the three female authors approach depictions of gendered trauma experienced during the Colonial War period and the extent to which their texts offer hope for possible recovery from such trauma.

Experiencing Trauma

Trauma affects the mind, the body, our sense of Self, and how we interact with the world and those within it. Whilst traumatic moments can be encountered anytime and anywhere, they

¹⁹ Indeed, there is also opportunity for the study of autofictional work written by men. For example, the aforementioned Júlio Magalhães’s *Os Retornados - Um Amor Nunca Se Esquece* (2008) could potentially be considered as autofictional.

unequivocally underpin colonial and wartime experiences. Interactions with trauma sit at the heart of this thesis, and the analysis presented in the proceeding chapters is centred upon the portrayals and effects of trauma suffered during the decolonisation timeframe. Firstly, I wish to discuss the definition of the term “trauma” for the purposes of my study, and secondly, to offer a prefatory charting of the theoretical field.

Most generally, trauma is understood as an individual’s response to a moment of crisis. This intense disruption has resultant cognitive, social, and emotional effects that can, in turn, create psychological interferences and imbalances which work against the inherent human capacity for survival. The aftermath of traumatic moments undergone in the past can dominate the present, and, whilst some survivors adapt with creativity and imagination, others remain in a state of fixated paralysis (Kolk et al. 1996: 4). Exposure to traumatic stressors can occur in the smaller details of a person’s day-to-day life, or within horrific spheres of action such as the Holocaust, natural disasters, or war. These stressors can originate from a single moment of shock or fear, or a continued series of varying abuses (Erikson 1978: 185). Trauma may present itself through varying physiological effects on the body, such as flashbacks, depression, extreme anxiety, stress, and disassociation from everyday life.

The study of trauma does not have a consistent or linear history, but rather, is marked by what Judith Herman names as ‘episodic amnesia’ (1992: 7). There have been periods of prolific academic investigation, followed by years of inactivity. However, a general demarcation of the systematic study of trauma highlights two particular, and gendered, investigatory areas: hysteria and war neuroses. Within the late nineteenth century, understanding “hysteria” was a central focus of studies on psychological trauma, led by the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot from the infamous Parisian asylum, Salpêtrière. Charcot transformed the hospital into an internationally renowned site of psychological and neurological teaching, with Sigmund Freud

and Pierre Janet amongst his students, and, by the mid 1880's, both Freud and Janet proceeded to define psychological trauma as the root cause of hysteria.²⁰

Ultimately, academic interest in hysteria began to subside, but the catastrophic impact of the First World War propelled the topic back into the public sphere. The return of deeply traumatised soldiers, unable to escape the unimaginable horrors they had witnessed at the front, prompted fresh studies into a, seemingly, male version of the “female affliction” of hysteria. Herman notes that shortly after the end of the war, despite hospitals being inundated with veterans suffering from long-term psychiatric disorders, concern about war trauma faded away and was replaced with societal disinterest and embarrassment (1992: 23). The repercussions of the Second World War incited a second resurgence of interest surrounding combat neurosis, but this was focused mainly on how best to return soldiers to the front as quickly as possible after a period of convalescence – little attention was devoted to the mental state of soldiers returning home and into society.

Wide-spread, and in-depth studies on the long-term traumatic legacy of war did not appear until the end of the Vietnam War, as veterans demanded psychological treatment programmes and support. In 1980, after extensive campaigning by veterans, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was formally recognised, and first included in the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III) (van der Kolk, 2014). In the following decades, the clinical identification and recognition of PTSD acted as a critical catalyst for the contemporary study of trauma, and consequent frameworks regarding recovery.

²⁰ For a detailed breakdown of the findings within the study of hysteria between Charcot, Freud, and Janet, see Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (London: Pandora, 1992).

Whilst the study of trauma has traditionally been situated within medical and psychiatric fields, in recent decades, intersections with literary and cultural studies began to occur. Indeed, the productivity of scholarship rooted in both clinical trauma studies and literary theory is exemplified by Shoshana Felman, a literary critic, and Dori Laub, a clinical psychologist, and their seminal study entitled *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (1992). The majority of works analysed by Felman and Laub portray the historic trauma of the Holocaust, and they state that, in the face of the incoherence created by trauma, providing testimony can fashion a new space that conveys a form of “truth”. The field of trauma studies in literary criticism developed further in the late 1990’s, with the landmark publications of Cathy Caruth’s *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), alongside Kalí Tal’s *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (1996).

Thus, the concept of trauma is no longer contained merely to its original, and linear, medical disciplinary ground, but instead has crossed disciplinary boundaries. Yet, as a result, the term has become progressively undefinable. Many contemporary trauma critics, such as Dolores Herrero and Sonia Baelo-Allué, argue that trauma should never be considered as a ‘stable and immobile notion’ (2011: 12), but rather, as Christa Schönfelder notes, trauma has become ‘increasingly, even notoriously, complex and slippery’ (2013: 28). Working from this understanding of trauma as inherently fluid, my thesis engages with traumatic representations under a flexible definition that can encompass a wide spectrum of disruptive experiences and reactions.

Portrayals of trauma have become increasingly prevalent within the field of life-writing, often named, in turn, as “trauma narratives”. However, critical unanimity on the wider definition of “trauma narrative” is lacking, and is also seen to encompass “trauma-fiction.” This term exemplifies how the idea of trauma has metamorphosised in recent decades, and now incorporates a varying selection of fields. In the opening lines of her critical work *Trauma Fiction* (2004),

Anne Whitehead notes: ‘The term “trauma fiction” represents a paradox or contradiction: if trauma comprises an event or experience which overwhelms the individual and resists language or representation, how then can it be narrativised in fiction?’ (3). The understanding of “trauma fiction” employed in this thesis is that posited by Vickroy, who, in her work *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, defines the term as ‘fictional narratives that help readers to access traumatic experiences’ (2002: 1).

Why are literary depictions of trauma important? Schönfelder aims to answer such a question in her monograph, entitled *Wounds and Words: Theorizing Trauma Romantic and Postmodern Perspectives on Mental Wounds*, arguing that the fictionality of literary works offers readers nuanced encounters with trauma, that, in turn, create a sense of emotional association, coupled with critical consideration (2013: 29). As such, trauma narratives construct a creative space that explores moments of human crisis, and permits the reader to confront the horrors of the unimaginable, and, hopefully, better understand the emotional, social, and physical implications of experienced trauma.

An improved understanding of the effects of trauma is of particular relevance to historical socio-political contexts such as wartime. Regarding military trauma in the Portuguese context, the work of Luís Quintais (2000; 2001) paved the way for a stream of emergent studies on the effects of post-traumatic stress on Colonial War veterans. In particular, Maia et al.’s (2011) study is illuminating on the physical effects of war exposure and PTSD on the health of veterans, whilst Aragão and Ferrajão’s (2016) analysis offers an insightful view into the wide-ranging traumatic effects of war-time participation, and the possibility of recovery from PTSD. Likewise, the work of Maria José Lobo Antunes (2017) is crucial in allowing the personal dimension of ex-combatant experiences to be brought into the Portuguese public sphere. From a literary perspective, representations of trauma have been analysed within the work of men, such as Antonio Lobo

Antunes²¹, yet such explorations in female-authored work are vastly underdeveloped - a lacuna that this thesis aims to fill. Given the large proportion of Portuguese society that were directly involved in Colonial War combat, further explorations into the mental and physical effects are vital into this understudied area and will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Remembering the Colonial War

Trauma and memory have become inherently linked concepts. Given that an interest in memory usually pertains to moments of emergency, disaster, or unrest, trauma often remains in close proximity. Janet, widely considered one of the founding fathers of psychology, first wrote on the intersections between memory, trauma, and disassociation in his 1889 doctoral thesis, entitled *L'automatisme psychologique: Essai de psychologie expérimentale sur les formes inférieures de l'activité humaine* (1889) [Cataplexy, Memory and Suggestion in Psychological Automatism: Total Automatism 2022]. Janet's main argument stated that, when emotions supersede the human capacity for action, the memory of the related traumatic experience cannot be processed. Instead, as Janet argues, the memory is "split-off" from the consciousness and a process of disassociation ensues. Later, the traumatic memory will return, and through emotions, behavioural reenactments, or visuals, triggers a type of broken "re-experiencing" of that trauma. It is now widely understood that traumatic memories are in fact more "stable" than ordinary memories, and are encoded in a different way which enables them to be recalled unaltered, and with surprising vividness, over time.

When considering the positioning of a text as autofictional, and thus reliant on the experiences of one's life, memory is naturally a relevant consideration. One of the most

²¹ See: Isabel Moutinho, *The Colonial Wars in Contemporary Portuguese Fiction* (New York: Tamesis, 2008); Sofia Tavares, "Representação e memória cultural: o trauma da recordação e a nostalgia da memória, lendo *Os Cus de Judas* de António Lobo Antunes", *e-cadernos CES* 2 (2008); Ricardo Rato Rodrigues, "A silent scream: trauma and madness in the early works of António Lobo Antunes" diss., University of Nottingham, 2016, and "Torno, Retorno e Transtorno: Trauma e Stress Pós-Traumático nos Romances de António Lobo Antunes." *As Humanidades e as Ciências Disjunções e Confluências* (2014): 197-208; Romilton Batista de Oliveira, "Trauma na Literatura: António Lobo Antunes e a Experiência na Escrita" diss., Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2018.

frequently used concepts within the field of memory studies pertains to Maurice Halbwach's term "collective memory", first asserted within his seminal work, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925) [On Collective Memory 1992]. Halbwach's work on the impossibility of individual memory, and existence of inter-generational memory remains a leading theoretical reference point within the discipline. The field of memory studies is vastly multidisciplinary, and although it most frequently explores extreme historical moments, such as war-time atrocity, or revolution, the field has a great affinity with scholarship carried out on the Holocaust, with many considering this as the catalyst for the field's development. The theoretical frameworks that emerged from the Holocaust studies discipline are widely regarded as the genesis of modern conceptualisations of violence, remembrance, and traumatic memory.²²

The proliferation of memory studies most often relates to the most vehemently violent pages of history, and, during the course of the 20th century, European imperial rule and the ultimate demise of corresponding colonial projects dominated. Given that the Portuguese Colonial War and decolonisation period were so catastrophic in death counts on both sides of the battle lines, it is unsurprising that the last decade has given rise to a boom in academic engagement with Portuguese memory studies of the period. Likewise, this time lag between the decolonisation period itself and recent increase in scholarship interrogating the topic emphasises the interval that is often required to digest traumatic historical events. In the case of Portugal, which emerged from a lengthy period of totalitarianism less than fifty years ago, such a delay is to be expected.

As a central focus, much has been written on the complicated nature of memory surrounding literary Colonial War narratives, their reliability, and the role of personal

²² See, for example: Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory", *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5 (1) (February 2002); *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); 87–106; Helmut Dubiel, "The Remembrance of the Holocaust as a Catalyst for a Transnational Ethic.", *New German Critique* 90 (Autumn, 2003): 59–70.

recollections in influencing wider collective memory. In this vein, the works of Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, António Sousa Ribeiro, Paulo de Medeiros, and Isabel Moutinho have been particularly influential. Whilst the purpose of this thesis is not to explore the reliability of memory in my chosen corpus, given that I seek to demonstrate the autofictionality of the works, and thus the use of personal memory in varying degrees, an overview of the arguments is instructive.

Leading critic Margarida Calafate Ribeiro's (2004b) expansive study *Uma História de Regressos: Império, Guerra Colonial e Pós-colonialismo* remains pivotal to any understanding of Colonial War literature. This seminal work traverses through Portugal's long-standing imperial history with an overarching structure centred upon Boaventura de Sousa Santos' (2002) essay; Santos' sociological concept positions Portugal in a semi-peripheral locale within a hierarchy of other nineteenth-century imperial powers.²³ Aside from this ground-breaking monograph, Ribeiro's extensive body of work remains an invaluable foundation for any scholarship within field of Portuguese post-colonial studies.²⁴ Her collaborative work with António Sousa Ribeiro *Geometrias da Memória: Configurações pós-Coloniais* (2016) is an influential study within Portuguese memory studies, as is their more recent work surrounding "post-memory", which examines the artistic production work by those who are second-generation and portray a collection of memories that they have inherited from family members.²⁵

²³ It is salient to note that Santos' essay (2002) which depicts this argument has been the subject of much criticism due to its often simplistic and reductive engagement with gender (Ferreira 2007; Owen 2007; Rothwell, 2010). Ribeiro utilises the notion of Portugal as the imaginary centre and then engages with four colonial war narratives; António Lobo Antunes' *Os Cus de Judas* (1979), João de Melo's *Autopsia de um Mar de Ruínas* (1984), Lídia Jorge's *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (1988), and Manuel Alegre's *Jornada de África* (1989), to explore Portugal's arrival into a postcolonial imaginary.

²⁴ See: Ribeiro (2002) and *África no feminino: as mulheres portuguesas e a Guerra Colonial* (Porto: Afrontamento, 2007).

²⁵ See: *Children of the Colonial Wars: Postmemory and Representations*, (2007-2010), and *Memoirs: Children of Empires and European Postmemoirs*, (2015-2020), both projects were hosted at the Centre for Social Studies (CES) at the University of Coimbra; António Sousa Ribeiro and Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, "Os netos que Salazar não teve: Guerra Colonial e memória de segunda geração", *Abril: Revista do Núcleo de Estudos de Literatura Portuguesa e Africana da UFF* 5(11) (2013): 25-36; "A Past that Will Not Go Away. The Colonial War in Portuguese Postmemory", *Lusotopie* 17 (2018): 277-300.

Paulo de Medeiros is a prominent critic around the thorny topic of remembering the Portuguese empire, and in his critical chapter ‘Hauntings: Memory, Fiction, and the Portuguese Colonial Wars’ (2000), reflects on the manner in which Colonial War narratives challenge traditionally nostalgic remembrance of the Portuguese Empire. For Medeiros, the arrival of literary works that depict the war function as a direct response by authors towards attempts of historical erasure and selective amnesia by the Portuguese government in the 1980s, and seek to dismantle the imperial ideology and myths of the *Estado Novo* regime. Building upon the statements of Sousa Santos regarding Portugal’s peripheral global positioning, and Calafate Ribeiro’s further analysis of this with regard to the Colonial War, Medeiros comments:

[...] the desire to erect a uniform of national identity is modelled on glorious achievements, be it the voyages of discovery in the sixteenth century or the end of fascism in the recent past, necessitates forgetting the ghosts of imperialism and of the colonial wars. History thus becomes the celebrated realm of Portuguese achievement and the grounds for a uniquely positive and secure national identity, whereas memory, of the colonizing enterprise, or more to the point, the colonial wars, is negated. (2000: 217)

Themes of imperial ghosts and ensuing spectral hauntings are prominent within Medeiros’ body of work regarding the demise of the Portuguese Empire. According to him, ‘all nations, and certainly all imperial nations, are haunted houses replete with ghosts’ (2002a: 175). Of particular relevance to the present study is Medeiros’ argument that the only ethical way to encounter such spectral hauntings is to bear witness and commit the ghosts to memory.²⁶ The emphasis given to the act of confronting and meeting imperial hauntings vis-à-vis has direct junctures with navigating, and surviving, the trauma suffered during the decolonisation period, which likewise demands an encounter with the past.

²⁶ See: Paulo de Medeiros, “Memória Infinita”, *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 2 (Spring 1999): 61-78; “Haunted Houses”, *Journal x* 2(2) (Spring 2002): 163-76; Ghosts and Hosts: Memory, Inheritance, and the Postimperial Condition”, in *VI Congresso Nacional Associação Portuguesa de Literatura Comparada* (2008); “Hauntings: Memory, Fiction, and the Portuguese Colonial Wars”, *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, (London: Routledge, 2000): 201-21; “Lusophony or the Haunted Logic of the Postempire”, *Lusotopie* 17(2) (2018): 227-247.

Isabel Moutinho's monograph *The Colonial Wars in Contemporary Portuguese Fiction* (2008) provides an insightful analysis of how traumatic memory is represented within Colonial War narratives, and the tensions that reveal themselves.²⁷ Moutinho divides the study into three parts relating to the protagonist narrative voice; traumatic memory, personal memory, and collective memory. In doing so, the study reveals a tension within her corpus- a desire to avoid historical erasure of the Colonial War and thus commit it to memory, alongside the need to come to terms with traumatic memory and move on from it.

Despite the large impact of the arrival of the *retornados* in the metropole, by the end of the twentieth century very little academic research had been dedicated to better understand this historical occurrence. Studies did however begin to appear in the early 2000s (Lubkemann 2002, 2003; Ovalle-Bahamó 2003), but failed to gather pace. In recent years, the debate has accelerated within the academic milieu and studies have examined the complex and often conflicting intersections of *retornado* national identity, memory, and experience (Øien 2013; Kalter 2017; Peralta, Góis and Oliveira 2017). Of note is scholar Elsa Peralta, whose edited volumes, entitled *Retornar: Traços de Memória do Fim do Império* (2017) and *The Retornados from the Portuguese Colonies in Africa: Memory, Narrative, and History* (2021), examine a wide-ranging collection of *retornado* narratives.

The title of this thesis refers to the works investigated here as “post-imperial”, and I would like to offer a brief explanation for my selection of this term. In the first instance, my understanding of the works as post-imperial rather than postcolonial is in-keeping with Elleke Boehmer's definition of postcoloniality as ‘that condition in which colonized peoples seek to take their place, forcibly or otherwise, as historical agents in an increasingly globalised world.’ (2005:

²⁷ Moutinho considers six novels in total: António Lobo Antunes, *Os Cus de Judas* (1979), Wanda Ramos, *Percursos* (1981), João de Melo, *Autopsia de um Mar de Ruínas* (1984), Álamo Oliveira, *Até Hoje* (*Memórias de Cão*) (1988), Lúcia Jorge, *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (1988), and Manuel Alegre, *Jornada de África* (1989).

3).²⁸ The subjects within the texts certainly do not fit such a description and instead span varying examples of active participants in the imperial project, such as colonial settlers, military personnel, and their respective families.

Boehmer additionally states that postcolonial works critically examine imperial projects and their corresponding ideological frameworks regarding racial divisions and power mythologies. Thematically, *A Costa*, *Caderno*, and *O Retorno* do indeed interrogate the colonial myths and imperial narratives promulgated by the *Estado Novo* regime, and their characters do express sentiments of displacement and trauma often found within postcolonial literatures. However, any commonalities between the sentiments felt between those who were colonized and those sent to Africa to “contain and control” colonized groups should not be overstated as the overarching reasoning and motives behind such sentiments is most often starkly different.

Despite my decision to refer to the three texts as “post-imperial”, this concept is by no means universally defined, and indeed, the varying understandings of the term alone could elicit ample debate. As such, I would like to propose a brief conceptual framework to my understanding of *A Costa*, *Caderno*, and *O Retorno* as post-imperial literature. The historical and temporal sense of “post-imperial”, when used regarding the Portuguese context, naturally pertains to the period concerned with the demise of the imperial projects across Europe. Whilst the texts studied within this thesis were indeed published “post” the fall of the Empire, this is a simplistic understanding of post-imperial literature that I wish to eschew. My avoidance here agrees with the position posited by Medeiros (2021), who warns that any over reliance of the temporal state of “post-

²⁸ My use of the non-hyphenated term *postcolonial* should be considered divergent from the hyphenated *post-colonial*, and pertains to strategies which attempt to challenge colonial ideologies and knowledge systems. Any use of the hyphenated term indicates a historical period, geographical site, or political shift. For more detail on the evolution of the terms, see: Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989); Anne McClintock, “Introduction: Postcolonialism and the Angel of Progress”, *Imperial leather: race, gender and sexuality in the colonial contest* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995): 1-17; Ana Mafalda Leite, “Literaturas Africanas e Pós-Colonialismo”, *Literaturas Africanas e Formulações Pós-Coloniais* (Lisbon: Colibri, 2003): 9-40.

imperial” and fixation on the “post” prefix should be circumvented, due to possible misapprehensions that the complexities of an imperial past have been efficiently solved, and the horrors of the Empire long behind us.²⁹ This is of particular relevance in the Portuguese case, given the neoteric imperial demise and departure from the totalitarian *Estado Novo* regime- any notion that Portugal has moved beyond its imperial age is unsound.

Rather than just a time frame, Medeiros suggests that the “post-imperial” should be considered as a “condition”; this understanding enables a more encompassing reflection of post-imperialism’s many faces, as a state, a process, a conjuncture, or more implicitly, an emergency (2021). This notion of the “post-imperial” as a process is helpful when considering *A Costa, Caderno*, and *O Retorno* as post-imperial texts as, as their focus on two different moments within the decolonisation period resolutely highlights that there is still much to be done if Portugal is to ever move away from its imperial past, and that any conceptualization of contemporary Portuguese postcolonial identity remains categorically an on-going process.

Finally, my reading of these texts as post-imperial is in concordance with Moutinho’s understanding of post-imperial works as being ‘full of an all-pervasive pessimism’ (2008: 12), and Medeiros’ consideration that a sense of loss is inherent to the post-imperial condition (2021). This melancholy quality is in direct contrast with the exultant and hopeful tone found within postcolonial literary works, which often demonstrate optimism towards a newly liberated society, and an eagerness to erect new nations and knowledge structures. Whilst *Caderno* and *O Retorno* end on a somewhat hopeful note, this is due to the opportunity of personal and familial renewal rather than the enthusiasm of re-formulating the Portuguese nation.

I am indebted to the work that has been done thus far on memory and the decolonisation period within the field of Portuguese studies. This scholarship serves as a firm foundation of this

²⁹ I am grateful to Paulo de Medeiros for generously sharing with me the paper that he presented at the XIII AIL Conference – Rome/Online, 27 July 2021.

thesis however, the purpose of this doctoral project is not to further address the reliability of memory within Colonial War narratives, nor its ability to transform personal recollections into a collective memory, but rather to examine the autofictional elements of each text and how this autofictionality is utilised as a strategy to both access and depict trauma. It seems to me that prior critical analysis of the three texts has exposed a need for close textual analysis of the varying examples of trauma included and that a wide-reaching analysis of all depictions of experienced trauma merits further study within the field. As such, the present study seeks to harness this potential and offer new analysis by carrying forward the work of Ribeiro, Moutinho, and Medeiros and explore the autofictional capacity of these texts within the fields of Portuguese memory and trauma studies. Concurrently, this thesis aims to offer a deeper exploration of mental and physical trauma inflicted upon Portuguese citizens involved in the Colonial War, be they colonial settlers, *retornados*, or combatants, which Moutinho has rightly argued is ‘widely underestimated’ (2008: 4).

It would be negligent to ignore the fact that the analysis within this thesis centres on white trauma depicted by white women, and it is thus essential to state that there is no intention to place the trauma of white Portuguese soldiers and colonial settlers above that of the Angolan and Mozambican civilians, oppressed under the colonial structure. Literary production by black female authors that depict trauma suffered by black communities during the decolonisation period and Colonial War remains scarce, be that by black Angolans or Mozambicans, or black or mixed-race members of the *retornado* community. Within this sparse literary landscape, Paulina Chiziane’s *Ventos do Apocalipse* (1999), and Aida Gomes’ *Os Pretos de Pousaflares* (2011) are works of great critical importance. Whilst the study of trauma suffered by the colonised black populations is critical, a space remains for analysis in which white colonial trauma is approached as an effect of the same colonial structures that oppressed the black population. This study of white colonial trauma seeks not to privilege the suffering of the coloniser above the colonised, but rather bring to light the importance of studying all facets of colonial trauma, and how their

corresponding intersections enable a better understanding of colonial structures and post-imperial societies.

Looking Ahead

This thesis begins by situating the corpus within the genre of autofiction. I establish the productivity of the genre in the (re)telling of narratives which are non-linear, flexible, and rupturing of traditional norms such as Colonial War experiences, and specifically female narratives of trauma. The positioning of the texts as autofictional is framed as a strategy to enable recovery from trauma in its ability to fictionalise a version of a past Self, and thus offers a sense of protection through a perceived sense of distance. Such a fictionalisation allows a more in-depth engagement with portrayals of trauma.

In Chapter Two, ‘Photographic (Re)collections: Visual and Verbal Disruptions in *Caderno* and *A Costa*’, I carry forward the investigation of autofictional strategies through a fresh focus on the visual elements of *A Costa* and *Caderno* specifically. I investigate how the childhood photographs within *Carderno*, at first glance, corroborate the nostalgia promoted by the *Estado Novo*, but when held in conjunction with Figueiredo’s narrative reveal a sinister and underlying traumatic violence. Attention is then paid to the mock ekphrasis utilised by Jorge in depicting imaginary photographs of war crimes carried out by the Portuguese army. Looking at the relationship between this strategy of verbal and visual layering, I argue that the traumatic reality of the colonial contexts is revealed more explicitly, and that through an exposure to such violence the reader/viewer is impelled to unpack various layers of meaning within colonial narratives.

Chapter Three, ‘Precarious White Masculinities: The Traumatic Shattering of Salazar’s Men’, deals with close-textual analysis of trauma, focusing specifically on white men. I examine the manner in which Jorge, Cardoso, and Figueiredo employ portrayals of experienced physical and mental trauma to destabilise the heteronormative *Estado Novo* masculine ideal, namely:

wounds and scars, PTSD, suicide, and physical and sexual abuse. In interrogating the possibility of survival and recovery of the male characters, I explore the need for multi-faceted versions of masculinity to overcome trauma.

The varying representations of white female trauma are observed in Chapter Four, entitled 'The Search for Solidarity and the Traumatized Female Psyche'. Here, I observe how, in the case of *Caderno*, dreamscapes are utilised as a strategy to interrogate trauma manifesting in the unconscious mind, and are able to exert both a therapeutic rather than haunting presence. Turning to the topic of female mental illness in *A Costa and Retorno*, I correspondingly examine how an uncomprehending narrator highlights the lack of vocabulary available to discuss mental illness at the time. This reading is extended to highlight a distinct absence of collective female solidarity and the presence of a patriarchal shadow that underlines female mental illness and trauma.

Chapter One

1. Hiding in Plain Sight: Strategies of Autofictional Self-Camouflage

[...] eu estive aqui. Eu estive aqui.

Dulce Maria Cardoso, *O Retorno*, p. 267

‘Human memory is a wonderful but fallacious instrument’, wrote Primo Levi, in his collection of essays entitled *The Drowned and the Saved* (1988: 13) [1986], ‘The memories residing within us are not engraved in stone. Not only do they tend to fade over the years; they often change, or even grow to incorporate extraneous features’. This cautionary observation forms the second of two epigraphs found within Figueiredo’s *Caderno* (2009, 2015). Of note, is not simply Levi’s warning of the unreliability of memory, but rather his mention of how adding ‘extraneous features’ can augment remembrances. If “extraneous” is understood here, not as “irrelevant” or “unnecessary”, but rather “of external origin”, this can relate to the mixing of memory with fictive episodes. Whilst Levi notes this critically, with a view to highlight the untrustworthiness of memory, I find this a helpful starting point to consider memory-based narratives where a purposeful blend of fiction and memory is at play.

Undoubtedly, the fragmented and ever-changing nature of memory problematises any authorial intent to verbalise and explore past recollections; as such, a genre able to withstand hybridity and experimentation is required for literary production. In the following chapter, I intend to situate my chosen corpus within such a genre: autofiction. This chapter aims to explore the intersections between autofiction and trauma and examine the potential productivity of a writing strategy that draws upon both concepts. I interrogate the authors’ development of a hybrid narrative which comprises of their own memories and fiction, and situate them within the autofictional subgenres created by Vincent Colonna (2004). I argue that, through the strategic use of autofiction, tools of displacement and self-camouflage are utilised to present a deeper form of

“truth” regarding the trauma of the Colonial War and decolonisation period, whilst concurrently offering a level of “protection” towards the authors, and their own experiences.

1.1 An Undefinable Genre

The genre of autofiction has been the subject of heated debate amongst literary critics over the last forty years, but is most commonly theorised as a hybrid of autobiography and the novel, where the neologism blends the two contrasting genres into one. Most scholars credit the creation of the term to author and literary critic Serge Doubrovsky, who used the coinage to specifically describe his work *Fils* [Son] (1977). Within said work, the eponymous protagonist imagines that the descriptions of his dreams, which he writes in a notebook, will become a fiction book that he would later pen. Doubrovsky defines the term on the back cover of the text:

Autobiographie ? Non, c'est un privilège réservé aux importants de ce monde, au soir de leur vie, et dans un beau style. *Fiction, d'événements et de faits strictement réels ; si l'on veut, autofiction*, d'avoir confié le langage d'une aventure à l'aventure d'un langage en liberté, hors sagesse et hors syntaxe du roman, traditionnel ou nouveau. Rencontres, fils de mots, allitérations, assonances, dissonances, écriture d'avant ou d'après littérature, concrète, comme on dit musique. (1997 : 10)³⁰

[Autobiography? No, that is a privilege reserved only for the important people of this world, at the end of their lives, in a style that is sophisticated. *Fiction, of events and facts entirely real; autofiction, if you will*, to have entrusted the language of an adventure to the adventure of language, outside of the wisdom and syntax of the novel, traditional or new. Interactions, threads of words, alliterations, assonances, dissonances, writing before or after literature, concrete, as one might say, music.]³¹

Across his career, Doubrovsky suggests various definitions for autofiction, but this initial categorisation of ‘fiction, of events and fact strictly real’ seems to home in on the main crux of the term. Whereas traditional autobiography attempts to portray a subject in the most realistic way possible, the Doubrovskyan definition aims to fictionalise such a character. There is an additional sociological element to this categorisation, highlighting that autofiction fills a lacuna insofar as traditional autobiography was reserved only to those of status. Through an exploration

³⁰ Italics my own.

³¹ Throughout this chapter, translations from the original French are my own unless stated otherwise.

of the lives of the everyman, Doubrovsky claimed that autofiction offered an insight into the experiences of those with whom we are less familiar, enabling an author to assume no *a priori* reader knowledge of either the subject or context of events. From this positioning, autofiction eschews any need for an elevated social status and, as Hywel Dix highlights, ‘permits a degree of experimentation with the definition and limits of the Self, rather than the slavish recapitulation of known biographical facts’ (2018: 3). Doubrovsky argued that autofiction is, indeed, mostly rooted in an experimental style, and in particular a departure from any linear, chronological time frame. It is this temporal exploration, inappropriate for a traditional autobiography, that oft enables a stylistic blending of fact and fiction.

The intellectual background of the Doubrovskyan definition seems to be in response to Philippe Lejeune’s research into the various forms of autobiographical writing. Within *Le Pacte autobiographique* [The Autobiographical Pact] (1975), Lejeune argued that autobiography requires a “pact” between author and reader. This autobiographical pact necessitates an implicit conflation of the writer, narrator, and protagonist, and additionally demands that the reader must assume all to be factual unless clearly stated otherwise. Lejeune argues that it is this contractual trust-based relationship which separates autobiography from fiction; however, such a regimented definition leaves little room for the exploration of intersections between the autobiography and the novel. For Doubrovsky, the assumption of complete truth is highly unlikely due to the central positioning of the author of an autobiographical narrative and the unreliability and subjectivity of memory and emotions. This problematisation of “truth” acts as a foundation for the genre of autofiction. Ferreira-Meyers notes:

if you look at the evolution of the term, it appears as if the word autofiction appeared in time to translate and crystallize the many doubts raised since the beginning of the twentieth century, with regard to concepts of subject, identity, truth, sincerity and self-writing. (2015: 205)

French autofiction theorists such as Darrieussecq (1996) and Lecarme (1993) have similarly problematised Lejeune's notion that the author, narrator, and protagonist must all be identified with one and other in such a rigid manner. Lecarme specifically agrees with Doubrovsky in the understanding that autofiction is a product of the new cultural conditions of the late twenty and early twenty-first century – in particular, questioning the assumption that an autobiographical narrative is fixed, stable, and objective. These interventions have exposed the possible pitfalls in the human ability to accurately and unproblematically narrate their own life-story, thus strengthening the case for the necessity of an autofiction hybrid. Autofictional texts do not obliterate the boundary between all autobiographical “pacts” however, but rather deliberately play with the possibilities of a double-pact-offering, rooted in both the referential and fictional.

In addition to the autobiographical pact, Lejeune described the ‘case vide’ [empty box] (1975: 28) – stating that he had never discovered a fictional text in which the narrator and the author went by the same name, and notes that this could indeed be interesting given the potential contradictions and conflicts of interest. Ferreira-Meyers states that, whilst Doubrovsky stumbled across autofiction accidentally within his own work, the term also functions in order to ‘fill the box left empty by Philippe Lejeune’ (2015: 205).

The term autofiction was first included in *La littérature en France depuis 1968* (1988) [French Literature from 1968] and was then slowly adopted by critics and literary theorists – yet, often misunderstood or accepted reluctantly. Recognition and discussions on the genre garnered pace a few years later, and have since drawn academic debate both within France, and across the literary world. Doubrovsky's working definition of autofiction is a paradoxical, complicated explanation of an open genre and has given space for multiple variations to be developed by theorists. In general, however, the term continues to elude classification.

The most accessible working definition is perhaps that of French scholar Phillipe Gasparini who agrees that no necessary pact, in the Lejeunian sense, is required between reader and writer, and that the innovative style of autofiction is a result of our evolving understanding of the self, psychology, and truth. Gasparini's defines autofiction as a:

texte autobiographique et littéraire présentant de nombreux traits d'oralité, d'innovation formelle, de complexité narrative, de fragmentation, d'altérité, de disparate et d'autocommentaire qui tendent à problématiser le rapport entre l'écriture et l'expérience (2008: 311)

[autobiographical and literary text that features numerous oral traits, formal innovation, narrative complexity, fragmentation, separation from the Self, disparateness and auto-commentary, which often problematize the relationship between writing and experience.]

Isabelle Grell reinforces this, stating that modern twentieth-century developments in psychoanalysis, surrealism, modernism and post-structuralism have disrupted the traditional autobiographic style (2014: 10–12). Whilst this definition goes some way to aiding the boundaries and characteristics of the genre, Gasparini notes that, by its very nature, autofiction is a resistant writing form, and therefore easily recognisable and defined boundaries are against its inherent structure. Both Doubrovsky and Gasparini's critical work in naming and identifying the genre of autofiction demonstrate the challenging feat of situating the term within a succinct, comprehensive category.

As is evident, there is no sole definition for autofiction (Dix 2018: 2); this ambiguity presents unexplored terrain for critics, and offers an opportunity to reformulate genre boundaries for future readers. Indeed, the debate regarding the boundaries and conventions of autofiction now extends beyond the French academy alone, and shows no sign of deceleration. Yet, the term is not without criticism. Autofiction has proven to be a particularly tricky concept for structuralist critics, such as Gérard Genette, who has shared reservations about the term. Genette, in his essay *Fiction and Diction*, criticizes the category of so-called "false autofictions", which are "fictions" only for legal purposes: or, in other words, veiled autobiographies.' (1993: 77). He is concerned

that the term autofiction might be employed in order to evade legitimate ethical and juridical critique, by resorting to some notion of artistic freedom.

1.2 Fertile Ground

Particularly relevant for the purpose of this thesis, is the wide range of women's writing born from the genre's experimental style. Autofiction seems to offer female authors a space to engage in a literary experimentation that enables an original display of self-representation and hybrid identities. To better understand how autofiction came to be a productive space for female authors, it is necessary to first take a short detour into the historical developments of the autobiographical canon and, more specifically, women's exclusion from it.

Classical autobiography has historically been a hostile genre when it comes to female authorship; although literature penned by women has traditionally been presumed as inherently autobiographical, with female imagination demanding personal experience, very few female-authored texts are found within the traditional autobiographical canon. As Anne Fleig comments:

From early on, female writing was subjected to an ambivalent evaluation; despite the fact that it carried positive connotations of enhanced authenticity, naturalness and verisimilitude, it was excluded from the canon on the grounds of an alleged lack of literariness. It is not by accident that the so-called 'golden age of European autobiography' around 1800 coincides with the establishment of male concepts of authorship. (2019: 54)

Conventionally, the autobiographical subject was positioned as the white Western male, and the genre constructed mainly around a bildungsroman format, with the reader taken on a journey the protagonist's personality development. Indeed, Lejeune's aforementioned stance on the autobiographical pact is centred around a selection of solely male authors. In a similar manner, much of the current European research on autobiography remains rooted in Augustine, Rousseau, and Goethe, who are positioned as the "fathers" of autobiography.

This is not, of course, to suggest that women were not producing autobiographical work. On the contrary, Virginia Woolf's seminal autobiographical essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929) explicitly criticises women's canonical exclusion, wherein female autobiographical texts were cast aside as both unsophisticated and unliterary. More recently, academic criticism has found female autobiography to be a potential genre of emancipation, which enables women to voice their lives away from traditional gender roles. This is particularly productive in gaining distance from the male heteronormative projections of femininity and womanhood often found in male writing. Of note here is the scholarship of Shari Benstock, who, in the work *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings* (1988), explored the aesthetic criteria that led to women's exclusion from the autobiographical canon. Feminist engagement with female autobiographies continues to readdress this imbalance and stresses the importance of looking at autobiography through a lens removed from androcentric Western biases.

In this manner, Sidonie Smith's *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography* highlights that an autobiographical tradition, with an androcentric centre, was an unavailable strategy to most women and that, due to their historical absence from public spheres and literary canons, it was necessary to tell their personal stories in a different format (1987: 50). In keeping with this notion, for many scholars the autobiographical structure of a coherent, autonomous subject is considered a patriarchal construction (Stanford Friedman 1988; O'Brien 1991; Dausien 1992). As a result, the term "autobiography" is found increasingly less frequently and in its place the term "life-writing" is utilised, which, as defined by Hermione Lee, pertains to a term 'sometimes used when the distinction between biography and autobiography is being deliberately blurred, or when different ways of telling a life-story – memoir, autobiography, biography, diary, letters, autobiographical fiction – are being discussed together.' (2010: 100).³²

³² Henceforth, the use of the term "life-writing" in this chapter will adhere to this definition.

Smith went on to further analyse the ‘double helix of imagination’ within many female-authored autobiographical texts, which engenders a double-voiced narrative structure, and argued that they demonstrate a dichotomous relationship between wanting to exert narrative authority and an apprehension of overt self-exposure (1987: 51). What emerges here is the how the constraints that the autobiographical canon imposed upon women’s writing hindered any depiction of the multifarious nature of female experience or reconstruction of the subjectivities within marginalised groups.

Autofiction’s fertile ground in relation to experimentation of style, time, and structure lends itself well to the exploration of women’s self-narrative and fictionalisation of the Self, removed from the restrictions of traditionally male structures of authorship, history, and memory. Autofiction can be viewed as a genre resistant to categorisation and boundaries in and of itself, and thus fit to house the narratives of women seeking to break the patriarchal autobiographical conventions that previously excluded them.

This richness of experimental opportunity within autofiction remains productive in the construction of varying female experiences – race and class, in particular. The emergence of the field of Postcolonial Studies shed light on the limited intersectionality found within traditional autobiographical writing and scholarship, with the experiences of many women of colour excluded. Autofiction, as Doubrovsky initially described, is able to delve into the lives of those often marginalised or living on the peripheries, and who possess hybrid identities. Of Francophone female autofiction authors, Shirley Jordan argues: ‘the sense of fracture and self-estrangement inherent in autofiction surfaces in specific ways in women’s articulations of culturally hybrid identities...Hybridity, *métissage*, structural fragmentation, and multi-voicing are shown to be productive responses to inherently unstable subject positioning.’ (2013: 81). Therefore, the experimental ability offered by autofictional modes of writing seems well suited to the requirements of narratives depicting experiences of migration, uprooting, exile, identity formation.

Although Jordan's argument is directed towards female writers from Belgium, Senegal, Algeria, and the Caribbean, it is evident how such a fracture and estrangement of the Self could also be found within Portuguese post-imperial texts, particularly those depicting *retornado* experiences. By situating autofiction within the intellectual contexts suggested by post-structuralism and deconstruction, and in the cultural contexts of memorial and commemorative practices, the genre is undoubtedly of use when discussing texts that depict the Portuguese decolonisation period.

1.3 Sharing the "Truth" About Trauma

If the autofictional genre is considered productive for depicting complex narratives of identity disruption, such exile, migration, and uprooting, one can reasonably suggest that themes of trauma would not be unexpected. So where, if at all, does trauma sit within a discussion on autofiction? And why would an author choose such a genre for a literary depiction of trauma?

A lone "story" of any traumatic event is generally agreed to be an impossibility. This provides a challenging, if not stimulating, starting point for any discussion on trauma and narrative form. As Freud recounts in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, soldiers plagued by nightmares of the First World War seemed to consistently relive the horrors of their military experiences; even as they tried to block such memories from their minds, they were subconsciously controlled by a 'compulsion to repeat' (1920: 22) traumatic events through hallucinations, flashbacks, or nightmares. Freud explains how trauma acts as a disruptor of memory, wherein the past is repeated uncontrollably within the present. This argument was later developed by Janet (1928), who believed that trauma was registered in an entirely separate consciousness through a process of dissociation. According to Janet (1928), the "memory" of a trauma is not, in-fact, a memory at all, as it cannot be consciously recalled or recounted. Instead, Janet proposes two opposing variations of "memory": traumatic memory and narrative memory. The conversion of the former into the latter has dominated therapeutic approaches to trauma

recovery ever since, with the fragmentary piecing together and transformation of traumatic memory into a more cohesive narrative memory now deemed key to recovery.

Leigh Gilmore however, within her work *Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*, highlights that the emphasis within recent recovery frameworks on survivors articulating their trauma is paradoxical (2018: 6–7). On the one hand, trauma is defined as located outside of language, whereby the horror of traumatic events is unrepresentable; and yet, on the other, language is considered at the heart of trauma recovery, where a survivor must testify to their experience, whilst finding the words able to express said trauma. There is an attempt then to displace what Gilmore names as the ‘unconscious language of repetition’ (2018: 7), where trauma presents itself as flashbacks or nightmares, with a more structured and conscious verbalisation which may be more helpful for recovery. The therapeutic power of trauma narratives has been well documented and cited within the psychiatric field; yet, undoubtedly, the road to finding a linguistic antidote to the realities of living with trauma is fraught with challenges. I argue in this chapter, and the thesis as a whole, that autofiction can be utilised as a strategy to minimise such challenges.

Trauma narratives are often found in life-writing and memoirs and are therefore assumed to be historically and autobiographically accurate accounts of a person’s experienced trauma. Within traditional autobiographical narratives, factual accuracy is synonymous with authenticity. Yet regarding trauma narratives, autobiography’s demand for authentic truth-telling, accuracy, and verifiable fact have often been viewed as overly restrictive. Of autobiography and trauma, Gilmore writes:

The portals are too narrow and the demands too restrictive. Moreover, the judgments they invite may be too similar to forms in which trauma was experienced. When the contest is over who can tell the truth, the risk of being accused of lying (or malingering, or inflating, or whining) threatens the writer into continued silence. In this scenario, the autobiographical project may swerve from the form of autobiography even as it embraces the project of self-representation. These departures offer an opportunity to calibrate our

attention to the range of demands made by autobiography and the silencing or shaming effects they impose. (2018: 3)

Trauma can be conceptualised as the breakdown between narrative and memory; therefore, it would seem reasonable to suggest that any narrative depiction of trauma would sit outside the boundaries of a structured genre. This suggestion prompts the question as to whether trauma can ever be accurately depicted within the genre of autobiography. When it comes to accessing trauma, Caruth and Esch argue that fiction is not only helpful, but rather, actively needed. They question:

How can we think of a referential – or historical, or material – dimension of texts that is not simply opposed to their fictional powers? How might the very fictional power of texts be, not a hindrance to, but a means of gaining access to their referential force? (1995: 2)

And so, to return to the opening question of this section, if fiction can be considered productive for trauma narratives – what about autofiction specifically? The disjointed sense of time and space often associated with trauma might be effectively exemplified through non-linear and non-referential narrative structures and strategies. Anne Whitehead argues that ‘if trauma is at all susceptible to narrative formulation then it requires a literary form which departs from conventional linear sequence.’ (2004: 6).

Speaking of the depiction of the Colonial War within *A Costa*, Ana Paula Ferreira asks: ‘How could an event which has always been in the order of the repressed be (re)constructed through the written word so as to effectively exorcize a national trauma?’ (1992: 268). Such a question can, in this instance, also be extended to *Caderno*, and *O Retorno*. The propensity of autofiction to investigate traumatic historical events brings to the fore the issue of the individual and the collective; it is necessary to interrogate how autofiction is positioned to engage a wide readership on the subject of a collective traumatic event from the perspective of an individual protagonist. The slippery issue of “truth” is of relevance here, as a readers will need to determine

what aspects of a trauma autofiction they believe to be authentic and emotionally resonant. It seems fitting to explore any memory of the decolonisation period or the Colonial War through a hybrid lens of fiction and experience, given that, within the censored discourse of the dictatorship, many of the narratives surrounding that historical period were indeed fiction themselves.

Questions surrounding the idea of “truth” are consistently present within debates on autofiction, where the authenticity demanded by the autobiographical pact is discarded. What can be considered “true” within an autofiction text? The problematic definition of truth has often acted as the foundation of the genre’s critique, yet critics are becoming increasingly sceptical of the authenticity readily assumed by the autobiographical pact itself. Memory theorist Paul John Eakin argues that ‘autobiographical truth is not a fixed but an evolving content, what we call fact and fiction being rather slippery variables in an intricate process of self-discovery’ (1985: 17). Such an idea is reinforced by Timothy Dow Adams who argues:

As fundamental as truth is to autobiography, modern readers have increasingly come to realize that telling the truth about oneself on paper is virtually impossible. Even if writers could isolate ‘the truth’ of their past, how could they know it would remain true as they wrote, much less in the future? How would readers know if they were reading the truth and how could writers separate poetic truth from factual truth, psychological truth from family truth? Is it more important to be true or ring true? (2017: 9)

Evidently, even in the autobiographical genre, which paved the way for autofiction, disputes between fact and fiction are relevant and a general acceptance of a hybrid approach between fact and fiction is agreed upon. So where does this leave us with the even more fictitious autofiction? In the latter, a complex relationship exists between authenticity and imagination. The questioning, and stressing, of the paradoxical nature of truth is a key foundation of any autofictive lens. Catherine Cusset, in her 2012 presentation, entitled *The Limits of Autofiction*, states that, within the autofiction genre, “truth” can be viewed as:

the capacity to go back inside an emotion, to erase anything anecdotic that wouldn’t be part of that emotion and would water it down, in order to offer it to the reader in a bare

form, devoid of anything too idiosyncratic, so that he can claim it as his own. When the writer reaches a deep enough level of emotion, it becomes *anybody's emotion*: something universal. Paradoxically, the "I" of the autofiction writer is anything but egocentric. It is not centered on the self, but erasing the self so as to make the truth of past emotion emerge.³³ (2012: 2)

Thus, the blend of fact and fiction that autofiction provides enables the author to establish in one sense a deeper truth between themselves and the reader. As Vinson astutely argues: 'autofiction, then, shifts the meaning of the autobiographical pact, not through entirely throwing out the promise of truth, but by redefining what 'truth' means, while also helping the reader recognize the shift that is occurring.' (2018: 148). This redefinition of "truth", when coupled with Cusset's analysis of a deeper and more collective emotion, allows autofiction to be well positioned to explore incidents of trauma, and more specifically collective trauma, where emotion can become 'anybody's'. In this respect, autofiction allows for a larger, collective truth, which in turn speaks to more than an individual set of experiences. By combining fact and fiction, an author may uncover a traumatic moment or event and communicate it in a way that an audience will understand, while also building a deeper exploration around the subjectivities of trauma, identity, and memory. To capture the "truth" of a traumatic event and create a transference to the reader is no mean feat, particularly when so much of trauma is deemed outside of ordinary human experience.

The problematisation of "truth" lies at the centre of any definition of autofiction. Trauma autofictions go on step further, as they play with the paradox surrounding linguistic inability to convey a sense of reality, and the recognition that, despite this, texts possess real power in portraying the *truth* of a traumatic event rather than the *facts*. As Marjorie Worthington explains:

When done well, trauma autofiction draws its authority from *both* sources: it is fictional and therefore has access to the depth and universality of story-truths, but it remains yoked to referentiality through the author-character's onomastic connection to the author. No matter how fictional the autofiction becomes, it always gestures metafictionally toward

³³ Italics my own.

the extratextual world outside itself and the extratextual author of the narrative. (2018: 133)

This notion that fiction is in fact *required* in order to best convey the “truth” is particularly relevant when exploring trauma narratives. To illustrate this point, Tim O’Brien’s autofictive work *The Things They Carried* (1990) is helpful. The text explores the horrors of the Vietnam War from the viewpoint of a veteran sharing his own name.³⁴ Reflecting on his work, O’Brien states, ‘often the crazy stuff is true and the normal stuff isn’t, because normal stuff is necessary to make you believe the truly incredible craziness’ (1990: 71); this acts as the genesis for his notion of “story-truth” and “happening-truth” explored within *The Things They Carried* (1990), and as aforementioned by Worthington (2018). Here, O’Brien writes: ‘I want you to feel what I felt. I want you to know why story-truth is truer sometimes than happening-truth.’ (1990: 179). The ‘story-truth’ depicts the fictional narrativization of an event where the author exerts more creative freedom, whilst the ‘happening-truth’ refers to a historical account. In doing so, the “story-truth” is ultimately able to discover a deeper “truth” than the ‘happening-truth’ was ever able; in most cases, the more banal fictional details of a “story-truth” are required to make the unbelievable, and yet true, details of a ‘happening-truth’ more accessible to readers.

Links can be drawn here between Pierre Janet’s aforementioned belief that narrative was key to overcoming traumatic memory and narrative memory. It seems likely that most trauma survivors have created their own blend of O’Brien’s “story-truth” and “happening-truth”, in the search for Janet’s narrative truth which aids their own recovery. In this way, autofiction perhaps has the potential to release authors from the double bind between speech and silence, memory and forgetting.

³⁴ My choice of work here is not random. Narratives of Vietnam are instructive when investigating the Colonial War which, as stated by Jorge in *A Costa* can be articulated as ‘o nosso Vietnam’. See full quote: ‘Fazíamos o nosso Vietnam sozinhos, com o mundo contra nós, quando defendíamos a Civilização Ocidental. Mas quando os americanos perdessem a guerra no Vietnam – porque eles haveriam de a perder – Portugal teria há muito vencido a guerra das suas províncias por determinação dos altos comandos.’ (231)

Often, autofiction narratives leave their readers with an incomplete ending. On O'Brien, critic Jon Volkmer states 'this state of never coming to conclusions, never being allowed to settle on a truth, paradoxically provides a "truer" sense of the experience of Vietnam than a consistent narrative could do' (1999: 245). The same can be said of the endings of *A Costa and Caderno*, both of which are fluid in their ambiguity. The use of autofiction narratives that depict the Colonial War period highlight the impossibility of ever truly knowing war at all, but demonstrate how such a blend of fact and fiction may well be the closest that anyone can come to gaining any certainty of such a time. On O'Brien's autofictional depictions of war time experiences, Calloway states: 'the stories become epistemological tools, multidimensional windows through which the war, the world, and the ways of telling a war story can be viewed from many different angles and visions' (2011: 88). Extending this metaphor of the window, within 'Palavras Prévias', Figueiredo states:

O Caderno tem uma vida própria, que quem lê reconhece, como se de repente se abrisse uma janela e o vento trouxesse intacto o ambiente do passado, descongelado, inteiro, e autêntico, com os seus ruídos, cores e odores; mas o livro também ficciona para dizer a verdade, esse outro grande paradoxo de literatura. (2015: 11)

Although Figueiredo does not utilise O'Brien's specific terminology of "story-truth" and "happening-truth", the general sentiment of a dual "truth-telling" strategy of fact and fiction is evident here. Certainly, in making a reader aware that a text is fictional, the audience is, in turn, forced to recognise the requirement to question the "truth" being presented to them. More generally, this encourages us to critically consider the way in which official war-time narratives are told and re-told. As Sarah Foust Vinson comments: 'while truth in memory and autofiction remains perpetually problematic, autofiction goes so far as to celebrate this, not necessarily leading us to a place of inauthenticity, but instead to a place of discovery and deeper understanding.' (2018: 158). Thus, trauma autofiction reinforces that an interplay between multiple "truths", be they fact or fiction, is a valuable way to understand our histories and identities.

Within both *A Costa* and *Caderno*, a problematisation and interrogation of the reliability of memory, and a critique of traditional History can be found, as is often the cornerstone of autofictional texts. The topic has been explored extensively in the case of *A Costa*, where Jorge's critique of official History narratives acts as a thematic foundation, perhaps best exemplified by its dual narrative structure and narrator Eva's sarcastic tone of voice.³⁵ A similar interrogation is subtler, but still present, within *Caderno*, and Figueiredo advises the reader from the outset to proceed with critical caution; indeed, the 2015 preface functions as a preliminary critique on both History and the reliability of memory. Figueiredo, here writing explicitly as herself, warns:

É mais fácil esquecer. Sempre.

O paradoxo reside no facto de só se ultrapassarem os choques de uma vivência, desenterrando-a, revolvendo os seus restos. O tempo silencioso apenas se abstém de produzir ruído.

É também mais fácil construir o que aceitamos recordar. Essa narrativa torna-se a realidade, a única em que acreditamos e que defendemos.

A História enfrenta sempre esse grande óbice, que cabe aos investigadores ultrapassar: o silêncio sobre o que muito se calou ou escondeu. O que não honra. O lixo faz-se desaparecer, os cadáveres emparedam-se e tudo deixa de existir. Não vimos, não sabemos, nunca ouvimos falar, não demos por nada. (2015: 8)

Indeed, the tools and techniques afforded by autofiction have been taken up by writers seeking to draw attention to traumatic historical events which have received insufficient historical or cultural

³⁵ See Ana Paula Ferreira, "Lídia Jorge's *A Costa dos Murmúrios*: History and the Postmodern She-Wolf", *Revista Hispánica Moderna* XLV 2 (December 1992): 268-78; Helena Kaufman, "Reclaiming the Margins of History in Lídia Jorge's *A Costa dos Murmúrios*", *Luso-Brazilian Review* 29.1 (1992): 41-49; Ronald W. Sousa, "The Critique of History in Lídia Jorge's *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, or Helen of Beira Meets Luís of Troy", *Cincinnati Romance Review* 16 (1997): 135-43, and "I Was Evita" or Ecce Feminina: Lídia Jorge's *The Murmuring Coast*", *Lusosex: Gender And Sexuality In The Portuguese-Speaking World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002): 168-183; Paula Jordão, "A *Costa dos Murmúrios*: Uma Ambiguidade Inesperada", *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 2 (Spring 1999): 49-60; Paulo de Medeiros, "Memória Infinita", *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 2 (Spring 1999): 61-78; Hilary Owen, "Back to Nietzsche: The Making of an Intellectual/Woman Lídia Jorge's *A Costa dos Murmúrios*", *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 2 (Spring 1999): 79-98; Hilary Owen and Cláudia Pazos Alonso, "Sexual/Textual Re-Visions in Lídia Jorge", *Antigone's Daughters? : Gender, Genealogy and the Politics of Authorship in 20th-Century Portuguese Women's Writing* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2011): 138-58.

memorialisation, such as colonial massacres and slavery. The experimental nature of autofiction has a dual productivity here where it brings to light the stories of marginalised groups, but also resists against the restrictive and linear depictions of historical events.

1.4 An Autofictional Continuum

The type of memories and personal experiences that Jorge, Figueiredo, and Cardoso pull from are clearly positioned differently; Jorge has adult recollections, whilst Figueiredo and Cardoso carry childhood memories. The nature of memory that exists amongst children who themselves belong to the *retornado* community is complex and fragmentary – whilst, on one level, they navigate the trauma of the war itself, on another, they also inherit the memories of those around them, such as family members. Regarding childhood narratives, Lejeune states that:

to construct the spoken word of the child, and eventually delegate the function of narration to him, we must abandon the code of autobiographic verisimilitude (of the ‘natural’) and enter the space of fiction...it is no longer a question of remembering, but of making up a childlike voice. (1989: 53).

I would dispute this rather narrow stance on childhood narratives. Indeed, the work of both Cardoso and Figueiredo would suggest that a hybrid approach is productive. In relation to childhood memories of those who lived through the Argentine dictatorship, Blejmar notes that they are:

comprised of images of what they lived, what they remembered, what they imagined and the stories they were told during and after the events. In their cultural memories of those years they turn to that hybridity precisely to make explicit the difficulty of discriminating fact from fiction in their narratives of the past and of the self. (2016: 14)

Jorge and Cardoso explore less of what did occur within their own experiences of the Colonial War, and more of what could have occurred were they to have been different people. Blejmar

refers to this as the ‘what-if strategy’ (2016: 199) whereby possible and conceivable versions of the past are presented rather than representations of the past as it truly was.

The following section of this chapter will explore the intersections between the author’s own histories and literary work. It is not my intention to propose that the texts are straightforward, “raw” autobiographical accounts of trauma encountered during the Colonial War, but rather, that they are written along a continuum of the autofictive form. I shall explore how Jorge, Figueiredo, and Cardoso have fictionalised their experiences through varying degrees, and, to assist in this exploration, I shall draw upon the autofictional framework laid out by Vincent Colonna (2014).

Under the stricter Doubrovskyan theoretical point of view, wherein the author, narrator, and main protagonist share the same eponymous identity, only *Caderno* would fit the required framework to be classified as autofiction. However, my intention in this chapter is not to force the chosen texts into a rigid structure, but rather seek to position them along an autofictional continuum. To provide some form of anchor within this continuum, I shall rely upon the more encompassing interpretation by Vincent Colonna, who has defined the elusive concept as ‘la nébuleuse autofiction a son cœur ardent dans l’affabulation fantastique, dans cette forme fabuleuse d’invention de soi [the nebulous autofiction who has its ardent heart in fantastical fabulation, in this fabulous form of self-invention]’ (2004: 34).

Neither exclusively literary historiography, nor formal classification, Colonna argues in his 1989 doctoral thesis that autofiction instead exposes a range of problems which not least question the very nature of genre itself (16). Colonna goes even further than Doubrovsky in his definition of the genre, and identifies a typology and arch-genre consisting of four basic types; biographical autofiction (2004: 34), fantastical autofiction (2004: 93), specular autofiction (2004: 119), and finally intrusive autofiction (2004: 135). This significant expansion of the term enables a more all-encompassing understanding of the neologism, and indeed, removes autofiction’s

prioritisation of authors as the main protagonist or hero of the text. For Colonna, any character within a text can be positioned as having an autobiographical foundation:

Les débats houleux sur sa légitimité auraient dû pourtant leur mettre la puce à l'oreille. Il n'y a pas une forme d'autofiction, mais plusieurs, comme il existe différents mécanismes de conversion d'une personne historique en personnage fictif. Personne n'a tout à fait tort : chacun a saisi un « bout » de l'autofiction, une grande boucle du tourbillon qui l'inspire. (2004: 72)

[The heated debates surrounding its legitimacy should have been a clue. There is not only one form of autofiction, but several, just as there are different mechanisms for converting a historical person into a fictional character. No one is entirely incorrect: everyone has grasped a “piece” of autofiction, a large loop in the vortex that inspires it.]

Fantastical autofiction places the author as the central hero(ine) of the text, yet is not confined by a need to adhere to the similarities of their own existence; in this respect, the hero is a type of ‘double projeté [projected double]’ (Colonna 2004: 75) that the reader would seldom associate with the author. In this instance, the main protagonist should not suggest that they are indeed a version of the author themselves (Colonna 2004: 75).

Biographical autofiction also places the writer at the epicentre of the text, Colonna identifies here that ‘L’auteur est toujours le héros de son histoire, le pivot autour duquel la matière narrative s’ordonne, mais il affabule son existence à partir de données réelles, reste au plus près de la vraisemblance. [the author is always the hero of their story, the central point around which the narrative encircles, but they fictionalise their existence from actual fact whilst staying as close as possible to verisimilitude]’ (2004: 93). Colonna states that within biographical autofictive modes of writing, the creative idea that the author is synonymous with the hero remains plausible to the reader and they should be aware that they are encountering a blend of fact and fiction.

Colonna’s third archetype of autofiction is named *specular* and sees the author not at the centre of the work as previously, but rather on the outskirts and reflected inwards, hence the mirror metaphor (2004: 119). Colonna states:

Le réalisme du texte, sa vraisemblance, y deviennent un élément secondaire, et l'auteur ne se trouve plus forcément au centre du livre, ce peut n'être qu'une silhouette ; l'important est qu'il vienne se placer dans un coin de son œuvre, qui réfléchit alors sa présence comme la ferait un miroir. (2004: 119)

[The realism of the text, its verisimilitude, becomes a secondary element, and the author is no longer necessarily at the centre of the work; they may be no more than a silhouette; the important thing is that they come to stand in a corner of the work, which then reflects their presence like a mirror.]

To illustrate this, Colonna refers to Diego Velázquez's infamous painting *Las Meninas* (1656) where Velázquez himself is depicted within the work, seen painting off-centre.

The fourth, and final, archetype is named *intrusive* autofiction and involves the author as 'un récitant, un raconteur ou un commentateur [a narrator, storyteller, or commentator]' rather than the hero of the plot (2004: 135). In this regard, the author's narrative voice sits externally to the main subjects of the plot and functions as a lone and disembodied voice, which runs parallel to the actual story itself. (2004: 135). With all four archetypes, Colonna reinforces the status of autofiction as a 'nebula' rather than a straightforward genre. It is with this in mind, that I shall now attempt to situate *A Costa*, *Caderno*, and *O Retorno* within said subgenres and at times blur the boundaries between Colonna's framework itself.

Starting with perhaps the most "faithfully" autofictional text of the three, I propose that *Caderno* sits fairly neatly within Colonna's definition of biographical autofiction. Born in Lourenço Marques, now Maputo, in 1963, Figueiredo lived out her childhood within the racially segregated capital, then under Portuguese colonial rule. She relocated alone to Portugal in 1975 as a *retornada*, and lived with her paternal grandmother in Caldas da Rainha. The unnamed protagonist within *Caderno* carries out the same journey and experience, whilst exploring the complex relationship with her father. Figueiredo has spoken widely of her own changing relationship with her father, and the reasoning behind the book's dedication to him.

Critics were, and remain, quick to label *Caderno* as an autobiographical novel or memoir, bolstered by interviews after the work's initial 2009 publication that well document Figueiredo's childhood in Mozambique and consequent return to Portugal.³⁶ I seek to delve deeper into the text's categorisation and interrogate whether such a clear-cut placement is entirely accurate. When asked why she chose to write an autobiography, Figueiredo commented:

Não é autobiografia. Chamemos-lhe uma neoautobiografia. Vamos pegar no Paul Auster. Como é que escreve o Paul Auster? Escreve exatamente como eu. Parte de uma experiência que viveu, verdadeira, e depois ficcional. O “Caderno...” é um livro de memórias e apesar disso tem coisas construídas. É verdade que parte da minha vida real. (Caria 2017)

Arguably, the immediate tendency to position the work as solely autobiographical echoes a wider literary gender prejudice, which all too often assumes the foundations of female-authored work to be based upon lived experience, as opposed to creative imagination. In contrast, male-authored works are rarely assumed to be anything but inventive fiction, no matter how close the author may be to the subject matter. Figueiredo seems conscious of such a stigma, and in the preface of the 2015 version entitled *Palavras Prévias*, writes: ‘Pode esperar-se que os factos relatados correspondam ao que foi testemunhado, vivido e sentido, não que sejam um relato literal isento de trabalho literário.’ (2015: 13). This echoes the attitude posited by Williams and Blanco, who comment that life-writing often falls victim to gendered pitfalls, stating: ‘The danger that may befall any narrative written in the first person is that it is considered reductively autobiographical rather than the work of a creative imagination.’ (2017: 2). Figueiredo's reinforcement of the “literariness” of *Caderno* is therefore understandable, and hints at the fear of her creative craft being obscured under the wider gendered connotations around autobiographical modes of writing.

³⁶ See Anita Moraes, “*Caderno de Memórias Coloniais* de Isabela Figueiredo”, *Via Atlântica* 17 (2010): 241-45; Isabela Ferreira Gould, “A Daughter's Unsettling Auto/biography of Colonialism and Uprooting: A Conversation with Isabela Figueiredo”, *Ellipsis* 8 (2010): 133-45; Joana Pimentel, “The Divided Mind: New Perspectives on Colonial Representations in Isabela Figueiredo's ‘*Caderno De Memórias Coloniais*’”, *Romance Notes* 52(2) (2013): 273-44.

Caderno is undoubtedly rooted in Figueiredo's lived experience, but her confirmation that parts are indeed fictionalised strengthens my positioning of the text as autofictional. A close reading highlights that, throughout the text, the protagonist is, in fact, nameless. This strategy is reinforced in the most recent edition of *Caderno* where, in the preface, Figueiredo consistently refers to the young protagonist as 'a menina' with a corresponding third-person verb formation. Such a decision creates an undeniable sense of distance between Figueiredo as the extratextual author and the intertextual protagonist with whom she shares so many similarities. Whilst the protagonist is unnamed, the link to Figueiredo is undeniable to the reader. This dominating proximity enables a positioning of the text as biographical autofiction.

Perhaps the most strikingly fictional elements of *Caderno* are the three dreamscapes that punctuate the narrative; a brief encounter with her father; a meeting with her imagined half-sister; and the closing chapter showing an imagined return to Mozambique. An in-depth analysis of these dreams and their underpinnings of trauma is explored in Chapter Four of this thesis. Whilst, of course, Figueiredo herself could have experienced these exact dreams, I define them as fictional due to their positioning outside of the spheres of consciousness and physical plane. Yet, are these fictive scenes "fictional enough" to land the text within the space of Colonna's fantastical autofiction? If we remain faithful to Colonna's understanding of the hero of a fantastical autofictive work as that who the reader would rarely equate with the author, it seems unlikely. More plausibly, the dreamscapes can be considered as a more direct signalling of the blend between the factual and fictional elements of the work, creating an awareness of the hybridity. Such signposting is common within the biographical autofictional sub-genre.

When considering the autofictional capacity of *Caderno*, it is worth briefly introducing Figueiredo's most recent work *A Gorda* (2016). The text depicts the trajectory of a young, overweight, woman named Maria Luísa who was born in Mozambique, but sent to Portugal as a *retornada* to attend school. As an adult, Maria Luísa ultimately decides to undergo gastric band

surgery, a procedure which Figueiredo herself has experienced and spoken of widely in interviews. Figueiredo has recently stated that she views the protagonist of *A Gorda* as ‘praticamente a continuação da menina do Caderno’ (2020), whom she notably separates from herself despite the text’s consistent categorisation by critics as autobiographical. Amongst some critics, this text has been suggested as autofiction (Mendonça 2021), yet when asked if she agreed with such a categorisation, Figueiredo replied: ‘eu realmente não gosto de rotular. É uma narrativa, um romance, e todo romance parte da experiência do eu.’ (2018a). This reluctance to label the work as autofiction does not however mitigate its autofictional qualities. Given Figueiredo’s remark that the protagonist Maria Luísa is an extension of the *menina* in *Caderno*, who I have situated as autofictional, it does not seem unreasonable to view the two texts as an autofictional series. Of additional note here is Figueiredo’s first literary work, *Conto é como quem diz* (1988), which was published under the name Isabel Almeida Santos. Whilst Almeida Santos was Figueiredo’s maiden name, the change from Isabel to Isabela is thought-provoking and adds further nuance to the idea of split protagonists within her body of work.

It is an entirely new protagonist, however, that Cardoso presents to the reader in *O Retorno*. As stated in the introduction of this thesis, the work depicts the story of teenager Rui as he travels to Portugal as a *retornado* with his mother and sister, whilst his father remains behind in Angola, held as a political prisoner. The family are relocated in a luxury hotel with other *retornado* families in Estoril, a location in which many *retornados* were indeed forced to reside until they were financially self-sufficient. The story undeniably echoes that of Cardoso herself, who arrived in Portugal with her older sister and mother as *retornadas*, whilst her father remained behind, and they themselves also lived in a luxury hotel in Estoril for over a year. Cardoso has made it clear, however, that the work is not autobiographical in the literal sense:

In the case of *O Retorno* the only points in common are that I lived through those historical moments...I was never a boy and I did not experience those events. I, Dulce, arrived in Portugal and went to Trás-os-Montes to be with my grandparents. There is nothing in the novel about that. (2020: 55)

Yet, my intention in exploring the text's boundary between the autobiographical and the fictional is to move away from such a clear-cut interpretation. I consider how, whilst Cardoso did not recreate her own experience in a literal sense, her experiences have, nonetheless, bled into the fiction and suggest a definition of specular autofiction.

O Retorno was written in Bamberg, Germany, where Cardoso had been invited to participate in an artist's residential programme, jointly funded by the Bavarian state and the International Artists Villa Concordia organisation. Between March 2010 and April 2011, the grant was dedicated to Portuguese artists specifically, and so Cardoso lived within an eighteenth-century palace, named the Villa Concordia, amongst fellow Portuguese nationals, the artists Filipa César and João Leonardo, and the musician Luís Antunes Pena. Of the experience, Cardoso drew an unexpected parallel between the residency and her initial time as a *retornada*:

Como estava a escrever “O Retorno”, queria, de alguma maneira, voltar a experimentar esse sentimento de não pertença. Claro que sabia que podia voltar a casa quando quisesse. Ter a garantia do regresso fazia com que o sentimento de não pertença fosse acima de tudo lúdico... muito diferente do que senti quando cheguei a Portugal, em 1975, vinda de Angola. Nessa altura não tinha maneira de voltar para casa... E isso muda tudo. Mas acho que o desconforto de estar longe de casa, que senti na Alemanha, me ajudou a convocar todo esse passado, e sobretudo a reflectir de forma mais incisiva sobre o tema da perda. (2011b)

Therefore, Cardoso did seemingly seek to actively recreate some of the emotions that she felt during her initial years as a *retornada*, and whilst her personal story is not reflected verbatim through the eyes of Rui, there is a unifying sense of shared experience and emotion which sees her positioned as, to utilise Colonna's terminology, ‘a silhouette’ (2004: 119). Cardoso's positioning as the extratextual author demands attention with regard to specular autofiction, in which the author sits not within the centre of the text but rather on the outskirts. On her own understanding of authorship, Cardoso has stated:

for me the most important quality of the novelist, and this is also a divine characteristic, is that of invisibility. It interests me that the author should be as invisible as possible, that I, the author, am more disguised in what I write. It is not quite a mask any longer; it may be more the mask of the mask.... I play with my biographical data, as I did in *O Retorno* and now in *Eliete*. (2020: 55)

The notion that she is ‘playing’ with her own biographical data seems to contradict previous statements that deny Rui’s story as her own. Naturally, it is not my intention to argue that the two stories are entirely interchangeable, but rather that there is a blurring of one within the other. In addition, the metaphor of the mask and invisibility here is salient to the discussion of the text’s specular autofictive elements. Cardoso, and her experiences, seem to undeniably act as the cornerstone of the text, but she has purposefully kept herself on the outskirts. Given that *O Retorno* deals inherently with portraying the stigma that the *retornado* community faced, it thus seems unsurprising that Cardoso did not insert herself as explicitly within the text as Figueiredo, who is dealing more with navigating personal blame and guilt.

Cardoso’s reference to her work *Eliete* (2018) prompts an interesting sense of autofictional lineage within her work. Cardoso has stated that she herself was nearly named Eliete (2020: 55) and the text explores the “normal” day-to-day life of a woman, living in a flat with her husband and daughters in Cascais, born four months after the Carnation Revolution. More recently, Cardoso has published *Autobiografia Não Autorizada* (2021a), which compiles fifty-five short stories written for the magazine *Visão*. As with *Eliete*, the short stories are rooted in daily life and feature subjects such as childhood, walking the dog, and a washing machine breakdown. Of the work, she has stated:

O que eu conto lá é a partir da verdade, não quer dizer que seja a verdade. Pode ser ficcionado posso nem partir de factos reais e colocar sentimentos verdadeiros, é a minha vida, eu tornei-me personagem, é a minha vida ficcionada, até quanto mais não seja pela memória que é sempre uma mistura de ficção e de imaginação. (2021b)

Within this most recent work, Cardoso has placed herself more explicitly within the centre of the text, contrasting with her peripheral positioning within *O Retorno*. Given this placement on the outskirts, it is perhaps unsurprising that *O Retorno* is the only of the texts within this corpus to culminate with a definitive, and positive, ending. Ultimately, Rui's father returns from Angola and is repositioned into the traditional father figure, albeit it with underlying trauma from his time as a political prisoner. He begins to rebuild his family's future and finances, literally through a business selling building blocks, and removes the family from the hotel, the cause of so much of their unhappiness. Seemingly then, despite the similarities of her own story with that of Rui, Cardoso chose to give the family the positive ending that, ultimately, she herself was denied. As she states:

O passado é um sítio muito perigoso. É talvez o sítio mais perigoso de todos. Não conheço sítio mais perigoso. Tem muitas armadilhas. E podes modificar o passado, que é uma coisa que não sabia até há pouco tempo. Refazê-lo. Podes ficcionar de tal maneira que o teu passado passa a ser outro. Aconteceu-me agora. À força de ter ficcionado a escrever *O Retorno* e de ser partilhado com tanta gente, o meu passado angolano já inclui aquela ficção. (2016)

Whilst I do not seek to draw upon the attribute of fantastical autofiction here, in which an author can imagine a new life for themselves, it seems that Cardoso instead wanted to reimagine the ending for someone else. Relying on the 'divine characteristic' of the author that she has stated, this narrative decision perhaps stems from a desire to control a traumatic narrative and find agency in her capacity to design an ending of her choice.

Turning now to *A Costa*, I propose that the work fits as a hybrid of Colonna's intrusive and fantastical autofiction. The life of Evita, narrated by Eva, bears striking similarities to Jorge's own time in Angola and Mozambique. For Jorge, Africa featured early within her childhood, with her father and grandfather emigrating to Mozambique when she was four years old. But, it was as a young woman that she travelled to Africa to marry her partner, then a military officer in the Portuguese Air Force. Initially, she arrived in Luanda, Angola, where her husband to-be had been

injured, and stayed for one year. Then, the couple moved to Beira, Mozambique, for around two years where Jorge worked as a teacher of Portuguese and French, whilst her husband fought in active service. Of this time, Jorge comments:

eu vivia em messes com as mulheres dos militares. Era uma situação claustrofóbica. As pessoas só falavam da guerra. A morte estava sempre presente. Lembro-me de tomar o pequeno-almoço com um piloto e, passadas duas horas, ele estava morto. Já nem víamos a viúva e os filhos, as pessoas desapareciam. Era um horror. (2014)

Such experiences are highly reminiscent of the narrative arc within *A Costa*, where protagonist Evita relocates to Beira, Mozambique, to marry and accompany her partner Luís Alex, who is fighting in the Colonial War, and the wider plot explores the lives of women living together in the Stella Maris hotel, whilst their husbands were fighting. Notably, however, Helena decides to live separately from the other women, perhaps a decision by Jorge to offer a trajectory away from the ‘situação claustrofóbica’ that she personally encountered.

Jorge herself has commented that many of the events which underpin the text, such as the mysterious alcohol poisoning of black civilians, war crimes, and realities of active service, did indeed take place. During an interview, when asked about the book’s positioning as autobiography or fiction, Jorge replied:

Em parte, esse livro contém o relato de uma memória vivida, ainda que transfigurada, voluntária e involuntariamente, como sempre acontece...baseei-me em determinados fatos ocorridos em Moçambique no final da década de 60, que eu não vivi diretamente, mas cuja memória estava muito presente quando vivi na Beira. Refiro-me, sobretudo, à Operação Nó Górdio e, posteriormente, já mais próximo da minha vivência, ao Massacre de Wiriamu, ambos ocorridos no Norte de Moçambique. Mas a história que relato no livro foi-me muito próxima. Tratava-se do aparecimento misterioso de uns bidons boiando nos rios e no mar, contendo álcool metílico com o qual as populações locais, por ignorância, se envenenavam, se cegavam e morriam. Esse elemento, que no livro surge sob forma de garrafas empalhadas que surgiam na costa, e a mudança de caráter de um alferes com talento para a Matemática, mas transformado pela força das circunstâncias num carrasco de guerra, foram os dois elementos que deram corpo ao livro. (Eurochannel)³⁷

³⁷ A detailed discussion on Jorge’s depiction of the *Operação Nó Górdio* and Wiriyamu Massacre takes place in the following chapter.

Likewise, within a lecture given at the AHRC Language Acts and World Making conference at Kings College, London in 2017, Jorge spoke of a dinner that she attended for Força Aérea officials and their wives:

ninguém tinha sossego porque lá fora havia uma praga dos gafanhotos tão densa que criava aureolas verdes em torno das luzes dos candeeiros da rua...Nessa noite, eu percebi por que razão iríamos perder a guerra, teríamos a perder... Passados muitos anos, a partir dessa noite dos gafanhotos, eu escrevi “A Costa dos Murmúrios”. (2017)

This memorable spectacle therefore not only serves as part of the inspiration for writing *A Costa* as a whole, but also pertains specifically to the opening scene of the text. Of the trauma that she encountered, Jorge has recounted visiting her husband after he was wounded in Eastern Angola: ‘tinha ficado com muitas cicatrizes e muito traumatizado psicologicamente. Custou-lhe muito ver morrer pessoas ao lado. Era horrível.’ (2014). Throughout *A Costa*, Jorge is unflinching in her portrayal of domestic violence suffered by the wives of military personnel, yet also offers an unflinching display of the trauma suffered by Luís Alex and the other soldiers, both physical and mental.³⁸ It does not seem unreasonable then to suggest that her own personal experiences witnessing the trauma of her husband influenced these authorial decisions.

Whilst the text has never been viewed by critics as entirely autobiographical, Maria Irene Ramalho de Sousa Santos referred briefly to the autobiographical nature of *A Costa* within her review, written shortly after the text’s publication (1989). In comparison with *Percusos*, by Wanda Ramos, and *Corpo Colonial*, by Joana Ruas, both also written from the perspective of military wives in colonial Portuguese Africa, Santos highlights:

A escolha da perspectiva da mulher dos alferes miliciano é, como fora já em Wanda Ramos e Joana Ruas, um aproveitamento aparentemente paradoxal do

³⁸ An in-depth discussion of the trauma suffered by Luís Alex will take place in Chapter Three of this thesis.

modo autobiográfico como *estratégia de distanciamento*; mas Lídia Jorge vai mais longe, ao assumir esse recurso estético como deliberada apropriação irónica de um ponto de vista desautorizado, literalmente infiel, que jamais poderia ter acesso à ‘verdade’ ou ao ‘real’ ou sequer à ‘verosimilhança’. (1989: 64)³⁹

The blend of fact and fiction required for both Colonna’s biographical autofiction is thus evident. Yet, the extent to which Jorge’s own personal experiences are transposed into the *specific* actions of *Evita* is unclear. Therefore, whilst the more general similarities of time and place would suggest a positioning of the text as biographical autofiction, I remain unconvinced that there is enough evidence from Jorge herself to support this hypothesis. I suggest instead that *A Costa* be positioned as a hybrid of both intrusive and fantastical autofiction. Regarding intrusive autofiction, Eva’s disembodied narration functions as a version of Jorge’s own voice. This narration, whereby Eva’s commentary runs parallel to the activities carried out by *Evita* in the main spheres of action, reinforces the story-teller trait that Colonna argues acts as the foundation to intrusive autofiction.

Turning to fantastical autofiction, whilst the specific similarities between *Evita* and Jorge are unclear, the more general characteristics that they share, such as being military wives, witnessing the trauma of the soldiers, and their proximity to the Wiriyamu Massacre, can enable *Evita* to be considered as the “projected double” of Jorge, a facet of the sub-genre that Colonna views as instrumental. Whilst the split dual-identity of Eva and *Evita* has been well examined as a strategy to critique traditional discourses of History⁴⁰ – an autofictional reading of the work, positions Jorge, Eva, and *Evita* within a triad split.

In 1999 article ‘Memória Infinita’, Paulo de Medeiros makes the comparison between the split double identity of Eva and *Evita* as a response to trauma. He argues: ‘a necessidade de isolar *Evita* como um outro eu restrito a um passado e a um lugar específicos pode ser encarada

³⁹ Italic emphasis my own.

⁴⁰ See: Ferreira, 1992; Kaufman, 1992; Sousa, 1997; Jordão, 1999; Medeiros, 1999; Owen, 1999; Owen and Pazos Alonso, 2011.

como uma estratégia imprescindível à sua sobrevivência.’ (1999: 75). To take this one step further, I argue that this survival strategy may in fact pertain to Jorge herself. Medeiros astutely links this process of division with the work of Susan J. Brison (1997), who explores strategies used by trauma survivors to protect themselves from an annihilation of the self, namely a disassociation from the body, and a splitting into multiple “selves”. Brison’s work is rooted in the investigations of Herman (1992) and Terr (1994), who researched children who had been subjected to sexual and physical abuse. Their findings demonstrated that many children develop multiple personalities to enable one or more versions of themselves to remain “unharméd” by abuse. The main argument by Brison is rooted in examples from the Holocaust, and in particular the French writer Charlotte Delbo, whose life-writing depicts her time as a prisoner in Auschwitz. Delbo, echoing the work of Herman and Terr, has commented that the creation of different “selves” was essential to combat the near destruction of the Self that she encountered within the Nazi concentration camp, and that the move into each new Self is akin to a snake shedding its skin. She writes:

No doubt, I am very fortunate in not recognizing myself in the self that was in Auschwitz. To return from there was so improbable that it seems to me I was never there at all...I feel that the one who was in the camp is not me, is not the person who is here, facing you. No, it is all too incredible. And everything that happened to that other, the Auschwitz one, now has no bearing upon me, does not concern me, so separate from one another are this deep-lying memory and ordinary memory. I live within a twofold being. The Auschwitz double doesn’t bother me, doesn’t interfere with my life. As though it weren’t I at all. Without this split I would not have been able to revive. (1990: 3)

A splitting of the self or creation of multiple selves is required to avoid the complete destruction of the traumatised Self. Brison links the creation of multiple selves as a strategy of trauma survival, building upon the idea posited by philosopher Derek Parfit, that a single unified Self does not exist, but rather we are each made up of numerous selves that feature in succession. Autofiction in general would seem to support such a hypothesis, whereby the author is depicting a past intertextual version of themselves, different from their current extratextual self; indeed,

autofiction seems well placed as the narrative equivalent of the multiple Self survival strategy, in that it allows for an exploration of the past self, set at a protective distance.

Where it may be too painful for a survivor to construct a traditionally autobiographical narrative of their trauma, a blend of both fiction and autobiography lends itself to the process of healing as it assists the survivor in their ability to truly “master” the traumatic events. For the first time, they alone have total control over the characters, the events, and the outcomes. Similarly, Brison argues that a splitting of the Self can encourage a newfound sense of empathy towards oneself that may have hitherto been lacking; just as we are able to empathise with others, the survivor is now better positioned to empathise with their separate traumatised self (1997: 30).

1.5 Autofictional (Self)-Camouflage

This chapter has explored how the genre of autofiction possesses a personal dimension and transformative power, not just as a mode of writing, but as a mode of living. When speaking of this ability of autofictional trauma narratives, Dix comments that:

autofiction is a project of self-exploration and self-experimentation on the part of the author. This in turn is partly because so many works of autofiction have been written in the aftermath of some kind of traumatic experience – real or imagined – so that the process of writing in response to trauma can be seen as a means of situating the self in a new context when other relational constructs have been removed or jeopardized. (2018: 4)

In becoming the “author” of one’s life, so to speak, the actual author can decide which characters to add, to omit, and which story to tell. Through the shaping of a traumatic lived experience into a text, and by devising the appropriate form and language to do so, a potentially cathartic transformation of the Self is possible. Autofiction is therefore an ideal strategy to shape the Self in the wake of trauma, whilst also honouring those aspects which are difficult to define.

Thus, when considering autofictions' ability to offer a therapeutic renovation of the Self, autofiction can be viewed as a veil of sorts, behind which the author can move freely between reality and fiction, without ever having to distinguish between the two extremes for the reader. Lisa McNee, upon comparing the truth/fiction dichotomy in African writers Bugul, Mokeddem, and Marie-Thérèse Humbert, argues that the authors 'camouflant et en brouillant les pistes narratives' [camouflage and blur narrative trails] (2005: 129) to constantly question autobiographical authority and autofictional strategy of enables an author to both display and protect an 'identité nomade' [nomadic identity] (2005: 138). Through this idea of self-camouflage, the author can be vulnerable whilst maintaining a certain sense of protection through distance. Such distance is particularly prized when narrating trauma, which, as Worthington argues:

enables autofiction to represent a traumatic event in ways that may not be historically factual but that may provide access to the deeper narrative truths characterized by works of fiction, whilst still facilitating the putative claim to authenticity that the onomastic author-character enables.' (2018: 127).

Therefore, trauma autofiction allows authors to explore and interrogate trauma on their own terms whilst remaining "protected" by an element of "self-camouflage". The varying degrees of fictionality within *A Costa*, *Caderno*, and *O Retorno* enable the texts to sit along a somewhat blurred continuum of biographic, specular, intrusive, and fantastical autofiction. Indeed, this continuum blurs the boundaries between Colonna's framework, demonstrating that neat categorisations should be handled with caution. This autofictional positioning allows the three authors a sense of protection, where they are able to be vulnerable with the reader, but not "too" vulnerable. Self-camouflage in this instance pertains to a fictionalised version of a past Self, a projected double in the case of *Caderno* and *A Costa*, and a more drastic form of concealment in the case of *O Retorno*, which sees Cardoso utilise an entirely new protagonist with a different gender to her own. In this triad, trauma can be engaged with at a safer and more empathetic distance by the author, that does not require their full vulnerability or exposure.

With the works now proposed as autofictional trauma narratives, the following chapters of this thesis aim to interrogate the *types* of trauma that are illustrated by Jorge, Figueiredo, and Cardoso, focusing, in the first instance, on the intermedial blend of the visual and the verbal in *Caderno* and *A Costa*.

Chapter Two

2. Photographic (Re)collections: Visual and Verbal Disruptions in *Caderno* and *A Costa*

The previous chapter explored how, in recent decades, the genre of autobiography has undergone a series of changes in both definition and expectation. Consequently, the term “life-writing” is now widely used to reflect varying modes of writing the Self. I positioned *A Costa*, *Caderno*, and *O Retorno* into the space of life writing, and more specifically the genre of autofiction; within

such a placement, the written dimension of the texts acted as my primary focus. This chapter, however, aims to explore their visual components, with a focus upon two of my chosen texts, *Caderno* and *A Costa*.

The present chapter deals with two starkly contrasting categories of photographs. The first relates to Figueiredo's family photographs which offer a visual insight into her childhood world of colonial Lourenço Marques. The second pertains to imaginary classified military photographs in *A Costa*, which are shown to female protagonist Evita and depict her husband, Luís Alex, partaking in atrocities against civilians during counterinsurgency operations in Mozambique.

The photographs considered here are opposing not only in their thematic content, but also in their tangibility. Those presented in *Caderno* physically exist, whilst those in *A Costa* are imagined, depicted instead through mock ekphrasis. However, as this chapter will later probe, the inability to tangibly view the images created by Jorge does not by any means render the described events as purely imaginary, rather, the opposite. Whilst my aim is not to make a comparative study of the photographs, were a preliminary observation to be made it would state that both visual collections share an entrenched sense of violence, both explicit and implicit, alongside a call to uncover a version of perceived "truth". Through these commonalities, both *Caderno* and *A Costa* incite a directive to look. In considering how the reader is forced to observe these images, this chapter interrogates two corresponding questions: in viewing these photographs, both fictional and real, what is stirred in us as a viewer/reader? And consequently, are we willing to ignore or bear witness to our findings?

Within any discussion of images captured during periods of colonial rule and decolonisation, it is imperative to question where photography acts as a tool that exposes the horrors of colonial violence, versus where it is complicit in corroborating colonial racial and power hierarchies. The images explored within this chapter are no exception. Therefore, if 'to

collect photographs is to collect the world' (1977: 3), as Susan Sontag observed in her ground-breaking work *On Photography*, the question pertains as to what type of colonial world do Figueiredo and Jorge intend for us to (re)collect?

To answer such an interrogation, one must look beyond the images themselves and be cognisant that, as Sontag further observes, 'the cameras' rendering of reality must always hide more than it discloses' (1977: 24). As such, within any directive to look, the viewer is engaged in a peeling back of layers, to uncover that which is hidden and bring it to the forefront. Indeed, if photography is more broadly understood as an opportunity to critically engage with the world, arguably a responsibility exists to embark on such a revelation.

A productive starting point for this chapter is the intersection between the autofictional and the visual. As Tobias Döring states: '[a]utobiography is a threshold genre. It traces and crosses boundaries between fact and fiction, memory and history, selves and others, images and texts – sometimes drawing these distinctions, but more often blurring them.' (2006: 72). An intermedial blurring of verbal-visual elements within an autofictional text is thus consistent with the stylistic traits of the genre.

Of particular relevance to my line of enquiry within *Caderno* and *A Costa* is Timothy Adams' work, entitled *Light Writing and Life Writing: Photography in Autobiography* (2000). Here, Adams argues that the combination of photography and autobiography is complex and that an amalgamation of the verbal and visual has the potential to deepen the opacity and intricacy of each, as opposed to when each is viewed independently. He states:

The commonsense view would be that photography operates as a visual supplement (illustration) and a corroboration (verification) of the text – that photography may help to establish, or at least reinforce, autobiography's referential dimension ... Photography may stimulate, inspire, or seem to document autobiography; it may also confound verbal narrative...[i]n my view, text and image complement, rather than supplement, each other; since reference is not secure in either, neither can compensate for lack of stability in the

other. Because both media are located on the border between fact and fiction, they often undercut just as easily as they reinforce each other. (2000: xxi)

Whilst both Döring and Adams use the term autobiography specifically here, I would argue that the same blurring and signposting of referential instability between text and image is possible in any example of life-writing, including autofiction. In the case of *Caderno*, I shall henceforth interrogate the interaction between the nostalgic childhood photographs and explosive text, specifically investigating the existence of a corroboration or contradiction between the two, in what Rippl has defined as ‘a struggle of representation’ (2018: 152). With *A Costa*, I shall investigate how images illustrating war crimes through the strategy of mock ekphrasis function as a productive tool to compel the reader to bear witness to colonial atrocity.

2.1 Decoding the Family Album in *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais*

My photographic analysis begins in the space of the family, through an exploration of Figueiredo’s childhood photographs.⁴¹ Firstly, it is instructive to observe the changes that the text has undergone from edition to edition from a visual standpoint. As stated in the introduction of this thesis, *Caderno* was first published in 2009 by Angelus Novus, and then re-edited and published in 2015 by Caminho, including new written content and a reconfiguration of the visual elements. The 2009 edition includes seven images: two panoramic shots of Lourenço Marques, three of Isabela alongside others, and two of Isabela alone. By contrast, the 2015 edition contains nine photographs: two of Lourenço Marques, two of Isabela alongside others, one of a public marketplace, and four of Isabela alone. The opening and closing geographical shots of the city, one of Isabela in a group, and one of Isabela alone have been retained from the 2009 edition. The photographs are candid and informal, highlighting their nature as private family mementos; yet, despite this, it should be noted that, save for one, all the images are located outdoors in public spaces. The lone exception remains outside, but is instead in front of her family home (*Caderno*:

⁴¹ Please note that in this chapter, I use the name Isabela to refer to the protagonist within the text and subject of the photographs, and Figueiredo when referring to authorial decisions.

167).⁴² For the most part, the photographs are unrelated specifically to the events depicted verbally within the preceding or proceeding chapters. In this respect, Figueiredo does not self-impose herself, but rather encourages the reader/viewer to link the visuals with her damning narrative.

Let us return to Sontag's idea of collecting. If the reader/viewer begins to "collect" fragments of Figueiredo's childhood world, what type of world would she like us to discover? In such a consideration, it is productive to draw attention to the first of two epigraphs found within the text: a quote from Paul Auster's *The Invention of Solitude* (1982). Auster's work, which is generally accepted as part-memoir part-detective fairy-tale (Barrett 2009: 89), ruminates on feelings of loss and absence in relation to his recently deceased father. In this regard, the thematic similarities with *Caderno* are clear, and furthermore, the works also share intermedial similarities as Auster too includes photographs. However, in one instance, the photo is a trick image. Upon first glance, the photograph shows five men around a table; yet, a closer inspection reveals that each is in-fact his father. In another, a group family shot, the photograph has been cut and then clumsily pieced back together to purposefully, and recognizably, manipulate the depicted scene. There is no doubt that Figueiredo, via her familiarity with Auster's text, was well-acquainted with an image's ability to interact with and intersect a verbal narrative.

Before entering into a close reading of how these photographs depict the visual journey of Figueiredo's complex relationship to colonial Lourenço Marques, consideration should be given to their status as objects which have journeyed themselves. Whilst it is unclear how the images came to be in Portugal, three likelihoods can be plausibly assumed; Figueiredo carried them in her suitcase during her journey from Mozambique; they were brought to Portugal by her parents upon their return ten years later; or sent habitually to relatives, alongside letters detailing the life of a granddaughter overseas. In each of these possibilities, the photographs have been on

⁴² Note that all textual references and quotations will be taken from the 2015 edition, unless stated otherwise.

a precarious geographical journey, ultimately selected by the family to be saved, sent, or carried back to Portugal. The voyage that these images have made is mirrored by Figueiredo's own, and concurrently these images possess the same disruptive testimonial power as Isabela's own conflicting narrative to tell upon arriving back to Portugal.

The geographical passage that the photographs took is but one part of their history, and after their arrival in Portugal considerations should be made as to where they resided, up until Figueiredo decided to include them within her work. In this regard, Filipa Lowndes Vicente encourages us to ask:

Que lugares – metafóricos e literais – ocupam as fotografias que vieram de lá para cá? Estão nas novas casas que as pessoas criaram ou nas casas dos seus descendentes? Arrumadas em gavetas? Misturadas com cartas, documentos, papéis? Em caixas ainda por abrir? Classificadas em álbuns organizados cronologicamente? (2017: 204)

Contemplations such as these prompt wider questions around problematic historical events, such as colonisation, and the individuals who played an active role within them: what spaces are their recollections of such times allowed to occupy presently? On the one hand, by ensconcing evidence of uncomfortable aspects of history, like the family photographs of a white colonial family in Mozambique, not only is a selective historical amnesia reinforced, but also children, like Figueiredo, are denied the right to childhood memories. On the other hand, post-colonial societies must explore methods that enable a reconciliation of such memories whilst remaining respectfully conscious of the systemic abuse that was suffered during colonial periods. The purposeful use of the images within *Caderno* shows how Figueiredo, aware that she cannot retrospectively change her actions, or those of her father, can now exert some form of agency in including these images within her exposing narrative. But can her family photos ever simply be just family photos? The likelihood of finding a definitive answer seems improbable, such are the complexities of a childhood experience, or indeed any human experience, within a colonial space.

The more relevant question with regards to this chapter is perhaps – does Figueiredo *intend* for them to be simply family photographs?

To better unpack this question, the following visual analysis shall draw on two different theoretical frameworks; the first is that of the *punctum*, originated by Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida* (1980), and the second is that of the ‘familial myth’, explored by Marianne Hirsch in *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (1997). In both works, Barthes and Hirsch explore visual representations of their own families: for Barthes an image of his mother as a child, which he discovered a few months after her death, and in the case of Hirsch, images of her family during the Holocaust and post-war period. Through the photograph of his mother, which is never shown, Barthes attempts to “find” her very essence through his filial lens. It prompts the question as to what Figueiredo herself “finds” when she looks at her included images, and indeed the ones she deemed too personal to include. Is she able to recognize any part of herself as she was then, or is this search, as Barthes described in his earlier work *Camera Lucida*, a ‘painful labour’ revolving in a world of ‘almosts’ (1993: 66)?

Given the personal nature of the images within *Caderno*, Hirsch’s comments on the idea of the ‘familial gaze’ are illuminating. As she states:

The dominant ideology of the family, in whatever shapes it takes within a specific social context, superposes itself as an overlay over our more located, mutual, and vulnerable individual looks, looks which always exist in relation to this “familial gaze” – the powerful gaze of familiarity which imposes and perpetuates certain conventional images of the familial and which “frames” the family in both senses of the term...As I see it, the familial gaze situates human subjects in the ideology, the mythology, of the family as institution and projects a screen of familial myths between camera and subject. (1997: 11)

Hirsch illuminates that a discussion of the familial gaze and its corresponding ideology should not be viewed in terms of the ‘hegemonic’ or ‘monolithic’, but rather should emphasise the specific historical, economic, and social context of each unique family life. The photograph itself

sits at the intersection between the myth, understood as the expectation to be upheld, and the actual lived experience. She succinctly observes that ‘photographs can more easily show us what we wish our family to be, and therefore what, most frequently, it is not.’ (1997: 8).

How then can the visual offerings from Figueiredo’s childhood and their projected familial mythology be interpreted, and navigated, to uncover the realities of the lived experience? In the case of Figueiredo, to speak of the familial myth is to concurrently speak of the Portuguese colonial myth. Regarding mythology, Barthes states: ‘it is rather as if I had to read the Photographer’s myths in the Photograph, fraternizing with them, but not quite believing them.’ (1993: 28). A similar reluctance to accept what is visually presented should be exerted over the photographs within *Caderno*, bolstered by the interaction between text and image, whereby Figueiredo enables us to *read* a different rendering of the *Estado Novo* colonial myth. We are thus able to inspect the capability of the written word and, in a return to Adams’ aforementioned phrasing, ‘undercut’ the myth that is visually represented.

Arguably, one of the most haunting qualities of Figueiredo’s photographs is that they are rooted in colonial nostalgia, and yet possess an overarching sentiment of death: the death of her father, her childhood, and of her innocence. On photography and mortality, Hirsch argues that: ‘photography’s relation to loss and death is not to mediate the process of individual and collective memory, but to bring the past back in the form of a ghostly revenant, emphasizing, at the same time, its immutable and irreversible pastness and irretrievability’ (1997: 20). This spectral element of photography is reinforced by Sontag, who commented that ‘those ghostly traces, photographs, supply the token presence of the dispersed relatives...As photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, they also help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure’ (1977: 3). In reference to visual documents then, both Hirsch (1997) and Sontag (1977) view the photograph as one of the ghostliest reminders of a lost world, at times more useful than many oral or written narratives. Indeed, family photographs often bridge the distance between generations through providing ghostly traces of an old world. Upon extending

this reading to Figueiredo, two ghosts emerge; her father, in the literal sense given the publication of the text after his death; and a young Isabela, who cannot return to that time or place.

Yet, it is not just spectres and nostalgia that make Figueiredo's photographs uncomfortable. Turning to Barthes and his renowned framework of the *punctum* is beneficial here. The *punctum*, he argues, is where an element of the photo, separate from its subject-matter, has the ability to prick or wound us; additionally, more often than not this element is within the detail of the image (1993: 26, 43). This is instructive when "reading" the images within *Caderno* which, at first glance, seem somewhat innocent. The shots do not explicitly portray the violence inflicted upon black bodies, the inequality of sexual politics, nor the imposition of a Eurocentric culture with a Mozambican setting, yet they are still haunting. Thus, what is it about the detail within Figueiredo's chosen images that causes a sense of *punctum*? The sections that follow will demonstrate a close reading of each image to explore this question and reveal the colonial and familial myth that underpins them.

2.1.1 A Photographic Curation

As aforementioned in this chapter, the images included within the original Angelus Novus edition and later Caminho edition of *Caderno* were subject to change. Figueiredo's specific curation process itself deserves critical analysis and the reasons for the change in the photographic range is, as of yet, unknown. Despite the personal remembrances that Figueiredo has candidly discussed during the interviews and press surrounding *Caderno*, the photographs have never been mentioned. At first glance, the initial impact of the images is somewhat innocent; yet, upon closer inspection, their immediacy, in combination with the brutal narrative, uncovers an altogether more sinister reality. This juxtaposition prompts the question: what does her writing expose that the photographs hide?

Figueiredo's active decision to add, omit, and conversely retain certain images in the 2015 edition encourages reflection on the use of these photographs as an act of curation. Within

a blog post, Figueiredo states that ‘quando escolhi as fotos para o Caderno havia imagens que considerava lindíssimas e que queria incluir’ (2010); yet, the selection that appears in both editions is certainly far more deliberate than simply a collection of pretty photographs.

Within both the 2009 and 2015 edition, the text opens with the same geographical shot of Lourenço Marques (Fig.1). Through a post (2009b) on her blog *Novo Mundo*, Figueiredo explains that this image was taken by her father of the urban Alto Maé area, her home district, and this more specific geographical detail is listed in the caption of the 2015 edition.⁴³



⁴³ For the post in full see: ‘O Prédio do Alto-Maé, *Novo Mundo*, 22 November 2009.



Just as *Caderno* opens with the city, so it does in closing, and both editions share the same final image of Lourenço Marques (Fig. 2); yet, in comparison with the opening shot, this concluding photo shows an uncaptioned and unnamed area of the capital, taken from a more distant perspective. The photographer is unknown, but it does not seem unreasonable to assume her father as the image's architect. In both instances, the opening and closing image features a timestamp of 1960, three years before Isabela's birth, and the location of Lourenço Marques – and these are the only images with a caption of any kind. This final photograph is situated after Isabela's dreamed return to Mozambique, which explores an emotional and complex reunion with her homeland. In framing her accusatory, and painful narrative with images of her childhood city it becomes evident that, for Figueiredo, everything begins and ends with the colonial capital. Arguably, the more distant closing image suggests an attempt to further herself away from her father's optic of the city.

Within the 2015 edition, there are no images of Isabela and her father together; notably, her mother does not feature at all in either text. Despite the central positioning given to her father within *Caderno's* verbal components– visual representations of him are sparse. This pictorial

absence functions as an interesting line of enquiry within my proposition that Figueiredo's images are a precise curation. In the 2009 edition, his identity can be assumed in the below left photo (Fig. 3) – crouched down, his back turned to the camera, and carrying what seems to be a camera bag.

This image (Fig. 3) is telling when viewed in conjunction with the photo on the right (Fig. 4), found in the 2015 edition. The image on the left shows a photographer, assumed to be Isabela's father, staging the photo of Isabela as the lone subject shown in the later 2015 edition. Figueiredo's removal of the photo on the left, and replacement with that on the right is telling; both shots are taken from the same moment, yet ultimately, she chooses to remove her father's visual representation.



Fig. 3 (2009a: 54)



Fig. 4 (2015: 71)

The curation employed by Figueiredo is not only limited to the images themselves, but also to their placement. Sontag argues that 'because each photograph is only a fragment, its moral

and emotional weight depends on where it is inserted' (1977: 82); thus, the location of the photographs in *Caderno* enables their role as a type of textual supplement that visually opposes the brutal narrative. Fig. 3 is found immediately after the line 'aquele homem não é o meu pai' (*Caderno*: 53) – in reference to the violence that her father inflicted upon his black workers. Fig. 4, however, is located a few chapters later than its Fig. 3 counterpart, following the line: 'Vender mangas ao portão, escondida da minha mãe, era uma desobediência que não compreendia nem resistia a praticar. Era ser o que tinha nascido.' (*Caderno*: 70). This line demonstrates the distance that Isabela felt from her parents, and thus, a further visual distancing ensues through the removal of the image of her father, perhaps creating yet another form of her "disobedience". It should be noted that this sentence is newly included written content within the 2015 edition. However, a true break from a paternal link is impossible here, given that her father is still omnipresent through the gaze of the image, of which he remains the architect. It is most likely that her father, as the dominant head of the family, took the majority of the photographs and was the owner of the family camera, as depicted in Fig. 3; therefore, while her father is visually poorly represented within both texts, the presence of his gaze in-fact renders him omnipresent.

The multiple layers that these two photographs reveal, with her father as the subject of one, and the designer of another, functions as a reminder that, even when candid, photographs are constructs. Therefore, what real knowledge about Isabela's childhood do they offer us? Fig. 3 provides an almost voyeuristic insight into the staging of the shots throughout the text, whereby each is an example of Isabela as a construct of her father's gaze, offering the reader/viewer an insight into the construction and maintenance of the familial myth in visual form. Furthermore, Fig. 3 offers a connected overlapping of a triad of gazes: ours as the spectator, that of the photographer, and Isabela's father as he sets up his own photo. The photographer of Fig. 3 remains unknown, most likely Isabela's mother or relative, and its exposure of another photograph being staged impels the reader/viewer to exert a critical lens over any reading of these images.

Arguably, the reality presented to us through these images is her father's own construct, viewed through his male and colonial gaze. In choosing to replace Fig. 3 where an unknown gaze supersedes that of her father, Figueiredo in fact prioritises the image (Fig. 4) centred upon his viewpoint; in addition, via the removal of her father as a photographic subject himself, his 'to-be-looked-at-ness' (Mulvey 1975: 11) is also revoked. In an attempt to distance herself from her father, Figueiredo in fact reinstates a visual gender imbalance whereby the woman is the object and the man the bearer of the gaze.

When deconstructing her father's gaze further, the motive for his shots seems to be both a personal interest in photography, as mentioned within Figueiredo's blog (2009), and no doubt a parental desire to capture the childhood of his only child; or at the very least, his only legitimate child. These images will most likely have been kept in an album or sent to relatives in Portugal, illustrating the new life that he has established for his family in Mozambique. In sending photographic mementos home, her father would undeniably be attempting to portray a successful lifestyle and achievement of the opportunities that he travelled abroad to seek; in short, a successful performance of the family myth.

2.1.2 The Illusory Community

The images within both the 2009 and 2015 edition are a mixture of the collective and of the individual. The 2009 edition faithfully interchanges between one and the other, first individual, then collective, and repeats as such. However, the 2015 edition exhibits an abrupt shift: the first two images show Isabela in a group, whilst the remaining four display her as the lone subject. Within both editions however, each group shot is uncaptioned and thus collectively complicated by the anonymity of its subjects. The below image (Fig. 5) is the first with human subjects in the 2015 edition, and due to the lack of description Isabela's relationship with those included is unclear to us, in particular the black child and woman. The location is also unknown; however, the surrounding vegetation is often found close to the ocean, therefore, in conjunction with the

second white child seemingly being wrapped in a towel, it can be assumed that they are heading to or returning from the beach.



Fig. 5 (2015: 41)

Of all the photographs within the 2015 edition, the above is particularly unsettling. It is rife with dichotomies, white/black, left/right, smiling/unsmiling, clothed/unclothed, with all the subjects looking into the camera, bar Isabela positioned in the middle. She seems to straddle the two worlds, and the positioning of Eurocentric dress next to the Mozambican cultural norm of a woman wearing a *capulana* and bare chest is striking. When these photos were sent back to the metropole, they, undoubtedly, would reinforce a misunderstanding of cultural differences around nudity and the rationale of the Portuguese “civilising” mission in Africa. And yet, for me, the *punctum* here is that white or black, Portuguese or Mozambican, old or young, all have bare feet, and are rooted to the same earth.

Indeed, when viewed through a racial and gendered lens, the exposed breasts of the unnamed black woman compared to Isabela’s fully covered mother hints at the unequal encounters that women faced within the colonial space; and the abuse, both physical and sexual,

that black women suffered at the hands of white soldiers and colonial settlers, bolstered by the rhetoric of black female sexual promiscuity often stemming from cultural misunderstandings around nudity. Against such a contextual backdrop, the unfaltering stare of the black child and woman into the camera is severe. In this regard, the experienced dichotomy of any photo is evident here, between what we see and what reality is concealed. Whilst the violence inflicted upon the black female body is not made explicit in this photograph, it is hidden in plain sight. The placement of this image within the text is also unsettling, visible immediately before and after Figueiredo's uncomfortable descriptions of the racial and sexual politics within Mozambique.

Save for the geographical images of Lourenço Marques, all the images in both texts do not show any form of caption, and therefore their subjects and locations remain open to interpretation by the viewer. The anonymity of those in all the group shots is particularly uncomfortable when viewed in conjunction with Lydon's work regarding Australian colonialists and photographs of the Aboriginal people, wherein she questions the ethics of displaying images taken with colonised subjects:

Such images were often produced within unequal power relations and were used to exploit or control indigenous people, and there is a risk that displaying the vulnerable black body will reproduce these degrading effects. In acknowledgment of the important role of photographs in constituting Indigenous identity in the present, cultural protocols surrounding the consumption of colonial imagery have come to involve consultation with appropriate community members, and informed permission for their use. (2010: 235)

In reference to captions, Barthes argues that 'the text loads the image, burdening it with a culture, a moral, an imagination' going so far as to denote it as 'parasitic' (1977: 25) due to its ability to direct the viewer to a particular reading. Without a specific informative caption, I would argue that the entire text of *Caderno* functions as a type of caption on the images, with Figueiredo asserting the lens of her narrated experience on the photographs. However, within frantically unequal power relations, the need for an informative caption is not parasitic as Barthes describes,

but instead essential. The lack of it is simply unethical. Such an ethical commentary on the photographic inclusion is also required of Fig. 6 (below). It is of the utmost importance to consider whether any of the black women or children included in the collective shots gave their consent for their photograph to be published in a now internationally read text. Most likely not.



Fig. 6 (2009a: 92)

As within Fig. 5, a visual representation of different childhoods colliding is present within Fig. 6, which shows Isabela at what appears to be her First Holy Communion, surrounded by a group of black and white girls of a similar age. Whilst the majority of the black girls are looking into the camera, only one of the three other white girls faces can be seen, the second is obscured by Isabela, and the fourth, at the front of the group, has her face out of shot.

This image is placed directly after one of the two mentions of photographs within the 2009 edition, where her mother describes items sent in panic to Isabela's grandmother for safekeeping: 'o serviço de chá. A cabeça da máquina de costura. Papéis, fotografias, o teu diploma da primeira comunhão. O serviço de chá chinês.' (*Caderno*: 91). The photograph seems to have smudged writing over the top, perhaps a remnant of the photo album where it was originally held, where details may have been written on the opposite page; perhaps the date, the name of the Church, or of the children. Or indeed ink from a letter, sent to her grandmother, with this photograph included.

Isabela's clothing also deserves critical attention, whereby the First Holy Communion dresses and veils complicitly reinforce a '*Deus, Pátria, Família*' rhetoric. It is worth noting that this image, which is uncomfortable in its display of imported religion and cultural hegemony, did not feature in the 2015 re-issue. Holy Communion aside, Isabela is nearly always dressed in white which offers an element of the aforementioned *punctum* to the images; the whiteness of her skin, and its mirror image in the whiteness of her clothing, seems out of place against the red earth of Mozambique. Figueiredo herself is damning of this:

Vestiam-me e calçavam-me de branco, mandavam-me pisar o raio da terra tão negra e húmida que chiava debaixo dos pés, ou tão vermelha que o verniz ou o couro se polvilhavam de sangue claro. Não havia forma de poupar o meu corpo às manchas da terra, contudo estava proibida de me manchar dela. Não havia forma de me libertarem dessa necessidade de me manter imaculadamente branca. Estou sempre vestida de branco, preocupada em não me sujar. (*Caderno*: 156)

This conflict between the textual and the visual is stark – with the brutality of her words coupled against the supposed innocence of a small child, dressed in white. The use of the word 'sangue' within the quote is particularly striking when viewed in conjunction with the sense of "purity" evoked by her white clothing and the violent realities of a colonial society. The idea of avoiding '[as] manchas da terra' therefore has an undertone of avoiding colonial guilt. Within

colonial settings, clothes are able to stabilize and destabilize categories of race and gender – in maintaining a clear performative Eurocentric dress the power of the Portuguese colonial class is made visually explicit and their societal and political position established. Clothing therefore acts as a consistent colonial boundary, with the difference in colonial power visually embodied, and therefore consistently reinforced.



Fig. 7 (2009a: 26), (2015: 53)

Indeed, as Fanon argues ‘it is by their apparel that types of society first become known...The fact of belonging to a given cultural group is usually revealed by clothing traditions’ (2007: 35). This reinforcement of Western tradition strengthens polarised racial differences, and by extension power differences. Within other colonial projects we have seen the colonial power mimic the dress of the colonized, in relation to the East and West, Bate comments:

In imitating the East, a European colonizes and disrupts the authenticity of indigenous clothing. But making the Orient a self-image also acknowledges that the East has entered the West, disturbing those polarised differences upon which the *image fixe* of Occident/Orient depends: civilised/uncivilised, clean/dirty, and so on. (1993: 87)

Such imitation and mimicry of Mozambican norms are clearly avoided within the photographs presented by Figueiredo. We are presented with another example of European sartorial tradition, and indeed another example of performative clothing, through the image of a young Isabela sitting in a miniature boat (Fig. 7). She is floating in a small boating lake, dressed up as *uma varina de Nazaré*, in a public park. Her costume, that of a little fisherwoman, was obviously brought or sent over from Portugal and is deeply symbolic when considered together with the heavily weighted metaphor of the sea, both within Portuguese collective memory and within colonization itself. It functions both as a symbol of passage, which Figueiredo was forced to make herself, but also of commerce and slavery.

The inclusion of this costume is of particular interest as it highlights the national project developed by the *Estado Novo* to promote the traditional fishing culture within Portugal. A strong maritime ideology was linked to a wider notion of Portuguese nationalism, and as Garrido states:

A integridade do Estado-Nação firmar-se-ia na convergência de dois patrimónios históricos inexpugnáveis: i) a ordem da terra e dos campos – um nacionalismo conservador e telúrico; ii) a ordem colonial-imperial, garante de uma nação subtraída à sua pequenez por meio de assimilações ultramarinas construídas na história – um nacionalismo imperial ou “lusotropical”.⁴⁴ (2008: 111)

At the heart of this project was propaganda around the 1945 legislation *O Plano de Renovação da Marinha de Comércio*, more commonly known as Despacho 100, which aimed to reinvent the

⁴⁴ For information regarding the concept of Luso-tropicalism, created by Gilberto Freyre, see Valentim Alexandre, *Velho Brasil Novas Áfricas – Portugal e o Império (1808-1975)* (Porto, Afrontamento, 2000); 227-229; Ribeiro, Margarida Calafate, “Empire, Colonial Wars and Post-Colonialism in the Portuguese Contemporary Imagination”, *Portuguese Studies*, vol. 18, (2002): 132-214; Santos, Boaventura Sousa, “Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-Identity”, *Luso-Brazilian Review*, vol. 39 (2), (2002): 9-43.

merchant shipping industry. Much of this propaganda focused on traditional aspects of local fishing communities, such as costumes, dances, and beliefs and sought to ideologically establish that Portugal was a ‘grande família das pescas’ (2008: 111). This supposedly innocent maritime cultural nostalgia is here imported into a Mozambican setting juxtaposes with the brutality of Portuguese nautical reminiscence and to further represent colonial domination. By dressing up in traditional Portuguese clothing, a Eurocentric superimposition upon Isabela’s body is evident, most likely placed upon her by her parents, alongside a sartorial performativity; but at a deeper level this cultural importation stresses the success of the *Estado Novo* regime in their reinforcement of a “Portugal uno e indivisível do Minho a Timor” – wherein both the *metrópole* and the *ultramar* were one unified nation.⁴⁵

There seem to be two elements of *punctum* in this image - the first being Isabela’s defiant stare directly into the camera; her stare is made more accusatory when viewed in conjunction with the line which precedes it: ‘não havia olhos inocentes.’ (*Caderno*: 52). This image is the only group shot featured in both editions, and can be found in roughly the same location within the text, in the 2009 edition it sits on page ahead of the 2015, making its positioning all the more deliberate. The second *punctum* is the two young black boys, one in the background, and one in the foreground; looking on, but separated from the little white child and other unidentifiable white subject by a noticeably white fence, a physical portrayal of the separation of the races within colonial Lourenço Marques. Two different childhoods are worlds apart, yet for a moment held within the same space. The undertones of colonial difference, and by extension colonial violence, are hidden below the surface here within a supposedly “public” setting. Whilst within the 2009 edition, all images of Isabela are roughly the same size, within the 2015 edition this photograph is strikingly the largest of all, taking up almost a full page.

⁴⁵ For further details on maritime nostalgia and imperial propaganda by the *Estado Novo*, see Álvaro Garrido, “O Estado Novo e a recriação historicista de uma tradição marítima nacional – Discursos sobre a ‘grande pesca’”, *Revista de História das Ideias*, vol. 28, FLUC, (2008): 327-355.

These images of Isabela amongst others in both texts, although always taken in public sites, explore how the inherent colonial violence ingrained within the public sphere renders any idea of the community as purely imagined. No example of this illusory community is clearer than within the only visual reference of her father found in the 2015 edition. He can be seen in a single photo, crouching down, off centre, at a local market where he seems to be inspecting produce. Crouched low, almost out of sight, her father is caught off-guard, in a type of “in-between moment”. He is the only white person, and it seems, the only man in the photo which shows the marketplace crowded with black women and children. He is depicted as wearing his characteristic ‘camisa de algodão fino, muito branca’ (*Caderno*: 99), and is watched intently by two black boys in the far-right corner, both in baggy clothing and one with protruding ribs, and a woman, far-left, most likely whose produce he is considering. The photograph itself is busy, with multiple encounters and lives being caught on camera, with a large tree at the centre point drawing the eye.



Fig. 8 (2015: 61)

The setting of the market is a thought-provoking one, and the presence of the white colonial man within a space which is historically considered female even more so. The market is

a gendered site which allows not only for female day-to-day actions and interactions to take place, but also for the development of skills and financial independence. For the most part urban spaces within the colonial period in Mozambique were male orientated and populated, and therefore these markets, where usually surplus home-grown produce was sold, acted as one of the few female-centric sites within Lourenço Marques. The subtle presence of Isabela's father, who we know to be dominating both physically and emotionally, seems even more out of place. The photograph presents us with a scene that seems almost banal, however below the surface is an undertone of colonial violence and unequal racial power relations, both economic and sexual. The out-of-place presence of her father viewed next to the tree in the centre creates an uncomfortable duality between nature and violence.

If, as Sontag (1977) believes, photography implies that reality is hidden and must be uncovered - what reality within this image can be discovered? The photographer is unknown to us, but it can be assumed to be a friend or family member and therefore most likely someone exerting a complicit white colonial gaze. In this shot he seems unassuming, yet from the verbal dimension of the text we are aware of the violence and fear that he instils, and the danger that he presents. From a gendered perspective, the presence of her father is insidious and particularly ominous given the focus given to his sexual proclivities within the text: the affairs that he had, the women that he made sexual advances to, both with consent, and without, and the trips he made to local villages where he most likely sired illegitimate children (*Caderno*: 44-45).

Whilst there is no explicit mention of his violence against black women within the text, the references to her father's sexual encounters with black women should be viewed under the realities of the sexual power relations of the time: 'As negras fodiam, essas sim, com todos e mais alguns, com os negros, e os maridos das brancas, por gorjeta, certamente, por comida ou por medo' (*Caderno*: 46). The addition of 'por medo' at the end of the list highlights sexual violence as a gendered racial embodied experience. The display of colonial power through the sexualisation of colonised women and consequent privileging of an imperial European

hegemonic masculinity has been well established within the postcolonial field. Within the Lusophone context, the cultural ideology around Gilberto Freyre's pervasive Lusotropicalism promoted miscegenation as a beneficial strategy, ignoring the racial, social, and gendered inequalities that dominated the colonial arena, underpinned by systemic violence.⁴⁶ In addition to Portuguese "soft colonialism", within the colonial imaginary the hypersexualised black female body was held in conjunction with the sexualisation of the Empire itself.⁴⁷

Through his presence in this photo, we are reminded of his visual pseudo-absence, which feels glaring throughout the text. Given that descriptions of his body dominate the written narrative, this was without doubt an active choice in the curation of the photographs. Although Figueiredo was retrospectively able to denounce her father's racism and actions through the verbal dimension of her work, she seems unable to combine this with his visual photographic representation. Through this absence, Figueiredo seems to seek to protect him in some small way, or perhaps protect herself through the elimination of the painful sight of her father held visually alongside her damning verbal testimony of him.

2.1.3 A Child Alone

All the images included, within both the 2009 and 2015 edition, are taken outdoors; none are from within Isabela's home. Be it an individual or collective shot, they all feature a strong natural backdrop either of vegetation (Fig. 5,8,9), water, or the Indian Ocean (Fig.7, 10). This duality with nature is particularly apparent in the below image (Fig. 9), found only in the 2009 re-issue, and stresses the juxtaposition between Isabela and the Mozambican terrain. It is here that we can return again to Barthes' notion of the *punctum*, where we see the little girl weighed down by a

⁴⁶ For more detail on sexual violence against black women in the Lusophone context, see; Garraio, Júlia, "Framing Sexual Violence in Portuguese Colonialism: On Some Practices of Contemporary Cultural Representation and Remembrance", *Violence Against Women*, vol. 25 (13), (2019): 1558-1577; Ribeiro, Margarida Calafate, "Lusos Amores em Corpos Colonizados: as Mulheres Africanas na Literatura Portuguesa da Guerra Colonial", *Ellipsis*, vol. 4, (2006): 131-47.

⁴⁷ This idea of the sexually available woman was rooted in the iconography around "Rosita" – a Bantu woman who had been brought from Guinea-Bissau to the Oporto Colonial Exhibition in 1934, along with other "indigenous" people from the colonies (Garraio 2019: 1562).

portable radio, her appearance neat, tidy, and controlled, against the unruly grass and, what appears to be, a coconut tree. It is the detail of the cumbersome radio which arguably pricks us and shows an element of the uncomfortable dichotomy of her reality; that of European culture, and of Mozambican nature. The weight of the radio and its cultural connotations pull her down towards the earth, whilst the height of the coconut tree is ascending towards the sky, through the crown of Isabela's head.



Fig. 9 (2009a: 20)



Fig. 10 (2009a: 70), (2015: 81)



Fig. 11 (2015: 129)

The second image featured above (Fig. 10) is the only shot of Isabela alone to be found in both editions, yet, it is inserted in different locations. Slightly older than in previous images, she is shown with her back towards the Ocean and with her eyes closed. This closing of the eyes acts as a reminder of the informal and amateur nature of the photographs. Within the 2009 edition, this photograph is placed immediately after Chapter 20 which depicts her cousin's traumatic return from the war, culminating in the line: 'o meu primo acordou o meu primeiro, estranho desejo, e, uns anos mais tarde, matou-se.' (*Caderno*: 71). By contrast, in the 2015 edition it features much earlier, after Chapter 12, which describes Isabela's conversations with her young black neighbour and the friendship they developed: 'se eu estivesse grávida do preto, o meu pai podia matar-me, se quisesse...e eu tinha medo do meu pai. Desse poder absoluto do meu pai.' (*Caderno*: 80). Despite its insertion in different locations, the photograph is preceded in both cases by violence, the indirect violence of her cousin's suicide, and the direct and immediate violence that she feared from her father.

Within both editions the photographs themselves move chronologically, albeit separate from the events of the written text, and Isabela becomes progressively older – however Fig. 11 (above) is disruptive of this style. She arguably appears younger here than in the image which precedes it (Fig. 10) and, thus, the image partakes in an unusual sense of time travel. This photo, found only in the 2015 edition, is inserted at the end of Chapter 28 which describes Isabela's two cats, Bolinhas and Gimbrinhas, who had to be left behind; the final line reads 'de todos os morticínios daqueles dias, o que mais me tocou foi o dos animais domésticos, por serem os únicos inocentes em tão complexo jogo de poder.' (*Caderno*: 128). Moreover, visually, the image of the little black dog in the arms of the little white girl, is then held in complete contrast to the dog of their black, unnamed, neighbour, who 'era branco de pelo de arame' (*Caderno*: 130) mentioned on the very next page. The image is thus verbally framed by cats and dogs, who Isabela argues are more innocent than herself.

The smiling photograph of a young Isabela holding her dog is juxtaposed with the revelation, nine chapters later, that Pilot was later poisoned by her cousin:

A prima da ti Gusta envenenou-me o Piloto em abril de 1978, e acusou os vizinhos. Foi nas férias da Pascoa. Embalei o meu cão morto. Nunca tinha aninhado um cadáver contro o peito. Tinha os olhos abertos, vidrados, as patas traseiras contorcidas, rasando o focinho, duro, gelado. Segurei-o nos braços, apertei-o, e chorei sobre o seu corpo inocente a minha culpa, dor, perda, impotência e abandono. Enterrei-o por baixo da nogueira que existia na fazenda. Mais tarde, abateram a nogueira. Para que servia um cão? E que importância tinha o cão que a retornada, a que roubara aos pretos, se tinha dado ao luxo de trazer para a metrópole, quer dizer, para Portugal? Se para retornados não havia lugar, para cães de retornados ainda menos. (*Caderno*: 205)

This somewhat brutal account of Pilot's death, and of her Portuguese family's indifference, highlights the stigmatization Isabela encountered as a *retornada*, even by her own family. Pilot's untimely demise seemingly indicates that domestic animals were unsafe on both continents, but more so highlights an additional shift in Isabela's sense of stability, as she loses her only living transitional object from Mozambique. This moment is symbolic through its demonstration that

Isabela is neither able to bring aspects of her old Mozambican life into her new Portuguese life, nor can she return to the home that she once knew. As Vicente comments:

Retornar não é possível e a fotografia é a prova desta impossibilidade. A imagem não serve para regressar, para retornarmos àquele lugar e ao momento enclausurado no espaço do papel, retangular ou quadrado, da fotografia. Ou, desde a revolução digital do quotidiano, para regressar ao ecrã imaterial, ao telemóvel ou ao computador. Serve sim, mas para nos confrontar com a impossibilidade de reviver aquele instante. De alguma vez regressarmos a ele. Aquele espaço e aquele tempo, aqueles segundos em que se conjugaram uma série de fatores, gestos, pessoas, encontros, olhares, presenças, nunca mais se poderá voltar a repetir. Ficou lá. Poderá ser um lugar na memória, mas não um lugar para onde se possa regressar. (2017: 199)

The aforementioned trend of the photographs being situated in public locations offers a stable framework, up until the penultimate image of the 2015 edition, shown below (Fig.12). This image shows Isabela as a young teenager, most likely around the age of thirteen when she returned as a *retornada*, sitting outside her home in Matola and is the first time a glimpse of her physical home is provided. The geographical location of this photograph is revealed by Figueiredo in a recent long-form content piece for *Ípsilon* which follows Figueiredo on her first visit to Mozambique since leaving as a child.⁴⁸ This photograph seems to function as a departure point from her childhood in Mozambique, and signals that her new life in Portugal is about to begin: ‘já era uma mulher’ (*Caderno*: 166). This is the final image of Isabela, and thus acts as a break within the text as the following chapters highlight her journey, arrival, and new life in Portugal. There is a notable visual absence in the representation of this time. We are forced to say goodbye to the smiling child, at home, and this image is held in direct contrast with the painful narrative on the preceding pages where Isabela is separated from her family, entrusted ‘de contar a verdade’ (*Caderno*: 164), or at least the “truth” of white colonial settlers.

⁴⁸ Within this piece she visits sites of her childhood and compares photographs of “then and now” side by side. For the full article, see: ‘Um Lugar Aonde Nunca Fui’, *Público/Ípsilon*, 27 January 2017.



Fig. 12 (2015: 167)

As the subject of this image, Isabela is set at more of a distance than in previous photos, as if we should now view her from a different perspective. This image is also the smallest of all the shots with Isabela as the lone subject. Of note are her glasses, shown for the first time in this penultimate image. Perhaps now, within the final pages of the text, these signify Isabela's ability to see, in some respects, a little clearer the reality of her father's positioning within a colonial setting. Likewise, for the first time in both editions, Isabela is sitting down as opposed to standing up. The background of flora here is consistent with the emphasis on vegetation within all the images, but the bunch of flowers that Isabela is holding adds a feminising symbolism against the "impropriety" of the verbal content of the text. The placement of this photograph seems a little more predictable, stressing that the narrative on Mozambique is over, and a new version of her life is to begin. The lack of photographs after this point arguably reinforces the instability of Isabela's situation, as she arrives in Portugal without her parents, unable to return to her place of birth, and the confusion of identity that is to follow.

To close on the family photographs explored here, I'd like to return to my stated intention of navigating the 'familial myth', as named by Hirsch. We shall never know if, when looking at these photographs, Isabela is able to "find" herself as Barthes sought to do with his deceased mother in *Camera Lucida*. But to us, as the non-familial viewer, the images are linked intrinsically to upholding a sense of family mythology appropriate to the time, constructed by the colonial and familial male gaze imposed upon the images by Isabela's father. It is through their curated content, and placement, alongside the brutality of Figueiredo's text that we are able to better understand the insidious colonial violence that acts as the backdrop to them all. The harshness of the text explodes the visual myth that the photographs portray; be that the use of performative white clothing, reinforcing Eurocentric religious ceremonies, or a sense of Portuguese maritime nostalgia. Or the exposure of the illusory community and its performed inclusivity, shown through the inherent duality of the group images. Indeed, the inclusion of the unnamed black woman and children comments on the necessity for ethical consideration in the reproduction of any image created within unequal power hierarchies, where such unspecified inclusion acts to further perpetuate the cycle of colonial violence.

These candid, family photos of Isabela force us to decipher the visible versus the hidden, and what we, as the viewer, are comfortable to both look at and overlook. Whilst we can see the smiling, windswept child by the beach, we are also privy to the anxious thoughts of a colonial child, and the violence that surrounds her childhood reality. Often despite the smile, the young, white, Isabela seems isolated, a child held within a complex and segregated society, and the nostalgic photographs are inconsistent against the constant mental battle played out in the pages of the text.

The use of these photographs within the autofictional text show us what Döring has named 'the surface self' (2006: 74). The previous chapter of this thesis argued that within autofictional texts authors are able to explore past versions of themselves via a separate self that

no longer exists. Such a strategy seems to additionally be at play here within the intermedial elements of *Caderno*; within the text there seem to in fact be three separate selves – author Isabela, textual Isabela, and visual Isabela.

The viewer/reader must therefore combine the photographs with her narrative, and to look beyond the visual Self that is portrayed. The photos do not show the violence that her father inflicted upon his black workers, or the gruesome scenes she describes around the fight for independence, nor do the images have a harrowing violent, dehumanising, or sexual element that we often see with images of colonial periods. And yet, the photos are uncomfortable. Uncomfortable in their normality as they are held alongside the violence exposed within the verbal dimension of the text. As the viewer we straddle the line between happy childhood photographs, our awareness of the politics of the time and Isabela's narrated experience. We attempt to reconcile aspects of childhood memory, many of which are common for all of us, with aspects of a disturbing colonial society.

Yet, the shift from group images to those of Isabela alone speaks to another negation of the familial myth – the unity of the family itself. Indeed, her sense of abandonment and solitude is palpable within the photographs. The very fact that there are no images of her situated in Portugal speaks to Figueiredo's own journey working through her own blurred identity. Arguably the transition of these particular photographs from the private into the public speaks to a need of finding utility for such visual memories - to put them to work in unpacking not only her own familial myth, but the Portuguese myth of decolonization in general. In the case of Figueiredo, the intermedial blend of her text, and its consistent destabilising of the visual by the verbal, functions successfully to shatter the deceit of colonial mythology and indeed the deceit by her own family unit.

2.2 War-Time Photography in *A Costa dos Murmúrios*

The following section examines the provocative use of photographs within Lúcia Jorge's *A Costa* and proposes that illustrating visuals of war crimes through a strategy of mock ekphrasis functions as an instructive tool to compel the reader to bear witness to acts of colonial atrocity. As such it casts a spotlight on violence committed by the Portuguese during the Colonial War – notably the Wiriyamu Massacre. Despite the politically charged nature of such a reference, for the most part the importance of the images in the text has gone undiscussed by critics. The analysis that follows observes how the intermedial elements of *A Costa* reinforce the text's entrenched thematic demonstration of violence and incite a directive to look. This command to look directly contradicts the lack of actual visual evidence available from the Colonial War period.

Paulo de Medeiros states that the war photos shown to Evita can be considered as 'haunted ghosts' (2002a: 167); the following analysis aims to elaborate on this viewpoint. The war photographs do, indeed, hover through the text like a ghostly presence offering depictions of death; they are hidden away in a safe, and the key that Helena uses to unlock it is itself concealed behind a mask. A process of unmasking is thus required to peel back the various layers of uncomfortable war-time realities. My evaluation is based around four pivotal scenes in the novel: the first features within 'Os Gafanhotos', where two unnamed newlyweds are directed by a wedding photographer (*A Costa*: 10). In the second, Evita is shown incriminating war photos by fellow military wife Helena exposing the war atrocities partaken by their respective husbands (*A Costa*: 133-35); the photos provide a dual revelation to Evita, illustrating the changed nature of her husband Luís Alex, and the brutal reality of the Colonial War. In the third, Evita discusses these photographs retrospectively with an injured soldier named Góis (*A Costa*: 150-54), gaining detail on the violence. The fourth is the later burning of these photographs by Forza Leal and Luís Alex to destroy evidence of their involvement in war crimes against civilians (*A Costa*: 254).

2.2.1 Bearing Witness to Atrocity

The critical importance of visual aids for witnessing atrocity is particularly complicated in relation to the Colonial War, as the number of photographs available is incredibly limited. Medeiros offers a clear insight into the minimal number of photographs available to Portuguese society that depict the Colonial War, estimating the total amount at around 500.⁴⁹ He argues:

Whatever reflection has taken place on the war it has been primarily effected through fictional narrative... Given the scarcity of studies of war photographs in general and the resistance to reflect on the representation of the Portuguese colonial war in particular, photographs of this war appear to have simply been forgotten. (2002b: 93)

Without a doubt the lack of visual records from the period complicates any analysis of Colonial War photographs themselves, including the fictional ones in *A Costa*, as there are limited points of reference.

The need for images when discussing war atrocity is undeniable, given that, due to the nature of atrocity being so far removed from normality, visual proof is almost always required in order for brutal acts to be communicated. Thus, when we view images of atrocities, our proximity to them mentally and emotionally, rather than geographically or historically, becomes more pronounced – as we become witnesses of the depicted crime. Through the viewing of the photographs, Evita's role undergoes a shift, as she now becomes a witness, albeit from a distance. The complexities of bearing witness to such events are rife. Indeed to bear witness is, as Felman contends, 'not merely to narrate but to commit oneself, and to commit the narrative, to others: to *take responsibility*, in speech, for history or for the truth of an occurrence, for something which, by definition, goes beyond the personal' (Felman & Laub 1992: 204). Jorge comments on this through the voice of Evita. After viewing the photographs of war crimes her husband was involved in, she explores the question of active ignorance:

⁴⁹ For a full breakdown of the location of these photographs see: Paulo de Medeiros, "War Pics: Photographic Representations of the Colonial War", *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 39, 2 (2002): 91-106.

Pergunta-me se não tive conhecimento directo. Não directamente, apenas conheci algumas roupas sujas — disse depois Eva Lopo. E para quê conhecer directamente? Querer desconhecer não é uma cobardia, é apenas colaborar com a realidade mais ampla e mais profunda que é o desconhecimento. (*Costa*: 130)

Indeed, throughout time the act of bearing witness has become somewhat synonymous with truth-telling, and Eva is henceforth forced to decide how she wishes to depart from her chosen ignorance. Barbie Zelizer, in her seminal work *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory Through the Camera's Eye*, argues that photographs are crucial in the act of bearing witness, however she states:

While photos are important tools for constructing moral consensus, particularly about events newly named or classified in public discourse, they tend not to be displayed until the cultures and nations involved are prepared to call the atrocities by names. (1998: 11)

Thus, to tell the truth about such events, society must be prepared to accept responsibility for war crimes and atrocities; we must therefore question whether Portuguese society at the time of the novel's 1988 publication was able to do so. Arguably the lack of accessible military photographs from the Colonial War period has impacted the collective narrative and remembrance around the process of decolonization. Undeniably a lack of photographs acts to hinder collective remembrance, as without visual aids it is challenging to convert testimony of atrocity or the real nature of war into what Zelizer calls 'the horror and shock of recognition' (1998: 138). To problematize this further is the fact that, within the context of the Colonial War, there is very little testimony on war atrocity that has made its way into the public sphere at all, bar the well-known example of Wiriyamu to be discussed in due course.

A *Costa*, in fact, opens with photography. The short story 'Os Gafanhotos' foregrounds an unnamed colonial couple as they pose for a series of wedding photos, directed by a similarly unnamed photographer. The photographer captures candid moments, but also, more significantly, constructs them: 'pressuroso, o fotógrafo pediu que o noivo tomasse a noiva nos seus braços e a

levantasse à altura do peito, junto da vedação que impedia que as pessoas, uma vez debruçadas caíssem ao Índico. Era majestoso.’ (*A Costa*: 10). This mimicking of falling into the ocean contrasts with the black locals found drowned in the sea, after being poisoned by methanol. Yet, the photographer is not concerned with documenting the multiple black bodies on the beach, but rather with capturing a fabricated picture of happiness centred around the white colonial duo. The indifference displayed by the wedding photographer in understanding the cause of the deaths of the black locals is shared by the rest of the wedding guests, though contrasts with the later arrival of a reporter from the *Hinterland* newspaper. The journalist attempts to photograph the tragedy, but is forcibly removed by Forza Leal and Luís Alex; later, his resulting death at the hands of Luís Alex is implied, but unconfirmed.

Within ‘Os Gafanhotos’, Jorge’s juxtaposition between the reporter and the wedding photographer begs the question: if not documented, whose stories actually took place? And by extension whose testimonies have meaning? Much has been written on Jorge’s critique of History and historical processes;⁵⁰ and the link here seems clear in that the opening description of the photographer represents the constructed narratives of History which prioritise some and exclude others. The inclusion of the wedding photographer nods to Jorge’s critique of censorship of Colonial War narratives, at both a verbal and visual level. Whilst these wedding photographs function as the opening layer to the “family album” of the couple, the photographic layers that are exposed later in the novel are, by contrast, horrific.

⁵⁰ For a detailed analysis see: Paula Jordão, “*A Costa dos Murmúrios*: Uma Ambiguidade Inesperada”; Paulo de Medeiros, “Memória Infinita”; Hilary Owen, “Back to Nietzsche: The Making of an Intellectual Woman”, *Lídia Jorge: In Other Words, Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies*, 2 Spring (1999); Helena Kaufman, “Reclaiming the Margins of History in Lídia Jorge’s “*A Costa dos Murmúrios*”, *Luso-Brazilian Review*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Summer, 1992): 41-49; Ana Paula Ferreira, “Lídia Jorge’s “*A costa dos murmúrios*”: History and the Postmodern She-Wolf”, *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, Año 45, No. 2 (Dec., 1992): 268-278; Maria Irene Ramalho Sousa Santos, “Bondoso Caos: *A costa dos murmúrios* de Lídia Jorge”, *Colóquio/Letras* 107 (Jan-Fev., 1989): 64-7.

2.2.2 Unmasking Reality

Medeiros argues that ‘Jorge’s writing is a form of resistance both to the systemic oppression and inequality that characterizes Portuguese society, and to the processes of masking that reality.’ (2011: 93). I would argue that, as part of this resistance, Jorge employs a metaphoric *unmasking* through the strategy of mock ekphrasis. I shall use the below passage as a starting point to demonstrate such a reading:

Era contudo um cheiro poderoso – o de coiro – que exalava mais forte, engolindo todos os outros, o que não admirava, porque o chão estava atapetado de peles de zebra, e as paredes estavam enfeitadas de setas, máscaras e tambores. O tecto tinha um desenho de forma estrelada construído em setas. Helena de Tróia começou a transpirar sobre o lábio - <<Chiu! Este é o canto do Jaime. Diz o Jaime que tudo isto tem um alto valor antropológico>>. Depois aproximou-se da secretária que ocupava o local onde se esperaria ver um animal embalsamado. Subiu à secretária, alcançou a boca duma máscara, meteu lá o dedo, e com a ponta da unha, retirou uma chave. (*A Costa*: 130)

Of particular interest to me here is the mask, assumed to be tribal, and the fleeting mention of a key hidden within its mouth. This key unlocks the safe concealing the incriminating photographs which depict the war atrocities in which both Evita and Helena’s husbands were involved. I would therefore question, as the starting point of this discussion – what, and indeed who, does Jorge unmask through the discovered photographs? Through such a process of unmasking, what narrative is told, through the mask’s very mouth, regarding the reality of the Colonial War, and of her husband?

To fully understand the symbolism of this mask in particular, an awareness of the culture of the Mozambican Makonde people is instructive. The Makonde tribe is well known for their artistic production, specifically wood carvings and most famously, the *mapiko* mask. This mask represents the return of ancestral spirits to earth, and is usually worn by a spiritual leader during coming of age ceremonies for adolescent boys and girls (Ndege 2007: 52). It is helmet-like in form, covering the upper half of the wearer’s head, who looks out through the mouth of the mask. Given my speculations on the specific geographical location of Forza Leal and Luís Alex’s

military operations, it may not be too outlandish to suggest that the mask in Forza Leal's office is one such *mapiko* mask, collected as booty from his military exploits. Within Mozambican culture in general, but particularly in the Northern Makonde provinces, it is anathema to reveal the identity of a mask wearer, however, this taboo of unmasking is arguably reversed within Forza Leal's study. Furthermore, where the wearer of the mask sees via the mouth, a similar process is constructed by Jorge as they key which enables Evita to see the war crime imagery is collected from the mouth itself.

Jorge's use of mock ekphrasis within this process of unmasking war atrocities is thought-provoking in its ability to reposition the male imperial visual culture which sits at the heart of the images. Such a transposition allows Jorge, through Eva, to reclaim the gaze and reveal the horrors that the photographs depict. Through the rhetorical device of mock ekphrasis, Eva highlights the elements of colonial domination within the photographs which are often under looked within Western traditions of vision.

Before beginning a close reading of Jorge's mock ekphrasis of classified military photographs depicting civilian atrocities, it is helpful to give contextual background to the aforementioned Mozambican war crime committed at the hands of the Portuguese army: the Wiriyamu Massacre.

2.2.3 The Wiriyamu Massacre

Throughout *A Costa*, we can roughly situate various events within different zones of Mozambique; the Stella Maris hotel in Beira, and a series of military operations within the North of the country, near Mueda. The testimony given by Góis regarding the military photographs shown to Evita enables a more detailed assembly of the military unit's geographical movements. One of the photographs Evita views is captioned as the 'Zona dos Paus' (*A Costa*: 132), or Zone of the Whip, a nickname given to the harsh landscape of northern Mueda due to its prickly 'whip-like' vegetation which made navigation difficult (Cann 2015: 85). This 'zona' included Sagal and

Diaça in the north, Nangololo in the south, Miudumbe in the east, and Mueda in the west, and was the main site of the *Operação Nó Górdio*, or Operation Gordian Knot, led by the notorious Portuguese General, Kaúlza de Arriaga.⁵¹ Inspired by American tactics in Vietnam, Arriaga was well versed in counter-insurgency strategies and, in 1970, launched the largest, and most costly, offensive campaign of the Colonial War. This seven month-long offensive involved paratroopers, commando, naval, and specialist units, and its ultimate failure added to the sentiments of discontent that fuelled the Carnation Revolution. (Dhada 2015: 41).

The later conversation between Evita and Góis discusses three locations⁵²: the river Sinhéu, which heads towards Diaça (*A Costa*: 150), the river Litinguinha, near Nangade (*A Costa*: 150), and Nancatári, a village known to have been targeted by the *Operação Nó Górdio*⁵³ (*A Costa*: 134) – all are close to Mueda, in the northern Cabo Delgado district. These explicit geographical references make it evident that Jorge is implying that Luís Alex, Forza Leal, and the other members of their military unit are involved in the *Operação Nó Górdio*. Whilst I would argue, and have elsewhere within this thesis, that the name Forza Leal acts as an inversion of ‘força’ and ‘leal’, the insertion of the letter ‘z’ is reminiscent of the unusual name of General Kaúlza. It is evident that Jorge is making a comparison here between the two figures, with Forza Leal mirroring Kaúlza de Arriaga’s reputation for military brutality and aggression.

In July and August of 1970, a series of military operations were launched as part of the operation in the northern region of Cabo Delgado in order to seize FRELIMO bases near Mueda. The aim was to stop FRELIMO infiltration across the Tanzanian border. The Cabo Delgado offensives were later followed by a collection of operations in the western region of Tete, which

⁵¹ Arriaga has written numerous texts on his version of events during the Colonial Wars, see: *Coragem Tenacidade e Fé* (Lourenço Marques: Empresa Moderna, 1973), *África: a vitória traída* (Lisbon: Intervenção, 1977), *Guerra e política: em nome da verdade os anos decisivos* (Lisbon: Edições Referendo, 1987).

⁵² A map showing the listed areas can be found in Appendix 2.

⁵³ For photographs depicting the military presence in Nancatári, and involvement in *Operação Nó Górdio*, see João Azevedo, ‘Nancatari’, *Dos Combatentes da Guerra do Ultramar*. Blog. (n.d.).

had become a FRELIMO stronghold (Opello 1974: 32). The now infamous Wiriyamu massacre took place in 1972 during the offensives within Tete. The war crimes were exposed through an article in *The Times* published 10th July, 1973, by a Father Adrian Hastings, who recounted the brutal massacre of Mozambican civilians at the hands of the Portuguese army in a small town near Tete called Wiriyamu, or Wiliamu.⁵⁴ The article itself makes for a deeply disturbing read, and describes an unthinkable level of violence and cruelty shown towards men, women, and children.

The global outrage that followed, accompanied by denial by the Portuguese authorities and General Arriaga, has led many details of the massacre to remain obscured. To counter this, historian Mustafah Dhada has dedicated ample scholarship to the piecing together of testimony and facts regarding the massacre. In particular, his book *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964-2013* (2015) remains a crucial source of information for anyone looking to deepen their understanding of the violence that took place.⁵⁵ He argues that the massacre in fact took place in five nearby settlements, Chaworha, Wiriyamu, Juwua, Riacho, and Djemusse,⁵⁶ with the Portuguese air force bombing the five sites, and then soldiers killing the remaining inhabitants with varying degrees of brutality. The death toll ultimately came to around 400 civilians, all massacred in the name of *Operação Marosca*, or Operation Entrapment.

Dhada's book on Wiriyamu mentions *A Costa* on four occasions, in reference to secondary literature which discusses the massacre. Curiously, he centres on the film first, which he states was 'inspired' by Wiriyamu, and only subsequently the novel (2015: xvi, 19-20), which

⁵⁴ To view the article in full, see: Adrian Hastings, 'Portuguese massacre reported by priests', *The Times*, 10 July 1973.

⁵⁵ For more information on the Wiriyamu Massacre, see: Adrian Hastings, *Wiriyamu: My Lai in Mozambique* (London: Search Press, 1974); Felícia Cabrita, "Os Mortos Não Sofrem", *Revista Expresso* (5 December 1992); "Wiriyamu, Viagem ao Fundo do Terror", *Revista Expresso* (21 November 1998); *Massacres em África* (Lisbon: A Esfera dos Livros 2008); Mustafah Dhada, *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964-2013* (London: Bloomsbury Press Academic, 2015); *The Wiriyamu Massacre: An Oral History, 1960-1974* (London: Bloomsbury Press Academic, 2020).

⁵⁶ From here on my use of the term Wiriyamu Massacre should be seen to encompass all five villages.

he argues does not cover any new ground regarding the massacre and is therefore worthy of little attention. It is simplistic to suggest that the film in its entirety was inspired by the massacre, and to do so ignores the layered commentaries on censorship, History, and trauma found within the film. Regarding the text itself, the atrocity Jorge depicts is carried out near Mueda in the North, as opposed to the Wiriyamu Massacre near Tete in the West, resulting therefore, in a geographical inconsistency. Whilst I agree that *A Costa*, and the film by extension, do make allusions to the Wiriyamu massacre; to draw attention to war crimes and atrocities against civilians in general, a specific commentary on Wiriyamu in particular does not function by any means as its *raison d'être*.

I would argue, in fact, that the geographical displacement of the atrocities shown within *A Costa* functions to suggest the likelihood of other massacres similar to that of Wiriyamu that could have taken place across Mozambique, the details of which may never come to light. Indeed, Jorge makes specific reference to Wiriyamu and other civilian massacres in the final pages of the text:

O tempo não conta para as aves. Dentro de poucos anos, exactamente terão tempo de pôr seis ou sete ovos - será esse o cheiro que se desprenderá de Wiriamu, Juwau, Mucumbura, será esse o cheiro que se desprenderá dos abatidos, dos queimados, dos que ficaram a arder ainda vivos, aqueles que hoje têm a escassa memória numa escultura de vidro, espetada na terra, como um pau, com meia dúzia de ossos lá metidos para exemplo. Erro do escultor! A escultura exacta deveria ser um amplo caldeirão de fezes evoluindo-se permanentemente, não como símbolo, mas como matéria real do nosso mais amplo e subtil sofrimento... passados vinte anos, não desejaria voltar a ver o jornalista senão para lhe perguntar se estaria de acordo comigo quanto à escultura de massacre de Wiriamu, essa hipótese de um caldeirão de fezes reais. (*A Costa*: 250-51)

The mention of Mucumbura relates to another massacre in the region of Tete throughout the year 1971 where men, women, and children were executed and thrown into mass graves, with huts burnt to the ground.⁵⁷ The references made to these events, both specifically, and to the idea of massacres in general, critiques the pervasive culture of violence and brutality against civilians

⁵⁷ For more information on the Mucumbura Massacre, see: Dhada (2015, 2020).

that dominated much of the Portuguese military presence during the *Operação Nó Górdio* and the Colonial War period.

2.2.4 Deathly Photographs

The analysis that follows will offer a piece-by-piece consideration of the main photographs shown to Evita by Helena, as she encounters them – beginning with her moment of realisation around Luís Alex's involvement (*A Costa*: 131).

Jorge's illustration of the war crimes within the photographs does seem to be loosely based on some of the tactics carried out within accounts of the massacres around the Wiriyamu triangle. One such tactic was for soldiers to throw grenades into huts, or set them alight, whilst civilians were locked inside – a similar act is referenced by Jorge in the photographs: 'eram imagens de incêndios, aldeias em chamas, sem qualquer referência [...] agora no meio das palhotas incendiadas havia soldados correndo.' (*A Costa*: 133). Additionally, there is a mirroring of the act of decapitation, which is mentioned in the initial account of the Wiriyamu Massacre given by Father Hastings:

e sobre um dos telhados da palha, um soldado com a cabeça dum negro espetada num pau. Viam-se vários corpos sem cabeça à beira dum chitala, um bando de galinhas avoejava sobre eles na mesma fotografia. Helena passou. Helena tomou a seguinte e mostrou o soldado em pé, sobre o caniço. Via-se nitidamente o pau, a cabeça espetada, mas o soldado que a agitava não era um soldado, era o noivo. (*A Costa*: 133)

Without doubt bodily dismemberment and mutilation, particularly decapitation, evokes strong responses of fear and horror. It is undeniably an act of not only extreme violence, but also of concentrated supremacy and domination. When commenting upon on Colonial War photographs, which also include a decapitated black male body, Medeiros states:

If these photographs avoid romanticizing death on the one hand, they, on the other, fetishize it. Silent yet eloquent witnesses to the monstrous brutality of the colonial war,

the cut off heads of the killed black men function as fetishized objects of the soldiers' desire to control the African people, to dehumanize it, and to display their assumed superiority. (2002b: 105)

The brutality of decapitation disallows the victim a single, united resting place, whilst functioning as a retributive warning to others; in doing so, the severed head becomes further fetishized and dehumanised, functioning as a prop within the spectacle of colonial domination. Confronted with the man that Luís Alex has become through the visual evidence of his participation in such a vicious act, Evita is faced with an irreparable rupture in their marriage.

During her exposure to the images by Helena, Evita witnesses three different trajectories: that of a black male prisoner, the grandmother or great-grandmother to unspecified guerilla fighters, and a new-born baby. The thematic issue of black corporeal fetishization within the photographs is continued through an image series depicting an unnamed black man. The man features in three photographs; armed in the first, unarmed in the second, and brutally lynched in the third:

Helena faz questão de mostrar atrás, mas logo a seguir o homem negro dos calções esfarrapados aparece a ser amarrado pelo pescoço numa espécie de pano. <<É a camisa dele>> explica. A fotografia seguinte representa uma árvore alta, sem folhas, como se realmente queimada, e um grande galho donde pende o negro, pelo pescoço, baloiçando sem camisa. A seguinte tem a mesma árvore, o mesmo galho, o mesmo negro, mas agora não tem nem calças nem camisa. O negro baloiça no galho da árvore, rodeado por soldados. Helena segura a fotografia. <<Disse o Jaime que as calças dele escorregaram e que ejaculou para cima do capim, em frente dos soldados portugueses! O Jaime diz que nunca mais acontece – agora vão amarrar sempre as calças de quem for enforcado, para se pouparem a cenas dessas!>> disse ela. (*A Costa*: 133)

Historically, pejorative depictions of the black body have been used to reinforce a rigid dichotomy between white and black races. The black male body is inferior, violent, and lazy so that the white male body is categorically not. Through this dichotomy, the corresponding dominant culture creates a paradigm in which the black body can be rendered an object of entertainment, utilized by the white community to imbue pleasure.

The history of lynching is traditionally rooted in the more general, informal act of public executions by a collective. Yet over time, due to the voracity of racial lynchings in the USA post the Civil War, the execution style has generally become associated with death by hanging, most commonly from a tree. Undeniably at the heart of racial lynching is the notion that it allows white people to find revelry in the physical dismantling of black people. This revelry is made uncomfortably clear in Helena's description of the hanging, as is a sense of shock when the deceased body loses control of bodily functions, and ejaculates (*A Costa*: 133).

The indication that the ejaculating black body is more distressing than the spectacle of a public hanging stresses the desire for black corporeal control by the white man even in death. The uncontrollable bodily functions of the cadaver are seen as an affront to the cultural norms of the Portuguese soldiers. That this should be the offensive element of the photograph highlights the cruelty which surrounds it. This shock is later reinforced through Evita's conversation with Góis and his wife (*A Costa*: 153).

The soldiers impose a voyeuristic gaze on the scene of the hanged man, and establish that which Amy Louise Woods calls 'the spectacle of lynching'. She argues:

The rituals, the tortures, and their subsequent representations imparted powerful messages to whites about their own supposed racial dominance and superiority. These spectacles produced and disseminated images of white power and black degradation, of white unity and black criminality, that served to instil and perpetuate a sense of racial supremacy in their spectators. Lynching thus succeeded in enacting and maintaining white domination not only because African Americans were its targets but also because white southerners were its spectators. (2011: 2)

Although conducting her analysis within a US context, the sentiment is no less relevant to the Portuguese and Mozambican example, and prompts the question: how is this violent spectacle amplified when immortalised in photographic form? Within the group of spectating soldiers, this photograph not only captures the visual moment, but also the nostalgic desire to immortalise, and

share, perversely “formative” homosocial military moments. If lynching as a public spectacle illustrates a type of fandom activity, rooted in a fetishized rendering of the black body as a site of enjoyment, then the photographs taken of such events demonstrate the material component of such enjoyment. As Shawn Michelle Smith states: ‘photography documented lynching but also played a role in orchestrating it. Making a photograph became part of the ritual, helping to objectify and dehumanize the victims, and, for some, increasing the hideous pleasure.’ (2007: 16). These photographs display heinous civilian atrocities, but through their nature as trophy photographs act as an object of the atrocious in and of themselves.

The deceased black male body is thus viewed as a fetishized object of humiliation, and, therefore, an object to be photographed. This functions in stark contrast to the death of Singer, one of the ‘limpezas’, over whose dead body Luís Alex is seen to be kneeling, weeping with his head in his hands (*A Costa*: 133). This behaviour is, unsurprisingly, critiqued by Góis, finding such emotion unbecoming for a military man and a sign of unparalleled weakness (*A Costa*: 150).

The horrific treatment of the lynched black man is not the only example of an uncomfortable fetishization depicted within the photographs, and the following analysis explores such a treatment of ‘a velha das setas’ (*A Costa*: 134) who Evita encounters as Helena shifts from one photograph to another: ‘...e logo na fotografia seguinte, surgia uma velha ao lado de Forza Leal. Dava-lhe pelo cotovelo, e a *ndona* do beijo era do tamanho dum prato.’ (*A Costa*: 134). As with the lynched black man, Evita is shown a series of photographs in which ‘a velha das setas’ features as the main subject; in front of an army truck next to a stack of arrows (*A Costa*: 134), and finally, sitting against a wall outside the Mueda Administration building and army barracks (*A Costa*: 134).

Treating the subjects of the photographs as characters in an episodical fiction, Helena comments ‘<< Nunca se fica a saber o que acontece concretamente à velha das setas >>’ (*A Costa*: 134), true perhaps for Helena, but not for Evita. The later testimony of soldier Góis, whom Evita

visits in his hotel room after he is discharged on medical grounds, provides further insight into the trajectory and nicknaming of the old woman. Góis states:

<<Vês? A Evita compreende, e sabe da velha das setas. Fomos ou não fomos bons? Fomos ou não fomos magnânimos? Imagina a puta da velha entrincheirada lá quase para o paralelo do Ingolonga, atrás da porta da palhota, a deitar setas. Uma delas foi espetar-se no peito dum furriel. O furriel voltou com um buraco no peito para Mueda, que a malta não sabia como se tirava uma seta. A malta atirou-se à filha da puta da seta e vá de puxar. Tanto puxou que largou, e deixou um buraco do feitio dum punho. Desgraçou o gajo todo.>> (A Costa: 153)

This episode equally provides understanding into the nature of warfare encountered by the Portuguese soldiers, who were ill-equipped to encounter the military tactics used by the Mozambican guerrilla fighters.⁵⁸ The harrowing testimony of Góis continues:

<<E a puta da velha, da cor duma batata, lá dentro com mais de cinquenta setas para fazer frente à malta. Pois sabem o que o meu comandante fez? Aquele homem tem piada, é um fino. Mandou coroar a velha com umas lianas e fê-la entrar em Mueda em cima dum Unimog como se fosse rainha. Repare que o meu comandante de companhia tem muita noção de honra, e uma velha que enfrente gente da tropa armada até às unhas, com setas, e com o neto morto lá dentro da palhota, e que consegue enfiar uma seta daquelas no peito dum furriel, merece ser coroada e condecorada, pertença a que sociedade pertença. O capitão Forza tirou dezenas de fotografias junto a velha. Queria que se erguesse à velha um monumento feito de ervas. Por vezes o meu capitão também é maluco. Tá bem? E teve pena de ter a entregar à Administração. No dia seguinte infelizmente, não havia mais velha.>>

<<Não foi para o aldeamento?>>

<<Não foi. A velha era avó ou bisavó de guerrilheiros, a velha sabia de mais. Aquilo deram-lhe uma caqueirada mais forte e pronto. Estenderam a puta da velha coroada!>> (A Costa: 154)

This tactic of humiliation enforced by Forza Leal has clear biblical undertones: the crown of ‘lianas’ forced upon her, the journey into Mueda sat atop the military jeep “throne”, and her consequent death at the hands of the administration seem to replicate another familiar image; the

⁵⁸ A biblical reading is possible here, wherein ‘a velha das setas’ functions as an inverted Saint Sebastian figure, who was tied to a tree and shot with arrows as punishment for converting fellow Romans to Christianity. Sebastian did not die however, and was later healed by Saint Irene of Rome.

crown of thorns placed upon Christ by his captors prior to his passage to the hill of Golgotha, otherwise known as the Way of the Cross, where he would ultimately face his crucifixion. The mockery that Christ endured, hailed as the “King of the Jews”, is echoed by the ridicule faced by ‘a velha das setas’, whereby she is treated as a fictionalized queen. However, whilst the humiliation of Christ was immortalised within paintings, in *A Costa* the soldiers further their ridicule of ‘a velha das setas’ by capturing her treatment on film. This provides a second example of the trophy photography and its function as a keepsake of the Mozambican “exotic” that soldiers encountered during active service. The mockery that ‘a velha das setas’ suffered is shown through the exoticised lens of the Portuguese soldier surrounding her bodily tattoos and traditional *ndona* lip plug:

<<E o Luís? Também se fotografou com a velha das setas?>>

<<O Luís e todos nós. Nunca se tinha visto uma velha com uma *ndona* tão grande agarrada ao beijo. Tatuada que parecia um tapete. Quem não tirou?>> (*A Costa*: 154)

As previously mentioned, the photographs and Góis’ testimony offer indications about the specific geographical locations within *A Costa*. This is the sole photograph with a caption, stating the nickname given to the woman, ‘a velha das setas’, and the location of Nancatári. Nancatári is a village situated near Mueda, in the Makonde Plateau in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, home to the Makonde people, to whom Jorge also makes multiple references within the text itself. The depiction of traditional tattoos and *ndona* reinforce the location of the soldiers’ operations as within the Makonde Plateau as such body adornments are typical of the region. On traditional Mozambican body art, Schneider states that the Makonde tribe are known for displaying the most elaborate body tattoos of all Mozambican tribes and unlike others, where tattoos depict social status and rank, amongst the Makonde they follow family tradition (1973: 27). However, it is the *ndona* lip plug, worn by women, that is the most distinctive feature of the tribe where it is seen as a sign of beauty and tribal identity (1973: 30). The obsession with photographing ‘a velha das setas’, alongside Góis’ description of her as ‘um tapete’ stresses the

Othering of Mozambican tribal culture and norms by the military unit as superficial and decorative.

The exoticization that is evident within both sets of trophy photos demands questions as to the sinister purpose of the photographs themselves. Was it not for their destruction, where would these images have ended up? Most likely the images would become a pseudo-souvenir of the “exotic” spectacles witnessed in Africa shown to relatives or friends back in Portugal - that is, of course, if the soldiers were fortunate enough to return alive.

The fetishization of Mozambican culture is further portrayed through Forza Leal’s study, in which Helena opens the safe that contains the boxes of clandestine photographs. Mozambican culture is viewed merely as an object to be collected, stored, and ultimately exchanged as an artefact of value. Indeed, when showing the images of ‘a velha das setas’, Helena points to the astral decoration on the ceiling made of arrows, the very same arrows that sit beside her in the photograph situated in Mueda (*A Costa*: 134): this evidence of looting acts as a striking commentary on the frequency and culture of war trophies.

The ultimate execution of the ‘velha das setas’, a grandmother or great-grandmother, demonstrates the death of a woman in the later stages of life, however, the photographs also depict the taking of a life that has only just begun – that of a newborn baby. The final of the three trajectories that Eva is shown, and into which we gain further insight via Góis, is that of a newborn child, born whilst his mother was marched away from a destroyed village, attached to a rope with fourteen other prisoners. Like the other two trajectories portrayed, her story is visually serialized through two photographs: at first pregnant, and later holding the new baby, however, Forza Leal would not disclose to Helena what eventually happened to the child (*A Costa*: 135). Similarly to the aforementioned trajectories already discussed, those of the lynched black man and the ‘velha das setas’, it is through Góis’ narrative that we are provided with the harrowing answer:

<< A malta ajudou a nascer um garoto preto. O filho da puta nasceu mesmo à meia-noite, e a malta sentiu-se com aquilo. A malta mandou os lenços de assoar para embrulhar o garoto. A malta quando ouviu o garoto chorar aqueceu duas latas de leite com as mãos, esfregando com as mãos na lata. Como calcula não se pode fazer fogo de noite, e a malta ali, tec tec com as mãos a aquecer o leite para o puto. Mas o filho da puta é que não quis comer...sim, o miúdo chorava, parecia uma hiena miando. Um contratempo do catano. O tempo a passar, a passar, a manhã a vir e o objectivo a fugir e a escapar! Só andávamos de noite. Já não disse? O meu capitão não quis saber – mandou chamar o *Singer* e a *Husqvarna*>>.

<<Os limpezas>>.

<<Exacto. E a malta entretanto cheia de cio pelo miúdo. Porque enfim, a malta tinha visto aquilo nascer, precisamente em cima da meia-noite, o miúdo era já a mascote da malta, e já tínhamos combinado o nome do puto, o miúdo ia ficar com a gente e haveria de se chamar Jesus Cristo. Mas o capitão lá pensou que se ia o objectivo e decidiu limpar os catorze da corda mais a grávida e mais o miúdo...um garoto nasceu à meia noite, e no dia seguinte, ao meio-dia, já o garoto estava de cabeça fora! (*A Costa*: 150)

Without doubt, Jorge's depiction of the murder of the new-born and his postpartum mother speaks to the brutal femicide that is so often a cornerstone of war. Yet, the additional brutality of the decapitation of a new-born child is difficult to comprehend and is highly reminiscent of the cruelty depicted by Father Hastings in his report of the Wiriyamu Massacres, where he described the disembowelment of a pregnant woman in order for soldiers to show her the sex of her unborn child.

Of further interest is the child's ability to renew a sense of humanity and empathy within the soldiers, the arrival of a life so innocent to a harsh world seems to provoke a sense of paternalistic protection. This feeling is ultimately short-lived, as despite the fact that 'se tivesse perguntado à malta quem é que estava de acordo com a limpeza, daquela vez, ninguém estava...' (*A Costa*: 152), none protected the child from decapitation at the hands of *Singer* and *Husqvarna*, by the order of *Forza Leal*.

As with the 'velha das setas', a biblical lens should be applied here and attention should be given to the naming of the child, as Jesus Christ - although naming the infant John the Baptist would have perhaps better foreshadowed his vicious decapitation. This naming of their *mascote*

arguably highlights the role of Catholicism within both Portuguese colonisation itself and the Colonial War. This detail functions as a critique by Jorge on the deep-rooted justification felt by some areas of the military towards their presence in Africa, so justified that Jesus could be your mascot. This fact notwithstanding, it was a Catholic priest, Father Adrian Hastings, who brought the Wiriyamu Massacre to the global stage, later reinforced by the careful documentation and names of victims provided by two other Catholic missionaries living nearby. Seemingly, the very religion that was distorted to justify the colonial course of action would ultimately be the one to denounce them.

The photographs explored here are clear examples of the genre known as “war trophy” imagery, taken by the Portuguese soldiers to visually immortalise their brutality and dominance. According to Hilary Roberts (2012), this genre is usually created by military personnel within dominant armed forces, intended as a souvenir or memento circulated between comrades. Roberts states: ‘The subject matter is consistent: the imposition of degradation, cruelty and atrocity on a vanquished enemy, in a manner completely contrary to most established moral codes.’ (2012: 202). Jean Baudrillard refers to such images as ‘Pornographie de la guerre’ [War Pornography] within his essay of the same name (2004), and indeed, the visual capturing of the naked, ejaculating, lynched man, held in conjunction with the public humiliation suffered by the ‘velha das setas’, does suggest a niche, and specialised, form of pornography, created through a voyeuristic and colonial gaze, centred around physical submission, and intended only for private circulation.⁵⁹

2.2.5 History Ablaze

Without the testimony of missionaries, such atrocities would have gone undocumented. When compounded with the aforementioned absence of Colonial War photographs, an incomplete

⁵⁹ For more scholarship on the genre of trophy photography, and war pornography, see: Andrew Hoskins and Ben O’Loughlin, *War and Media*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010); James Harkin, “War Porn”, *The Guardian*, 12 August 2006; Joanna Bourke, “Torture as Pornography”, *The Guardian*, 7 May 2004.

narrative of the Colonial War has been perpetuated within Portugal. It is far easier to ignore tales of human atrocity if there are no images to accompany it, since the latter force us to personalise such events.

Visual representations of the war atrocities that have plagued history are not in short supply, the Holocaust being the most obvious example. The image of the lynched black man no doubt echoes photographs surrounding the Civil Rights Movement in the US. Arguably, given limited Colonial War imagery, we are forced to “borrow” images from other atrocities which have become part of our collective identities. But to borrow such mental images is an unsatisfactory halfway house, and does a disservice not only to the remembrance of those within the borrowed mental image, but also to those who suffered in Mozambique.

Whilst the rhetoric of nostalgia towards the Portuguese presence in Africa has been challenged within literature in the aftermath of the Revolution, the lack of photographs within collective memory allows for the narrative of the war constructed under the censorship of the *Estado Novo* to remain the dominant discourse. This control of public knowledge of the war by the dictatorship is stressed by Jorge:

<<Devem-nas destruir>> - disse a mulher da renda e da criança.

<<Oh, oh! Onde é que isso já está! Graças a Deus que os tipos da informação estão cozidos com quem tem mais mãos a lavar do que tropa regular. Mas não há azar. Só que se eles soubessem, com fotografias, tudo...Podia dar pano para mangas. (A Costa: 152)

This call to action of destroying the photographs precedes the later burning of incriminating evidence. This critique of the corruption and collusion of military officials and the Portuguese media, and the consequent arrogance of Góis in stating that no repercussions would be felt for the brutality of his military unit, is stark. It additionally speaks to the doctored narrative given to Portuguese society at the time, living under the shadow of censorship. This offers a glimpse to

readers that there is far more to uncover, made even more evident by Jorge's invitation to the reader to dig deeper themselves:

Peça – é sempre gente simpática, a que guarda a História. Escreva um papel pedindo o acesso aos reservados. Se lhe concederem o privilégio, passados uns dias, volte para consulta. Faça o mesmo percurso, peça a caixa CHIV- 3 269. T. (*A Costa*: 216)

Through the eventual burning of the imagined photographs which depict the brutality inflicted upon Mozambican civilians and soldiers in the novel itself, Jorge comments on this self-serving dismantling of history. Even those whose lives have been documented, although often incorrectly constructed through the physical and mental lens of the photographer, can ultimately still be erased. This critique of historiographical processes is no clearer than through the erasure of the black suffering inflicted by Forza Leal, Luís Alex, and their military unit, but can additionally be seen through the indifference of the wedding photographer to the poisoned black bodies in '*Os Gafanhotos*' and the silencing of the *Hinterland* reporter.

This discussion on those who create and those who destroy the images of History is most evident through this act of burning, likened by Jorge to the fire that destroyed much of the Library of Alexandria in Egypt during Julius Caesar's Civil War. Whilst historical depictions of its destruction vary, it is thought that the fire spread to the Great Library after Caesar's soldiers set fire to their own ships to block the fleet of his enemy from approaching the shore. The self-serving destruction does not feel too far removed here:

O capitão dirige-se para o local onde *Adão Terras Altas* pôs a caixa. O noivo vai atrás com um isqueiro. Ambos se curvam sobre a caixa, retiram pacotes, acendem-nos pelos vértices, colocam-nos dentro do caixote que rapidamente toma fogo, constitui durante uns minutos uma fogueira razoável, e depois encurta e apaga. (*A Costa*: 254)

And thus, the question remains – where are the official photographs that depict the Colonial War? Military archives would seem to be the most obvious answer; however, these archives burnt down

in a fire on 22nd June 1975 (Medeiros 2002b: 94). Interestingly, little concrete information on this fire is available. However, given that it took place thirteen years prior to the publication of *A Costa*, the fire of the Great Library may well not be the only fire that Jorge is alluding to.

2.3 Photographic Layers

Both texts discussed here play with the medial boundaries between text and image; childhood photographs in the case of Figueiredo, and the strategy of ekphrasis in that of Jorge. In *A Costa*, mock ekphrasis is utilised as a means of bringing the horrors of Portuguese Colonial War crimes to the fore, going one step further than her already provocative narrative. In doing so, Jorge demonstrates a political strategy which unveils colonial hierarchies and unpicks a male imperial gaze. In *Caderno*, the inclusion of photographs disrupts traditionally linear autobiographical modes of writing and stresses the nostalgia and mythology that surrounds Portuguese decolonisation – a mythology which her verbal narrative destabilises.

At the beginning of this chapter, I questioned what type of world(s) these two very different collections of images encourage us to (re)collect, and how through the very nature of photography, and the injunction of looking, readers are forced to engage with their multiple layers of meaning. Such layers allow us to unmask the myths and narratives that have dominated the retelling of the decolonization period. Without a doubt, the world that we collect through these images is a despondent one. Jorge's imagined photographs are important as a reminder that images of Portuguese war atrocity and soldier brutality are yet to come to light. The limited number of photographs accessible which depict the Colonial War, let alone those of war atrocities, equally act to hinder collective remembrance of the period. They are hidden from public consumption, in comparison to the tangible images offered by Figueiredo. Indeed, as is clear from the curated collection of images within *Caderno*, Figueiredo arguably had too many photographs to choose from, whereas in *A Costa*, the very fact that Jorge has necessitated imagining the photographs, speaks to their scarcity.

Both sets of photographs, the real provided by Figueiredo and those imagined by Jorge, are steeped in loss – be that the literal loss of life, both on a mass civilian scale, a smaller familial scale, or the loss of Self. The stark change in the personality of Luís Alex, the once shy mathematician now brandishing the heads of decapitated civilians – is an example of the rupturing of the Self that war inflicts, alongside Isabela’s loss of childhood innocence, compounded with the loss of her homeland.

And with loss comes inevitable grief – Evita is, temporarily, unable to conflate the two versions of her husband and decide how she will navigate her newfound knowledge of military atrocity. Similarly, Isabela is unable to link the visual representation of her father with her critical narrative of him. The aforementioned curation of images seems to speak to the rupturing capabilities of her photographs, and she is thus unable to denounce him entirely by exposing him visually. Visual ghosts seem to wield a different power than those of the written word. The haunting figures of both Isabela’s father, Luís Alex, and indeed of the innocent civilians who were massacred are not just fictional ghosts, but rather spectral reminders of uncomfortable realities of Portuguese decolonization.

Yet, there is also a sense of grief around the loss of the possibility to return – neither writer can go back to the state they once knew, be that national or personal. Isabela can no longer seem to connect herself to the images of the little white colonial child held in liminal space between her written words, nor find a way to combine the past period of her life with her present. Likewise, Eva cannot un-see her husband’s complicit participation in war crimes, nor the true nature of Portuguese decolonization. Like Eve herself she has taken the apple from the tree of knowledge and must now navigate her own expulsion from the Garden. Both can only move forward in some way. Yet, we must remember that the puzzle pieces offered by Jorge and Figueiredo offer are also lacking. They by no means propose a full picture and remain wanting in terms of giving much-needed space to the narration of the black experience at the time.

Nonetheless, with loss and consequent grief comes the possibility for renewal and an opportunity to rebuild a new sense of Self. Both sets of photographs highlight that, to access such a reality, an active search for answers required. This pursuit of knowledge may be initiated through the untold trajectories of Mozambican civilians, the victims of brutal atrocities, or the problematic elements of a colonial childhood. Both authors entice the reader through a series of layers: the layering of image and text, innocence and colonial violence, by Figueiredo, or the three-layered narrative device by Jorge, from ‘*Os Gafanhotos*’, to the mock ekphrasis of the images, leading to the revealing testimony of Góis.

The curated collection of images included within *Caderno* seems to depict perhaps the beginning of such a knowledge-seeking journey by Figueiredo – whereby coming to terms with the visual representations of her life in Lourenço Marques seems to cause more of a *punctum*, to return to Barthes, than aspects of her writing. Jorge seems to demand such a journey of us as viewers, encouraging us to ask questions and uncover the hidden meanings in her described images and their echoes of the brutality of Wiriyamu. Through these images, both writers testify to the perversions of the colonial myth, be it the changed nature of Luís Alex, or the rupturing of Isabela’s innocence regarding her father’s colonial complicity. In the following chapter, I situate these men alongside other male protagonists in my corpus and explore how trauma impacts their adherence to the colonial male identity promoted by the *Estado Novo* regime.

Chapter Three

3. Precarious White Masculinities: The Traumatic Shattering of Salazar's Men

This chapter asks how Jorge, Figueiredo, and Cardoso construct and deconstruct masculine norms through the presentation of traumatic implications of the Portuguese empire on male bodies. White masculinities form the central focus of this chapter, which positions the primary male characters of each text along a spectrum of masculinity, examining how, and if, they may be considered disruptive of a hegemonic standard. The authors' potential destabilising of the *Estado Novo* heteronormative masculine ideal is investigated through a fresh focus on the male body, sexuality, and representations of experienced physical and mental trauma, namely: wounds and scars, PTSD, and suicide, in addition to prisoner, physical, and sexual abuse. Primary emphasis is given to the following characters: Luís Alex and Forza Leal (*A Costa*), Figueiredo's unnamed father and cousin (*Caderno*), and Rui, his father Mário, and Uncle Zé (*O Retorno*).

Relationships with men underpin the texts within my chosen corpus and male characters are an undeniable focal point in each work. Even *A Costa* and *Caderno*, which are written from the female point of view, overwhelmingly focus on significant relationships with men, be it between husband and wife in *A Costa*, father and daughter in *Caderno*, or father, son, and uncle in *O Retorno*. In interrogating the depiction of these male trajectories, this chapter aims to answer the following questions: what type of masculinities are constructed, how are they disrupted, and how does this disruption intersect with trauma?

In the analysis that follows, I seek to highlight how Jorge, Figueiredo, and Cardoso problematise traditional hegemonic masculinities, in particular paternal and military ideals, and how intersections with trauma contradict the heteronormative male body as a site of ideological power. Jack Halberstam, in their queer theory work *Female Masculinity* (1998), critiques the privileged and protected status of male masculinity and the propensity of many theorists to re-centre the white male body. Whilst the men explored within this chapter are indeed all white, it

is not my intention to situate their traumatic experiences at the top of a colonial hierarchy or offer a central positioning to the white male colonial body, but rather to probe how they embody, present, and disrupt colonial masculine norms. Such an examination assists the understanding of interactions between hegemonic masculinity and other colonial bodies of any race or gender, and the consequent junctures of violence, power, and domination. An increased comprehension of such encounters in turn extends a wider understanding of gendered colonial structures.

Although there have been many vital studies on gender within the Portuguese-speaking context, masculinity remains an underdeveloped line of enquiry within Portuguese-speaking literary and cultural studies.⁶⁰ As Lehen and Nielson state: ‘[b]ecause of its stable, far-reaching, and naturalized structure, Lusophone hegemonic masculinity remains virtually invisible. An important step in contesting hegemonic masculinity is thus to render it *visible*, audible, palpable’ (2018: 6).⁶¹ This chapter proposes a new reading of *A Costa*, *Caderno*, and *O Retorno* under the lens of masculinity, providing visibility to hegemonic male identities, and explores the manner in which Jorge, Figueiredo, and Cardoso complicate such portrayals and critique the parameters of a social hierarchy that restrict and drive out minority male identities.

3.1 *Estado Novo* Masculinity

Before undertaking an analysis of the male characters within the texts, it is helpful to first explore the theoretical frameworks surrounding the term “hegemonic masculinity”. Hegemonic masculinity, as defined and conceptualised by Connell, is defined as male traits which go on to become a masculine cultural ideal; these ideals in turn legitimise patriarchal norms and resulting male dominance over others (1995: 77). Whilst mass culture often assumes that there is a fixed and “true” masculinity, gender and feminist studies have highlighted the existence of multiple

⁶⁰ A notable exception to the gap in scholarship around masculinity is Quinlan and Arenas’s *Lusosex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-Speaking World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), and the recent 2018 special issue of the *Journal of Lusophone Studies*, named Luso-Masculinities; this special issue explores narratives of resistance to hegemonic masculinities within Lusophone literary works and cultural practices and is a much-welcomed resource within an expanding field.

⁶¹ Italic emphasis my own.

male identities and their changeability according to class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and religion (Segal 1990; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Ashe 2007; Coles 2009); therefore, an understanding that masculinities are neither fixed nor static, but rather subject to change due to multiple factors, is critical. A culturally ideal, and thus hegemonic, masculinity is seen to reside at the top of the gendered social hierarchy of male individualities. Such an ideal is likely to be established when there is a link between this archetype and an institutional power (Connell 1995: 77); namely business, government, and, of particular relevance for this chapter, the state.

According to Demetriou (2001) in his expansion of Connell's work, hegemony can be both external and internal: external through institutions such as the military, labour market, and the family, which enable men's dominance over women, and internal where masculinities themselves are placed within their own social hierarchy. Demetriou's concept of external and internal male hegemony is productive for the purpose of this chapter as it highlights not only how the state and military as social institutions promote an idealised form of masculinity, but also how this hegemonic and heteronormative standard is highly ranked within the social hierarchy of male identities itself.

Understanding the nuances of a Portuguese masculinity and its role within a colonial context is pivotal to any reading of the male characters within the texts of this corpus. In order to situate hegemonic male archetypes within a contemporary Portuguese context, dominated by the Colonial War, it is instructive to explore the *Estado Novo* ideological doctrines which impacted male identity politics, and their corresponding effect on colonial gender systems. The regime offered a privileged position to masculinity and whiteness, and central to the cultivation and maintenance of white male power was the myth of the "*homem novo*".⁶² The initial details of the *homem novo* model can be found within the regime's ideological push of the 30s and 40s, when Salazar sought to affirm a distinctly nationalistic and moralistic political path; this comprised of

⁶² Similar notions of idealised masculinity were also present in other authoritarian regimes in Europe, such as Nazi Germany and fascist Italy.

the removal of the liberalism sweeping through Europe and a reinstatement of a mythological sense of an “*essencialidade portuguesa*” (Rosas 2001: 1034).

The ideal of the *homem novo* was further bolstered by an inherent sense of “*portugalidade*”. Lugarinho explains the term in greater depth:

Portugal, através do Estado, assumia a sua função missionária na História dirigindo-se a uma tarefa civilizadora junto aos povos dominados e perante o concerto das nações. Para que tanto se configurasse, já que a economia teria que dispor diretamente dos territórios ultramarinos para a execução do projeto político-económico de Salazar, era necessário que se dispusesse da mística nacional portuguesa, que por agora se convertia pela institucionalização da ‘portugalidade’. (2005: 53)

The main tenants of the *portugalidade* ideology were first presented by Salazar during a speech in Braga, which commemorated the 10th anniversary of the coup d’état against the First Republic; the clerical fascist doctrines that this speech depicted came to be known as the “*discurso de Braga*”.⁶³ As Rosas notes:

Convirá salientar que os “valores de Braga” não eram uma simples plataforma de unidade político-ideológica no quadro do Estado Novo, ou uma moral abstracta e genericamente informadora dos comportamentos em sociedade. Significavam uma moral de (re)educação, de regeneração colectiva e individual, da qual resultaria, pela acção do Estado Novo nos vários níveis das sociabilidades públicas e privadas, o moldar desse especial “homem novo” do salazarismo, capaz de interpretar e cumprir a alma e o destino ontológico da nação que o antecedia e se lhe sobrepunha, vinculando-lhe atitudes, pensamentos e modos de vida, redefinindo e subordinando o particular ao império do “interesse nacional”. (2001: 1037)

The triad ideology of “*Deus, Pátria, Família*” was central to the idealised masculine archetype promoted by Salazar, who in turn based the success of the nation upon the stability and reliability of the *homem novo* prototype; this reliability is of particular consequence to the colonial project and the upholding of the national mythology surrounding Portuguese maritime nostalgia. On the necessity of maintaining a narrative of *portugalidade*, Lugarinho argues:

⁶³ This commemorative speech took place on the 28th May, 1936.

A “portugalidade”, virtude almejada pelo “homem novo”, não se resumia apenas à submissão do homem português às razões do estado, mas a sua crença inquestionável nessas razões e a sua inserção num modo de ser (num “hábito” cujo fim seria a estabilidade do estado e, por conseguinte, da sociedade), a manutenção e propagação da “civilização portuguesa” (onde se incluía a fé católica, os valores da ruralidade, pobreza e o culto do passado e dos heróis nacionais). E, ainda no investimento permanente na “mística imperial” (finalidade mais ambiciosa que pretendia inserir o homem português no projeto colonial do Estado Novo, criando-lhe uma sensação de territorialidade alargada, aliada à “sua” missão civilizadora). (2013: 25–26).

Salazar drew upon the nationalist maritime mission of the Portuguese people; this ideology was woven intrinsically with Camões’ national epic *Os Lusíadas* (1572), whose rhetoric was rooted in the historical grandeur of brave seafarers who landed on Indian shores in 1498. As stated in the Colonial Act of 1930, ‘[é] da essência orgânica da Nação Portuguesa desempenhar a função histórica de possuir e colonizar domínios ultramarinos e de civilizar populações indígenas.’⁶⁴; such a phrasing emphasised and reinforced the historical mythology that enveloped narratives of Portuguese maritime expansion and strength. Therefore, the men sent to control and protect the Portuguese empire, and who embodied the nationalist and moral dogma of the regime, were seen as the historical continuation of the maritime explorers depicted by Camões (Ferreira 2002: 108).

3.1.1 The White Male Colonial Body

The required compliance of Portuguese men regarding the *homem novo* standard, and subsequent politically-enforced gender identity, did not function merely at an ideological level, but also a physical one. When speaking of the corporeal, Foucault comments that ‘it is always the body that is at issue – the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission’ (1995: 25). To create these conditions, the need for power is obvious. And thus, to

⁶⁴ For more detail see: Ato Colonial, Diário do Governo, nº 156, decreto nº 18:570, 8 July 1930.

speak of the body is to additionally speak of power, both power projected from the body, and power inflicted upon it.

According to Callow, ‘the significance of the human body as a unique kind of conflict materiality cannot be understated [...] the body is central to human experiences of warfare [...] [and] body parts can become a political tool’ (2012: 29). The idea of the human form as a political site and tool is especially pertinent within colonial settings, as colonial power and imperial projects are based in the manipulation, movement, and maintenance of bodies. Indeed, Dale and Ryan view the empire as a ‘significantly corporeal process, constructed and controlled by the travelling of European bodies, and the enslavement, infection and murder of indigenous bodies’ (1998: 2). It is thought-provoking here to reflect upon the submission and docility of Portuguese civilian colonists and soldiers in relation to the regime, and their bodies as sites of political meaning through their physical utility and geographical distribution by the government. Importance, therefore, must be placed on the white male Portuguese body, both military and otherwise, as a political tool utilised by the *Estado Novo* to prevent and delay the loss of Africa.

As noted by Dale and Ryan, it is thus evident that the maintenance of colonial power requires a continuous control of bodies, both colonising and colonised. This requirement is reinforced by Upstone who comments ‘colonisation has been a project centred upon manipulation and appropriation of bodies as both territory and the key to maintaining successful control of land’ (2009: 148). Furthermore, the bodies of the colonial settlers and soldiers, sent to protect the Portuguese colonial presence in Africa and maintain control over the colonised native bodies, can themselves also be considered “colonised” and expended for the dictatorship’s own ends. The strength of the male body is thereby crucial not only from an ideological sense within the imposed *Estado Novo* hegemonic male norm, but also in a literal sense whereby the military body is required as cannon fodder, and the settler body as an extension of the metropole, to maintain the Portuguese empire.

Linking this back to masculinity specifically, Dale and Ryan further note: ‘the body with integrity and rectitude was by definition a male body, a body controlled by reason and subject to the ultimate authority of the will, not vulnerable to physical demands.’ (1998: 9). Indeed, “real” masculinity, and therefore hegemonic masculinity, is considered to be intrinsically linked to the male body, with male superiority to women frequently explained using biologically reductionist theories upon which a “natural” male identity is inherited; this intrinsic reproduction of heteronormative masculinity would then allow men to be “naturally” stronger and more aggressive, resulting ultimately in male dominance (Connell 2005). If the male body remains consistently at the epicentre of the construction of traditional masculinity models and the upholding of both a colonial ideology and physical practice, then it follows that the *white* male body is essential to any colonial structure.

3.1.2 Paternal Relationships

The following exploration analyses how representations of corporeal politics of power are made evident through the presentation of fathers within *Caderno* and *O Retorno*. As has been established, the white male colonial body and its upholding of a hegemonic masculine norm was given a central positioning by the *Estado Novo* regime, who deemed the ideological centring of the powerful white male as crucial. Under the banner of *Deus, Pátria, Família*, the regime was rooted in the critical importance of family politics, with the father the active head of a unified family unit. Salazar’s brand of masculinity and the *homem novo* model was heavily intertwined with a paternalistic nationalism, and Salazar positioned himself as the paternal protector of the Portuguese people. The father figure was likewise a central metaphor within Portuguese colonialism and, as Rothwell states, the dictatorship ‘sought to re-legitimize a national father figure as a representative trope of national unity.’ (2007: 19). It can be reasoned that Salazar was, in fact, no more than a destructive father. Or indeed, as Rothwell argues, an empty father, who relied upon the abuse of the paternal metaphor for his own motives, and through the Colonial War was ultimately exposed as an abusive father sending his “sons” to their deaths.

Similarities are clear between Figueiredo and Cardoso's portrayal of the father as the dominant head of the family: both are colonial settlers, one an electrician (*Caderno*) and the other a coffee grower (*O Retorno*), and from whom colonial beliefs and nationalist ideals are disseminated. Rui's father, Mário, is a firm believer in the natural right of the Portuguese people to rule Angola and as such he would rather burn down his own home than relinquish it to the nationalists (*O Retorno*: 23). For his part, Isabela's father likewise rejected the idea of Mozambican independence 'os negros estão lixados, estão a contas. Ainda vamos ganhar isto.' (*Caderno*: 121). Both fathers are family bread winners and possess extremely traditional views on male behaviour and racial politics which evoke the discourse around the "civilising mission" undertaken by the Portuguese in Africa (*O Retorno*: 30, *Caderno*: 48).

Ashcroft states that 'the post-colonial male body is the prosthesis of empire, its eye the prosthesis of the imperial gaze in which it proceeds to construct itself' (1998: 209), and this is remarkably true in both texts. Speaking of *Caderno*, Moraes states that 'falando do pai, fala-se da ordem colonial' (2010: 243), and indeed directly after Rui learns of Angola's independence he comments: 'o pai morreu.' (*O Retorno*: 153). In keeping with their metaphorical role as the empire, both paternal figures act as the idealised benchmark for sexual and racial politics within the settings of Mozambique and Angola, and thus, through their complicity in the colonial system, can be viewed as consummate examples of the *homem novo*.

The two men are portrayed as sites of physical strength and authority, thereby depicted as true representations of the strong white male body. Mário is physically imposing and domineering: 'o pai mede quase dois metros e pesa mais de cem quilos, onde o pai está tudo parece mais pequeno' (*O Retorno*: 22). Similarly, Isabela's relationship with her father is consistently described via his physical power and her parallel childlike impotence: 'o meu pai levava-me pela mão, e eu sentia-me portátil como uma mochila leve; ia quase no ar.' (*Caderno*: 91); the corresponding violence that accompanies his strength is made starkly evident: 'e eu tinha

medo do meu pai. Desse poder absoluto do meu pai.’ (*Caderno*: 80). The consistent references to his expressions of physical violence show that Isabela has a right to be fearful. Ultimately, it is through her father, that she learns the violent truth of Portuguese colonisation.

The complicated filial love felt by Isabela is shown openly through a detailed description of her father’s romanticised body: ‘o corpo do meu pai era um trono. O corpo do meu pai era bom’ (*Caderno*: 207); such a regal lexicon emphasises the privileged paternal position and Isabela’s self-positioning within a corresponding site of submission. A piece-by-piece physical description occupies much of Chapter 47, illustrating his feet, calves, belly, legs, genitals, face, and, finally, his ashes. Yet, a dichotomy regarding her father’s body becomes evident, shown most plainly through the description of his feet: ‘os seus pés eram bem acabados, cheios, com os dedos desenhados ao pormenor, como uma escultura do Renascimento, e as unhas redondinhas, transparentes, brilhantes.’ (*Caderno*: 205). At first Isabela seems to revere his feet, but later reveals a more grotesque depiction underscored by an element of Kristevian abject revulsion: ‘o meu pai tinha nos pés umas escamas como massa folhada, que eu desejaria puxar e comer’ (*Caderno*: 204). Within her essay *Powers of Horror* (1984), Kristeva links bodily examples of revulsion with an accompanying sense of fascination; Isabela recreates such a fascination through her expressed desire to consume the pieces of her father’s skin. The use of the term ‘escamas’, when read as “scales”, constructs a bestial depiction of her father, but when read as “flakes of dry skin” indicates flaws within a body that is projected as omnipotent; such a reading can be extended as a portrayal of the shortcomings within the *Estado Novo* regime itself.

Insofar as the paternal body can be viewed as a corporeal metaphor for the regime, it is unsurprising that it inflicts extreme violence. If it is to be believed, as stated by Aristotle, that ‘the hand is a tool of tools’ (1968: 149), Isabela’s father uses his hands both for violence, and for protection. As with the representations of his feet, his hands are likewise described in animalistic terms: ‘como patas de urso’ (*Caderno*: 100) or ‘poderosas garras’ (*Caderno*: 56).

Moraes comments that the violence shown through *Caderno* ‘serve como antídoto à velha ideologia, que ainda sobrevive de várias formas, do ‘bom colono (ou da boa colona) português (portuguesa)’ (2010: 242). This is no more evident than through the physical violence that Isabela’s father inflicts upon his black workers, often in the name of beating the laziness from them: ‘o meu pai gritava lá dentro e, aos safanões, trazia-o para fora, atordoados, ambos. Segunda, vais trabalhar, ouviste? [...] Vais trabalhar para a tua mulher e para os teus filhos, cabrão preguiçoso. Queres fazer o quê da vida? Safanão. Soco.’ (*Caderno*: 92).

Through this imposed violence, the black body is portrayed as fully accessible to the white man, with the knowledge that there will be no retribution for abuse. There are no limits when it comes to the black body: in practice, it is entirely owned by the white colonisers; thus, total freedom exists over the brutality inflicted upon it. There is furthermore inherent power retained and utilised by the white colonial settlers regardless of gender, and Isabela herself, although struggling with her parent’s racist attitudes, experiments with this when she hits her classmate Marília: ‘podia perfeita e impunemente bater-lhe. Era mulata.’ (*Caderno*: 94). Indeed, the preceding chapter illustrates the beating that her father inflicts upon his black employee, Ernesto, when he is absent from work. This linear structuring of the chapters, shifting from her father’s violence to her own, highlights a familial inheritance of racism, and that, despite the damning nature of Isabela’s words, she is unable to remain entirely immune to the colonial ideological influences of her family.

Within *O Retorno*, the relationship between Rui and his father, Mário, runs as an undercurrent throughout; the “return” signified in the title of the text itself not only relates to the family’s status as *retornados*, but also to his father’s ultimate reunion with the family after their separation. The characterisation of Mário builds a father figure similar to that of *Caderno*, he is domineering, strong, and is the active head of the family. Rui’s identity and understanding of masculinity is intricately interwoven with that of his father and the reader is privy to his struggle

in Mário's absence, whereby he attempts to replicate his paternal presence whilst also grappling with his own process of individuation. He has internalised his father's conformist views surrounding hegemonic masculine norms; that men cannot be beautiful (*O Retorno*: 39), do not cry (*O Retorno*: 39), and that it is shameful to show weakness (*O Retorno*: 16). The importance of the father as the family patriarch is so fervent for Rui that, upon arriving in Portugal, he seeks to replicate Mário's paternal role, whilst he remains imprisoned in Angola. Rui repeats phrases that his father commonly used (*O Retorno*: 87), takes on the responsibility of caring for his mother (*O Retorno*: 161), and constructs a hypothetical plan to collectively immigrate to America in light of the poor conditions that the family have to endure in Portugal (*O Retorno*: 173).

Through his father, Rui has absorbed the racial politics of the colonial period and the consequent privileged hierarchal positioning of the white man; his attitudes regarding race are shown starkly in the below passage:

Os pretos. A não ser que se queira explicar o que são, aí é o preto, o preto é preguiçoso, gostam de estar ao sol como os lagartos, o preto é arrogante, se caminham de cabeça baixa é só para não olharem para nós, o preto é burro, não entendem o que se lhes diz, o preto é abusador, se lhes damos a mão querem logo o braço, o preto é ingrato, por muito que lhes façamos nunca estão contentes, podia-se estar horas a falar do preto mas os brancos não gostavam de perder tempo com isso, bastava dizer, é preto e já sabe do que a casa gasta. (*O Retorno*: 25)

Rui's belief in the male role as protector and defender is further stressed through his internalised guilt, triggered by his perceived status as a coward, where he is overwhelmed by a sense of betrayal in "allowing" his father to be arrested by Angolan soldiers: 'O pai tinha razão, aquilo era nossa terra, devíamos ter ficado lá, só um cobarde abandona a sua terra sem luta...foram todos cobardes, e eu também, eu mais que todos.' (*O Retorno*: 126). This sense of culpability, constructed through his lens of hegemonic masculinity highlights how Rui, despite only being a teenager, believes he should enact infinite physical and emotional strength.

Rui's sexual development features as a significant part of *O Retorno* and exposes his association of a heterosexual identity with heteronormative masculine norms; in keeping with this ideological viewpoint, normative attitudes surrounding virility and sexuality are a cornerstone of Rui and Mário's relationship. Rui's sexual experiences begin in Africa, where, in seeking to live up to his father's expectations of "being a man", they find a joint connection through ideas around sexuality, specifically the act of masturbation, a shared secret that they keep from his mother and sister: 'Eu e pai pertencemos ao mesmo clube' (*O Retorno*: 27). Notions of virility and sexuality are constant throughout the novel, be it through Rui and his friend's discussion of their sexual exploits (*O Retorno*: 43), their voyeuristic obsession with viewing the naked female form at the cinema (*O Retorno*: 45), or Rui's first sexual encounter with Fortunata (*O Retorno*: 43).

Within the aforementioned paternalistic discourse surrounding the Portuguese presence in Africa, the colonial settlers were seen as the "fathers of the nation", acting out their duty of national development, whilst reducing the black female body to a vehicle through which colonist desires were served (Moutinho 2008: 88).⁶⁵ This is made painfully clear by Cardoso when Pacaça, one of Rui's friends, states: 'No caminho para casa deu-me os conselhos que um pai tem de dar a um filho, os mesmos conselhos que mais tarde dei ao meu filho, as outras pretas não são asseadas como as do munhungu, tens de ter cuidado com as doenças' (*O Retorno*: 203). Whilst father figures were able to be explicit about matters of sexuality with their sons and "passed down" knowledge in a ritualistic way, the same cannot be said with their daughters. Through clandestine eaves-dropping over adult conversations, Isabela becomes aware of her father's notorious sexual appetite: 'Foder. Meu pai gostava de foder. Eu nunca vi, mas via-se' (*Caderno*: 42), as well as his extramarital affairs (*Caderno*: 45). Through the conversations that Rui has with

⁶⁵ For an investigation into the illegitimate children sired by Portuguese colonists and soldiers see: Catarina Gomes, *Pai, Tiveste Medo?* (Lisbon: Matéria Prima, 2015) and *Furriel Não é Nome de Pai: Os Filhos que os Militares Portugueses Deixaram na Guerra Colonial* (Lisbon: Tinta da China, 2018).

his friends and those that Isabela overhears, it is evident that, amongst men, male sexuality is celebrated, whereas amongst the colonial wives it is begrudgingly tolerated.

Sousa Santos argues that ‘what is important is to understand the sexist rules of sexuality that usually allow the white man to sleep with the black woman, but not the white woman with the black man.’ (2002: 17). Figueiredo highlights the stark sexual double standards that existed within colonial Mozambique, where white men could have sexual relations with black women and condone their actions under the term miscegenation, whilst relations between white women and black men were strictly prohibited and abhorred: ‘Mas um branco podia, se quisesse, casar com uma negra... Para uma branca, assumir uma união com um negro, implicava proscrição social.’ (*Caderno*: 40). Figueiredo makes the reader acutely aware of this double standard whereby the black woman is presented as unruly, wild and sexualised, and the white as chaste and pure. The anxiety around white female sexual restraint is further exemplified when Isabela’s father catches her ‘joga[ndo] a foder’ (*Caderno*: 54) with her white neighbour Luís, and she is victim to his violent retribution: ‘[s]enti durante muito tempo as violentas bofetadas do meu pai a arder no rosto e os golpes que espalhou pelo meu corpo; rosto, braços, nádegas, costas, pernas. Onde caísse. Foi bruto.’ (*Caderno*: 56).

Equally, Cardoso stresses the hypocrisy of sexual double standards through conversations between Rui and his friends. Together, they discuss the young black girls with whom they have had sexual relations and how they are anatomically different from white girls (*O Retorno*: 43); this narrative of black female sexualisation provides an insight into colonial sexual politics and how the voyeuristic representation of the black female as sexually exoticised starts from an early age. Rui and his friends deliberate about the only white girl to have had a sexual encounter with one of the boys, stating: ‘não é uma branca como as outras porque gosta de ser mostrar nua’ (*O Retorno*: 43).

Through these depictions of female sexuality, both *Caderno* and *Retorno* illustrate examples of the “Madonna-Whore complex”. As coined by Freud (1905, 1912), this complex highlights the two predominant archetypes that women can be placed into, the virtuous Madonna, or the sexualised Whore. In the Portuguese colonial case, the white women, both in the colonies and in the metropole, were expected to remain sexually restrained and virtuous, clearly acting as the Madonna, whilst black women were depicted as overtly sexualised, thereby embodying the Whore archetype. Both fathers presented within *O Retorno* and *Caderno* accurately reinforce this pejorative narrative, and such an ideology has been inherited by Rui and taught to Isabela respectively.

Whilst my analysis of sexuality thus far has been restricted to heterosexual relationships, Cardoso also delves into attitudes towards homosexual relationships via the depiction of Uncle Zé who has sexual relationships with men both in the military and after his active service. Rui displays an intense homophobia, learnt from and reinforced by his father, who perpetuates the much-utilised pejorative myth that gay men are sexual predators: ‘quero que me avises se o teu tio se puser com conversas esquisitas ou se se chegar muito a ti’ (*O Retorno*: 42). As Belkin states, ‘the capaciousness and incoherence of the myth of the homosexual predator is evident in its conceptualization of a homosexual person as someone who obtains sexual gratification through rape and/or seduction and/or simple availability.’ (2001: 101). Uncle Zé’s homosexuality is also deemed the fault of prior patriarchal heads of the family: ‘se eu fosse o teu avô tinha endireitado o teu tio nem que tivesse tido de lhe dar porrada todos os dias, não há barro que não se consiga moldar quando está fresco’ (*O Retorno*: 42).

Notably, homosexuality was considered a mental illness until 1973, when it was removed from the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, and was only decriminalised in Portugal in 1982. There is a clear fear that homosexuality is an intergenerational familial trait, and Rui is apprehensive that people will believe that ‘era uma coisa da família’ (*O Retorno*: 47). As a result of Rui’s internalised homophobia, he is unable to empathise with Uncle

Zé's suffering and experienced sexual trauma, which will be discussed in detail in the third section of this chapter, and his intolerance intensifies his resentment over Uncle Zé's inability to secure the release of his father from prison: 'o tio Zé nunca fez esforço nenhuma para o pai ser libertado e assim que nos enfiou no avião para virmos para cá foi a correr pôr-se a chupar na pichota do Nhé Nhé e nunca mais quis saber de nós.' (*O Retorno*: 263).

Evidently, when speaking of the paternal figures in *O Retorno* and *Caderno*, both function to depict the fervent attitudes of *Estado Novo* ideology regarding race, sexuality, and gender; and both men represent a compliance to a dominant hegemonic masculinity that leaves little room for difference.

3.1.3 Salazar's Soldiers

The link between men, militarism, and war has endured within societies and their corresponding cultures throughout history, and the type of masculinity which upholds militarism and imperialism has profoundly shaped the experience of modern war as a social, embodied, and psychological experience (Carden-Coyne 2015). The idealised male identity that sits at the heart of military culture is based around the model of the brave, nationalistic warrior; accordingly, the army can be viewed as one of the most important platforms not only for the reproduction, but also the definition of hegemonic masculinities. Higate and Hopton (2005) have argued that, whilst the army does not provide each soldier with a ready-made hegemonic identity, it does indeed offer them the resources to develop one. Such an identity is based upon a compliance to strict military values, is rooted in emotional control, heterosexual desire, physical fitness, self-discipline, and the ability to use physical violence for strategic ends; in other words, to maim, kill, and destroy other bodies.

The armed forces in general demonstrate an organisational effort in constructing a narrow hegemonic masculinity which will successfully and efficiently allow its subjects to produce violent behaviour, and thus relies on male hegemony masculinities to survive. Nagel has argued

convincingly on the interwoven and intimate relationship between nationhood and manhood, highlighting how nations are highly dependent on gender constructs, stating: ‘it is therefore no surprise that the culture and ideology of hegemonic masculinity go hand in hand with the culture and ideology of hegemonic nationalism’ (1998: 249). This is of the upmost relevance within the *Estado Novo* context where, as discussed, hegemonic nationalism and the “homem novo” model were deeply intertwined with the colonising project.

I shall now move on to an analysis of the presentation of soldiers by the three authors. Military masculinity is no exception when understanding the significance of the male body and its consistent role at the centre of a construction of male identities. Male corporeality is particularly important in the image of military manhood, not just in terms of physical strength, but also, as Biernoff argues, it ‘is more than flesh and blood: it is a symbolic site invested with political as well as personal meaning. Valor, heroism, patriotism, courage: these concepts assume visible form, and do their cultural work, when they are personified and embodied’ (2014: 36). This statement is of relevance regarding the Portuguese soldiers fighting the Colonial War, who were expected to embody the expansionist discourse of the Salazar/Caetano regime in their mission to maintain a Portuguese presence in Africa.

Notions of self and of social identity are closely linked to the institutions in which individuals are involved, and meaning and purpose is found as individuals make use of institutional resources which assist in the construction of identities (Holstein & Gubrium 2000), and in the case of Salazar’s political programme the army is of particular importance. Indeed, the heavy intertwining of masculinity in Salazar’s nationalism becomes immediately clear through national military conscription: all men were expected to complete a compulsory minimum service of three years (Cardina 2010).⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Compulsory military service in Portugal was abolished with the *Lei do Serviço Militar* No. 174/1999 which began a four-year transition to a fully professional army, ending in November 2004 (Carreiras 2007: 8).

The institutional power of the army was such that the organisation had a strong influence and impact upon the conceptualization of gender within society and therefore assisted in the promotion of the hyper-masculine fascist-nationalist ideal desired by the *Estado Novo*. The regime made great use of the intersection between military and hegemonic masculine norms, and the youth conscripted to fight were portrayed as heroic military men, protecting not only the Portuguese presence in Africa, but also *Estado Novo* moral values. Many young men, fuelled by the heroic rhetoric of the dictatorship which promoted military masculinity, left their families to fight for Salazar.

The following analysis aims to trace the compliance of the military protagonists within the texts to this military masculine archetype. During the initial mention of Isabela's cousin in *Caderno*, she stresses his loyalty to the Colonial War; 'O meu primo tinha sido educado no mais profundo desprezo pelo negro. Quando fez 19 anos, e o mandaram para o Niassa, partiu contente. Ia lutar pela califórnia portuguesa' (*Caderno*: 110); he is also a firm believer in the racial politics of the colonial regime, and refuses to abandon the Portuguese name of the capital from Lourenço Marques to Maputo (*Caderno*: 71). Similarly happy to fight is Forza Leal, who acts as the hyperbolic military ideal within *A Costa*; he is a decorated army man, who even in the face of death continued to fight to reach 'o objectivo [...] o objectivo' (*A Costa*: 66). Through this exaggerated military caricature, he can be viewed as the embodiment of the *Estado Novo* political ideology and of hegemonic military masculinity. Indeed, if we view the name Forza Leal to be a graphic distortion of For(ç)a Leal, this can be viewed in conjunction with his blind loyalty/Leal to a colonial military regime rooted in dishonesty and hypocrisy.

Concurrently in *A Costa*, Luís Alex becomes increasingly fixated on the hyper-masculine Captain, imitating his behaviour and manner of speaking (*A Costa*: 78); this leads Eva to ultimately state: 'o noivo não ria nem para mim nem para o mar, só conseguia rir para o capitão' (*A Costa*: 69). Forza Leal is not only violent within the military sphere, but also the personal one,

where he humiliates and instils fear in his wife Helena (*A Costa*: 29). Luís Alex incorporates this trait into his own relationship and begins to use similar techniques to emotionally manipulate Evita, such as cutting his mouth with a knife to secure his requests are met (*A Costa*: 83).

Through the characterisation of Luís Alex, Jorge makes blatant that time spent in the army fosters a strong environment for a hegemonic military masculinity to develop, whilst other variations of masculinity are rooted out so that heteronormative masculinity sits atop the hierarchy of identities. After reluctantly responding to the call of military conscription, Luís Alex, once a quiet and dedicated mathematician, is now gripped by war, violence, and the sanctity of the Portuguese mission. In keeping with this departure from his older sense of Self, he no longer wishes to be called by his old nickname Galois (*A Costa*: 236), referring to the famous mathematician Évariste Galois⁶⁷, but rather as Galex; this new nickname relates to an act of homo-social bonding between himself and his platoon where he shoots at chickens. He is unrecognisable from his past self, and Eva comments that: ‘podia depois explicar as razões a um rapaz que não tinha resíduo daquele que antes havia conhecido com a pasta’ (*A Costa*: 239). It is apparent that within both the *Estado Novo* regime and the hierarchy of masculinities itself, rationale, logic, and individual thought are no match for the violent militarised body.

Nonetheless, as Carden-Coyne notes, ‘military masculinity may be resilient but it encounters a significant degree of both disobedience and outright opposition’ (2015: 3) and when such masculinities refuse to conform to a hegemonic and heteronormative male norm they can be termed as disruptive. Whilst Jorge offers the reader a more traditional, albeit exaggerated, representation of the military ideal through Forza Leal, Luís Alex is presented as a more unstable

⁶⁷ Évariste Galois was a French mathematician and political activist, (25 October 1811 – 31st May 1832) whose work laid the foundations for two major branches of abstract algebra. Galois was a staunch republican during Louis XVII’s rule, and his later succession by Charles X, and was an active member in political protests resulting in multiple arrests and his expulsion from École Normale. He is thought to have died, aged twenty, during a duel regarding a love affair. This runs in parallel with the death of Luís Alex depicted in ‘Os Gafanhotos’ where, in one version of the story, he dies during a Russian Roulette shoot-out with Eva’s lover Álvaro Sabino.

and disruptive example. Although, from the outset, Luís Alex mimics Forza Leal and embeds the racial and imperial ideology of the regime into his behaviour, as his active military service progresses, he witnesses, and participates in, increasingly disturbing missions, and gradually his illusion of the rationale behind the Colonial War begins to shatter.

Through an insightful discussion of the biblical undertones within *A Costa*, Lúcia Silva (2003) postulates that Luís Alex can be considered as the sacrificial lamb, given in sacrifice on the Day of the Atonement in order to cast away the sins of Portuguese colonialism. Silva pinpoints in particular the purifying use of water when a black boy washes mud from Luís Alex's feet after returning from the swamp (*A Costa*: 15), and the connection to Jesus washing the feet of the Disciples during the Last Supper: 'the roles of Master and servant, the oppressor and the oppressed are inverted, because the black boy assumes Jesus' position, that is, the servant becomes the Master, pointing to the impossibility of the Portuguese ever becoming the Masters of the land and its people.' (2003: 222). Building upon Silva's analysis, the use of water here also depicts a futile attempt to cleanse the sins from Luís Alex's body and soul.⁶⁸ Indeed, it is in the shower that Luís Alex is honest for the first time about the realities of the war (*A Costa*: 238). Thus, the purifying properties of water reach their full potential by enabling Luís Alex to admit the grim actualities of the Colonial War and begin to recognise his participation in Salazar's self-serving colonial project.

This ultimately renewed sense of vision results, within Eva's narrative, in Luís Alex supposedly taking his own life, unable to come to terms with his involvement; his ambiguous and potential suicide stresses his deception and betrayal by the false *Estado Novo* narrative of the glorified empire, and he becomes the gullible victim of the hypocritical ideological justification by the regime. To take Silva's biblical analogy one step further, rather than just a scapegoat, Luís

⁶⁸ This inability to remove sins, metaphorically through washing, is additionally deployed in *Caderno*. After daily acts of racist violence, the body of Isabela's father seems to go through a daily process of renewal, shown by the washing of his fresh white shirt. Yet it is noteworthy that even after this daily ritual of cleansing his body, he can never be fully clean (*Caderno*: 99).

Alex in fact acts as an inverted Christ figure, sent to die on the front-line by a national Father; but rather than this being an act of infinite love, it is merely the power-hungry act of Salazar, the absent father as denoted by Rothwell (2007).

Despite the menacing omnipresence of Salazar's ideology and colonising mission in the three texts, within *Caderno* and *O Retorno* he is never explicitly referenced. He is mentioned in *A Costa* by the hospitalised soldier Góis, but only once, and by his official title. Lieutenant Góis had returned from the front, having contracted malaria (*A Costa*: 111), and informs Eva of the violent war crimes committed by the platoon that he and Luís Alex belong to (*A Costa*: 154). Jorge mirrors this horrifying conversation with an imaginary one between Góis and his wife, in which he professes his innocence in the entire colonial experience:

Tu não és culpada, eu não sou culpado, nenhum dos nossos camaradas é culpado. Este terraço está completamente inocente! Culpados foram os padres, os polícias, a tua mãe, o meu pai, os nossos professores da escola primária com aqueles mapas! Culpados, minha querida, é o Comandante da Região Aérea, o Comandante da Unidade, o nosso General, o Presidente da República, *o Presidente do Conselho!*⁶⁹ (*A Costa*: 157)

This ironic refusal of blame is notably passed on through a series of men, including Salazar himself, and through this lineage of culpability Jorge highlights the varying sources of propaganda that propagated the nationalist myths that fuelled the Portuguese army. Góis does however include his wife's mother in the list of those to blame as the sole female role model; this reinforcement of guilt and responsibility highlights the historic narrative of blame that so often surrounds maternal figures.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Italic emphasis is my own.

⁷⁰ Female culpability often finds its origins with the blame given to Eve in the Garden of Eden, but is particularly fervent with regard to maternal figures specifically. Due to the sole responsibility historically given to mothers over the actions and care of their children, narratives of blame and guilt follow when idealised societal norms of the family are not met.

The initial characterisation of Isabela's cousin, Forza Leal, and Luís Alex make evident that institutions such as the state and the military enabled *Estado Novo* ideals surrounding both masculinity and colonial doctrines to be successfully reinforced. The ideological justification of the Colonial War and notions of military might and duty are exacerbated through the compliance to a hegemonic masculinity that all three military protagonists initially replicate; the ways in which this compliance is ultimately disrupted due to encounters with trauma will be discussed in the second part of this chapter.

3.1.4 Queering the Military

Although *O Retorno* focuses primarily on a civilian family, soldiers still feature, and from the outset we are offered a disruptive example of military masculinity through the characterisation of Uncle Zé. His portrayal shifts throughout the novel, and from the revered and brave soldier (*O Retorno*: 41) to the figure of the effeminate homosexual, Zé seems to have a dual physical depiction. To begin with, it appears that he adhered, at least in part, to aspects of the military masculinity promoted by the *Estado Novo*, for example the hyper-masculine 'tatuagem Angola 1971' (*O Retorno*: 34). According to Dyvik and Welland 'unlike other physical manifestations of war on the body, such as amputations or scars, military tattoos are voluntarily and permanently embodied traces of war experience.' (2018: 349), however rather than tattooing his body as a reminder of his active service, this tattoo seems to have been acquired before serving in the military. Thus, the tattoo is more likely a means of establishing group solidarity amongst other members of his division and can, therefore, be considered a sign of a homosocial bonding based around heteronormative masculinity.

Tales of Uncle Zé's macho adventures are depicted in his letters to Rui's mother, and earn him the title 'Tarzan do Quixete' (*O Retorno*: 41); whilst this nickname has obvious connotations with brute strength, it should also be viewed critically, as the text makes clear the anxiety that Rui's mother feels regarding status and maintaining appearances; therefore, it is

probable that she fictionalised or embellished the stories recounted in Zé's letters in order to gain respect for the family.

Of particular significance regarding the characterisation of Zé is his implied homosexuality; he is described as decidedly effeminate and different from the other soldiers:

O tio Zé não era como os outros tropas, fechava os olhos ao beber gasosa, punha-se a pestanejar, queixava-se da humidade que lhe pesava os pulmões...os outros tropas não falavam assim, para mais o tio Zé tinha os lábios em forma de coração como os da mãe, que belo homem te tornaste, dizia-lhe a mãe, o pai nunca deixa que a mãe diga que sou bonito, os homens não se querem bonitos, mas o tio Zé sorria agradecido e até corava como as raparigas, os homens não devem corar. (*O Retorno*: 39)

Zé negates an adherence to a hypermasculine military body and presents a disruptive identity through his effeminate gestures, further amplified by his homosexuality which is first mentioned during his time in active service: 'a carta estava cheia de meias palavras mas dava para perceber que o tio Zé era como os rapazes que eram apanhados a fazer porcarias uns com os outros na casa de banho do liceu' (*O Retorno*: 41). Zé's sexual identity calls for an analysis that intersects with queer theory.

The development of queer studies within Portuguese literature is still in fledgling form, and at present there is no comprehensive exploration of the historical representations of differing sexualities within Lusophone literature. Within the last two decades there have been notable academic contributions to this lacuna, through broader thematic collections and historical overviews, yet any individual literary analysis remains predominantly focused on male authors.⁷¹

⁷¹ See: José Luiz Foureaux, *Literatura e homoerotismo: uma introdução* (São Paulo: Scortecci Editora, 2002); José Carlos Barcelos, *Literatura e homoerotismo em questão* (Rio de Janeiro: Dialogarts, 2006); Ricardo Thomé, *Eros proibido: as ideologias em torno da questão homoerótica na literatura brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Razão Cultural, 2009); Paulo Drummond Braga, *Filhas de Safo: uma história da homossexualidade feminina em Portugal* (Cacem: Texto, 2011); Fernando Curopos, *Queer(s) périphérique(s): représentation de l'homosexualité au Portugal (1974-2014)* (Alfragide: Texto, 2016a) and *L'émergence de l'homosexualité dans la littérature portugaise (1875-1915)* ((Paris: L'Harmattan

Interpretations deploying queer theory within the Lusophone African space remain limited, with most found within books with a different thematic centring.⁷² Of great importance to the maturity of Lusophone queer studies was the seminal *Lusosex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-Speaking World* (2002), edited by Susan Canty Quinlan and Fernando Arenas, and the recent *Journal of Lusophone Studies* special issue ‘Transnational and Counterinternational Queer Agencies in Lusophone Cultures’ (2019), edited by Anna M. Klobucka and César Braga-Pinto. The following analysis seeks to make a small contribution to this emerging scholarship within the Lusophone space.

Certainly, there are many aspects of the army which lend themselves to the construction of a homoerotic site, and Willett and Smaal argue that ‘while the laws, rules and policies were very clear on the undesirability of homosexuality in the forces and provided strong powers to regulate it, the very existence of such measures reveals the sexual potential (and reality) of an all-male institution composed of deracinated young men in their physical prime’ (2013: 27). In addition, utilising Foucault’s notion of sexual prohibition, repression and surveillance can often lead to sexual identities being ‘drawn out, revealed, isolated, intensified, incorporated, by multifarious power devices’ (1978: 48).

Initially Zé did not return to Portugal after his military service, but instead remained in Angola, and ‘foi aí que conheceu o Nhé Nhé, o amigo preto que quando fuma faz bolinhas com fumo como raparigas, uma boquinha delicada e um risinho, consegui, consegui.’ (*O Retorno*: 47); this functions as the second depiction of Zé’s homosexuality where we assume his relationship with Nhé Nhé to have a sexual element.

Editions, 2016b); Jorge Vicente Valentim, *Corpo no outro corpo: homoerotismo na narrativa portuguesa contemporânea* (São Carlos: University Press of São Carlos, 2017).

⁷² Hilary Owen and Phillip Rothwell, eds. *Sexual/Textual Empires: Gender and Marginality in Lusophone African Literature* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2004); Jones, Eleanor. *Battleground Bodies: Gender and Sexuality in Mozambican Literature*. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2017).

There was no space for homosexuality within the *homem novo* and Catholic fascist-nationalist theoretical model, where lesbian and gay relationships were viewed as a direct threat to the sanctified family unit. Arenas and Quinlan state: ‘during the puritanical and ultranationalistic regime [...] the “sacred” Portuguese or “Luso” family was to be safeguarded by containing sexuality’ (2002: xxi). Indeed, it is due to Zé’s outwardly presenting effeminacy and homosexuality that he suffers sexual abuse within the military, as will be discussed in the following section.

That being said, despite the ideological stance of the *Estado Novo*, clandestine gay and lesbian relationships naturally still took place within the spheres of Salazar’s control; of particular importance here are the homosexual politics of the empire. There is indisputably an inextricable link between sexuality and empire within the colonial imagination. In fact, in *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, Aldrich argues that ‘the colonies provided a refuge for those fleeing their homelands – by desire or necessity – because of reprobate desires and chequered backgrounds, and, more generally, for those ill at ease in the confines of traditional European society’ (2003: 406).

And yet, the colonies did not always provide such an egalitarian homosexual utopia, particularly where interracial relationships such as Zé and Nhé Nhé’s are concerned. Boone (1995) and Matz (2019) argue that gay sex in the colonies was almost equally as exploitative as the direct exploitation of imperialism itself, and that homosexual desire was inevitably complicit in the project of the empire. Therefore, in direct competition with the potentially transgressive nature of Zé’s sexual identity lies his potentially active role in the racial power play of the empire, which will be explored in the final section of this chapter.

Through his relationship with Nhé Nhé, Zé becomes involved in the Angolan nationalist movement, suggesting an apparent rejection of the regime’s ideological beliefs regarding the

Portuguese colonies: ‘passou a ajudar o povo oprimido a libertar-se do jugo dos colonialistas, tem cartão e tudo. Sabe as cantigas revolucionárias de cor e aprende quimbundo com o Nhé Nhé’ (*O Retorno*: 47). As Barbara Bush, within Levine’s central work *Gender and the Empire*, argues:

Homosexuality subverted heterosexual white domesticity, transgressed the race boundaries on which the stability of Empire depended, and thus weakened the foundations of colonialism. Male homosexuality remained illegal and experiences of discrimination may perhaps have made homosexual men and women more sympathetic to colonial grievances. (2004: 84)

It is unclear whether Zé embarked upon his military journey discontent with the politics of the Colonial War, or if these ideas developed once his obligatory service was complete. However, as Campos states: ‘The war seemed to prolong itself indefinitely and for many students and military men this meant an interest in political and ideological literature and an increasing awareness of African national movements’ (2008: 111). Indeed, public concern regarding the Colonial War had begun to surge, particularly amongst the educated youth, and politically mobilised university groups organized protests and distributed leaflets criticising the regime’s political standpoint on the ongoing combat.

Whilst it would be easy to equate Zé’s sexuality with his new found anti-imperialist political opinions, Matz, commenting on Forster, states ‘proof that any effort to draw links between homosexuality and anti-imperial justice must end in all-too-human ambiguity.’ (2019: 33). Such human ambiguity is plain throughout Rui’s optics of his Uncle Zé, and the contradictions in his characterisation will be discussed in more depth in the final section of this chapter.

3.2 Traumatic Encounters

Thus far, this chapter has traced the compliance of fathers, sons, and soldiers within *A Costa*, *Caderno*, and *O Retorno* alongside the *homem novo* ideal and military masculinity endorsed by

the *Estado Novo*. Bar the disruptive elements of Zé's sexuality and political identity explored above, for the most part the other male characters seem to submit successfully. The second half of this chapter will now focus on the trauma experienced by the male characters, both physical and mental, and how this complicates their effective compliance to a masculine identity model.

Focusing on the emotional implications of trauma, Allen comments that 'psychologically, the bottom line of trauma is overwhelming emotion and a feeling of utter helplessness. There may or may not be bodily injury, but psychological trauma is coupled with physiological upheaval that plays a leading role in the long-range effects' (1995: 14). This state of powerlessness is further emphasized by Caruth's (1995) description, whereby she states that trauma occurs when the subject experiences a sense of complete destruction of their coherency and control over life and body. Both these descriptions emphasise that a traumatic event is beyond our frameworks of reference, and thus, we have minimal knowledge how to comprehend or interpret it; as such, our consequent ability to cope is overwhelmed. The trauma discussed in the following analysis can be divided into three distinct categories: trauma encountered within the army, both on and off the battlefield, trauma encountered in prison, and the trauma of uprooting and of migration.

3.2.1 The Wounded Male Body

The importance of a strong and "whole" male body within the gender expectations of the *Estado Novo* colonial project has been previously established; thus, building upon that foundation, this section explores by contrast the tensions that emerge within normative ideals of masculinity when the body is wounded.

In many instances, war wounds can exude a glorified status and be synonymous with power and dominance. This symbolism is evident in *A Costa* through the scar on Forza Leal's chest, obtained through military combat in Guinea Bissau (*A Costa*: 65). The scar itself additionally has an erotic charge and is legendary amongst the people of Stella Maris; for Luís

Alex ‘a cicatriz foi uma bela marca [...] e esteve por isso na base de grandes duelos, profundas admirações, redundantes amores’ (*A Costa*: 63). The mark is enveloped in military and masculine significance, celebrating violence and symbolising power, strength, and bravery; this stance is held in direct contrast with Eva who views it as the ‘anachronism of imperial discourses’ (Owen & Alonso 2011: 164). In the case of Forza Leal, his bodily scar acts to reinforce his hyper-masculine military identity and his disfigurement enhances his perceived sense of power.

Nevertheless, not all wartime scars are steeped in glory, and some place into question the assumed undeniable strength of the male body. Corporeal wounding is particularly symbolic when viewed in conjunction with the military body, as when these bodies are mutilated or disfigured ideals of the military male corpus are exposed as hollow and false (Biernoff 2014). Carden-Coyne argues that it is fundamental to explore ‘how war wounds, as the experience of frontline casualties and military hospitals, demonstrated the complexity of gender constructs and gendered behaviour in response to the military demands placed on male bodies in wartime’ (2015: 4). Alongside the rupturing of the concept of the male body as the base of masculinity, the wounded body further disrupts the oppressive ideals of the heteronormative masculinity promoted by Salazar’s regime.

Surprisingly, despite the very real physical repercussions of the Colonial War on the bodies of a generation of young men, disability is rarely mentioned within the three texts. The only explicit example of military disability caused by combat is found within *A Costa* during a lecture on Portuguese military might delivered by an army Captain who is blind, having lost his sight after a grenade exploded during a chase in the bush during the Colonial War (*A Costa*: 214). The disabled body acts here to invert the imperialist discourse promoted by the *Estado Novo*, upon which the Captain is ironically lecturing. An additional irony here is that the blind Captain is unable to see that the room in which he is speaking is decorated with pictures of the ‘Invencível Armada’ (*A Costa*: 216). Owen and Alonso comment that ‘the Captain’s blindness could be a thinly veiled reference to the metaphorical “blindness” of Salazar, who in 1968 had been left

disabled by a stroke, but continued to believe himself in charge of the nation until his death in 1970' (2011: 186). The physical disability shown here ruptures the imposed military ethos of the strong and "whole" military body that the Captain supposedly "embodies".

Indeed, Jorge makes a second and final reference to the physical brutality that the Colonial War inflicted upon the bodies of Portuguese men through the harrowing line on the last page of the text: 'Nem todos obviamente voltavam por seus pés e por seus olhos' (*A Costa*: 259). This line starkly alludes to the physical costs of the war and the reality that many soldiers returned to Portugal with physical impairments and disabilities. Through this mention of the physical cost of the war, Jorge highlights the contradictions within Salazar's imperial plan of action as many of the soldiers sent to war would return home, if at all, to a country whose economy at the time was still mostly agricultural, with severe physical disabilities. These disabilities would prevent them from working the land or emigrating to seek manual labour, thus unable to fulfil their traditional role as breadwinner of the household. This exposes the flaws within the *Estado Novo* rhetoric of the brave Portuguese male as the patriarch and protector of the household, as many of these men would now be unable to financially support their families, or indeed emotionally and physically protect them from the person the Colonial War had forced them to become, as will be explored later in this chapter.

Disability is also mentioned by Figueiredo, although not in relation to war-time trauma. As has been previously explored, Figueiredo gives great importance to her father's body, and despite her constant self-positioning as diminutive and physically submissive towards him, there is one moment where she comments on their similarities. As she leaves the airport to board her flight to Portugal, she comments upon both her and her father's hand: 'as suas duas mãos *inteiras* espalmadas contra o vidro, o sorriso misturado com lágrimas. As duas mãos iguais às minhas mãos. Estas, de carne, que agora escrevem esta frase. As mesmas.' (*Caderno*: 162).⁷³ And yet, it

⁷³ Italics my own.

is only within the last ten pages of the text, that Figueiredo references the fact that her father has a physical disability; he is missing three fingers on his right hand and thus his hand is not ‘inteira’ at all.⁷⁴ She states:

Lembro-me de que não tinha as mãos inteiras. Sofrera a amputação de três dedos na direita. Cortara-os numa máquina tipográfica, aos 12 anos, ou talvez mais cedo, pouco depois de ter começado a trabalhar. A máquina com que operava mostrou-lhe que já tinha idade suficiente para ficar sem eles.

Os dedos do meu pai, olhando para a palma da sua mão aberta, pareciam pénis anões circuncidados, com o freio separando cada metade, ou melhor, travando aquelas pequenas bochechas de carne (*Caderno*: 208)

The visually stark, emasculating description of the maimed fingers as ‘pénis anões circuncidados’ is ironic given her father’s virility and sexual appetite, both within and outside his marriage (*Caderno*: 42). So why, despite countless references regarding her father’s body at length, and his hands in particular, does the passage referencing his disability come so late? Notably, the addition of her father’s disability does not feature within the original *Angelus Novus* edition, and is found only in the reissued and extended version of *Caderno*, published by Caminho in 2015.

The lateness given to his *handicap* by Figueiredo seems to highlight the pervasive, internalised belief around her father’s strength and the white male body in general. To my mind, the lateness of the mention of this disability may echo Figueiredo’s struggle to accept a vulnerable side to her father, when positioned alongside his violence and complicity within the colonial system. Such a childhood accident relates to a different iteration of her father, a child required to work rather than attend school due to a poor socio-economic background. The version of the father that we see through Figueiredo’s characterisation has had all other portrayals of vulnerability erased by the power, violence, and brutality that he displays in the present. And yet, this physical disability reminds us to pause and take note of the child who came before the version

⁷⁴ A family photo showing her father’s handicap can be found in Appendix 2.

of her father that exists within colonial Lourenço Marques. To return to the Aristotelian idea utilised earlier in this chapter that ‘the hand is a tool of tools’ (1968: 149) and that Isabela’s father uses his hands as the “tools” with which to carry out Salazar’s colonizing mission, it is now evident that the tool which Figueiredo described as so omnipotent, and often dangerous, is in fact flawed. Moreover, the monolithic body that she has described is disabled. In this respect, it may prompt the reader to feel somewhat sympathetic towards her otherwise objectionable father, who is inflicting trauma on others.

Curiously, a similar disfigurement of the hand is found within *O Retorno*, where Rui’s grandfather lost a thumb whilst chopping firewood. When in public, Rui declares that his grandfather was injured fighting in the war, and notes that his mother never corrects him; thus, passively corroborating his story (*O Retorno*: 36). Likewise, Rui’s father, Mário, is marked by a scar on his shin suffered during a motorcycle accident (*O Retorno*: 15), described as ‘feia de se ver’ (*O Retorno*: 15). Although the scar is not related to war-time activity, it is rooted in a hypermasculine image of the motorbike and therefore does not carry the same embarrassing weight as his grandfather’s disfigured hand. Therefore, it is evident that not all bodily wounds are created equal, and their symbolism is dependent upon whether they can be inserted within a narrative of male might and dominance.

The corporeal wounding found within *A Costa*, *Caderno*, and *O Retorno*, demonstrate the varying significance awarded to physical war-time wounds. Minimal injuries suffered on the front line, such as those of Forza Leal, seem to bring glory, but severe wounds and disabilities incite an uncomfortable silence, lest they be allowed to expose, and implode, flawed narratives around the physical cost of the Portuguese presence in Africa. Similarly, injuries associated with the political imprisonment of colonial settlers are steeped in shame, as they reveal to the metropole, all too discernibly, the uncomfortable reality of the imperial project.

Turning now to trauma experienced whilst in political prisons, Cardoso and Figueiredo portray such experiences through both fathers, who are incarcerated by nationalist movement groups during the decolonisation period. The physical scars they sustained were not obtained from front line fighting, but rather as punishment for the violent racism inflicted upon the black population by white colonial settlers. Isabela, on the treatment her father endured, states: ‘Saiu do cárcere, irreconhecível e calado...que terá apanhado forte e feio, sem dó, sem hora.’ (*Caderno*: 201-02). Despite the fact that Rui’s father professes his role in what Eduardo Lourenço has named ‘a existência sonâmbula do nosso colonialismo inocente’ (2014: 212), his wounds cause him deep embarrassment upon his return to Portugal and he consistently wears long sleeved shirts to hide his scars and corresponding shame (*O Retorno*: 256). On their arrival to the metropole, the *retornado* community were viewed as backward racist imperialists, and Portuguese citizens sought to disassociate themselves from the colonial projects; thus, the desire to cover the father’s scars attests to this prevalent stigma.

3.2.2 The Traumatized Male Mind

The following section departs from the physical body and explores the representation of mental trauma suffered by the male characters within the texts. In relation to mental trauma within the Portuguese literary field, Rato Rodrigues (2016, 2017) has analysed in depth the representations of post-traumatic stress disorder in the work of Lobo Antunes. However, aside from this, PTSD has, for the most part, been absent from scholarly engagement with Portuguese post-imperial writing; this lacuna seems surprising given the brutality of Colonial War active service on Portuguese men.

Undeniably, when looking at the drastic changes in Luís Alex’s personality in *A Costa* from a lens of trauma, it is apparent that he is not in fact the perfect embodiment of the regime, as Salazar hoped his soldiers would be, but instead fraught with the repercussions of a war-time combat reality. On his return from the Front, he is clearly suffering from PTSD. His sleep is

broken and fitful (*A Costa*: 238) and upon hearing sudden noises he takes a position of attack as if holding a rifle (*A Costa*: 243). The mental trauma that numerous soldiers suffered both during and after their army service ruptures the heroic narrative that the *Estado Novo* disseminated and undermines a more general ideological standpoint of an indestructible military masculinity. As Carden-Coyne comments ‘the expectations of stoicism and heroism placed on individuals were no match for the scale and reach of industrialised slaughter’ (2015: 3).

After Luís Alex delves deeper into the world of violence, broken relationships, and war crimes, his body also begins to betray him; as he suffers more extensive trauma in the army there is an apparent shift away from the traditional masculine body towards that of the feminine: for example, his voice becomes feminised (*A Costa*: 237), and he is unable to have a sexual relationship with Eva (*A Costa*: 243). No longer able to fully mirror the distorted hyper-masculine figure presented by Forza Leal, Luís Alex’s masculinity seems to shift into a more feminised state as his mental trauma becomes more pronounced. His emotional turmoil and suffering ultimately reaches its pinnacle at the end of the text, where he is swept out to sea in a potential suicide. This act mirrors the poisoned black bodies who are likewise found dead in the water. Through the ambiguity given to Luís Alex’s death and his body’s loss at sea, Jorge plays with the *Estado Novo*’s concealment of information regarding military suicide or casualties. These were rarely reported, in an attempt to hide the inconvenient and shameful traces of Colonial War violence from the Portuguese public.

Portrayals of PTSD and suicide are also utilised by Figueiredo through the depiction of her nameless cousin. Upon returning to Portugal after the war, he is evidently also grappling with PTSD, drug abuse, and violent outbursts, and ultimately commits suicide. Through his trauma, the unnamed cousin breaches the credibility of *Estado Novo* ideology around male military resilience and the nature of the war itself, whereby it was assumed that veterans could return and reintegrate into society unaffected by their military experiences: ‘já em Xabregas, após ter

queimado todas as veias, assaltado ourivesarias na Almirante Reis e assassinado negros a tiro, pelas costas, na Damaia' (*Caderno*: 108).

Suicide presupposes not only a disruption of masculinity, but more importantly acute mental trauma. Whilst suicide within literary analysis has historically been viewed metaphorically as a symptom of social disorder, in this instance it is more important to consider how these examples of suicide highlight the untreated trauma that became a widespread issue for many soldiers, as they bore the brunt of *Estado Novo* hypocrisy. Veterans were expected to coalesce into functioning members of society, with no state welfare support to either assist recovery from trauma or negotiate their participation in a war that was condemned by a newly post-colonial Portuguese society.

Significantly, when the unnamed cousin leaves Mozambique for Portugal, the remaining family bury his uniform, gun, and machete as a preventive measure to hide their complicity in the Colonial War from independence groups. The symbolic weight of this cannot be denied. The act of burying these emblematic images of the military is in keeping with the collective societal silence that bound the Colonial War, and these objects which historically were innately linked to valour and courage are now imbued with shame and fear. The cousin ultimately becomes disillusioned with the rhetoric of the Empire even before returning to Portugal:

descia a Lourenço Marques de nove em nove meses, mas já não era o mesmo. Deixou crescer a barba. Era a guerra, e o meu primo nunca falou da guerra [...] o meu primo falava pouco e evitava a roda social [...] tinha vergonha (*Caderno*: 111)

Thus, the burial of his military possessions not only foreshadows his own burial, through the ultimate act of suicide, but also signifies the demise of his blind allegiance to the nation. Both depictions of suicide by Jorge and Figueiredo demonstrate the eventual erasure of the traumatised white male body, and by extension an erasure of its complicity in maintaining colonial hierarchies.

Whilst not depicted as suffering explicitly from PTSD, both Rui and Isabela's fathers clearly experience mental trauma as a result of their political imprisonment, and, in contrast to their initial positioning as pillars of colonial strength, neither are able to discuss their experiences:

O pai nunca falou da prisão. Nem uma palavra. Talvez por isso eu não consiga olhar para as cicatrizes do pai quando o vejo em tronco nu. O silêncio do pai faz com que as cicatrizes contem coisas mais terríveis do que as que o pai poderia alguma vez contar, as cicatrizes mostram-me as feridas a serem abertas, o pai a gritar, a implorar, o pai deve ter chorado (*O Retorno*: 251)

A prisão do meu pai foi sempre tabu na família. Ele nunca nos falou sobre o que se passou lá dentro, e nós tivemos pudor em perguntar, pelo que imagino o pior. A sombra do que se desconhece é sempre enorme. O meu pai era um gabarola bem-disposto, portanto se não lhe ocorreu gabar-se sobre os seus feitos heroicos desta fase, nem sequer uma gracinha, é provável que não tenham existido, e que a coisa lhe não tenha corrido bem. (*Caderno*: 201-02)

That both the body and the mind are no longer sites of masculine power due to the wounds inflicted upon them is a deeply traumatic reality and thus shrouded in silence. The reticence that surrounds both fathers' periods of incarceration speaks to the mental suffering that was endured, but more specifically highlights a lack of vocabulary with which to discuss their trauma. Rui and his sister, Milucha, wonder if their father will become like Senhor Moreira, who 'ficou meio maluco porque esteve preso muitos anos [...] torturaram-no durante muitos anos.' (*Retorno*: 231). After the end of the Colonial War there was no welfare infrastructure within Portuguese society to support returned veterans; therefore, the absence of State-offered assistance was compounded by an accepted hegemonic masculinity, that considered speaking of emotions as a weakness, and resulted in an internalised and unspoken trauma left to fester.

Yet, the mental trauma experienced during the Colonial War can be caused on either side of the battle lines, and the following analysis explores mental trauma encountered within the Portuguese army itself. In *O Retorno*, as previously discussed, through the depiction of his body and actions, Uncle Zé defies and inverts the traditional power possessed by the normative military

body; however, it comes at the high price of homophobic sexual abuse by fellow soldiers (*O Retorno*: 41). The letters that once brought tales of Zé's fictionalised masculine triumphs, now illustrate a depressive period: 'o miserável queixa-se que os outros soldados lhe arrearam' (*O Retorno*: 42). Indirectly through Rui, we learn the extent of the abuse through the uncomfortable line: 'Pedi muitas vezes a deus que o tio Zé fosse ferido para regressar à metrópole mas tirando a sova que os outros soldados lhe deram nunca lhe aconteceu nada de mal.' (*O Retorno*: 47).

Belkin (2001) argues that, although homophobic military culture should not be considered as a single hegemonic monolith, it has remained historically entrenched and resistant to change. A reason given as to the persisting nature of military homophobia is that it seeks to deny the armed forces as 'a site where lesbian and gay practices and identities actually emerge' (2001: 94). Despite the fact that many who have engaged in same-sex sexual relations in the army continue to consider themselves heterosexual, some give credit to it as being a step in understanding a queer identity; it is, however, unclear as to whether Zé was aware of his queer identity before entering the military or not.

Given that there is limited information on historical homosexual practices within the Portuguese army, it is unsurprising that there is next to no scholarship on homophobic abuse, such as male rape. And yet, within heavily gendered institutions such as the military homophobic abuse is rife, with male rape and sexual assault often carried out as a form of homophobic hate crime (Dunn 2012). Effeminate and gay men are seen to pose a threat to a hegemonic military masculinity, and indeed the gendered social hierarchy of culturally idealised masculinities, and are therefore often met with violent repression. Connell states that:

In the dynamics of hegemony in contemporary Western masculinity, the relation between heterosexual and homosexual men is central, carrying a symbolic freight. To many people, homosexuality is a *negation* of masculinity, and homosexual men must be effeminate. Given that assumption, antagonism toward homosexual men may be used to define masculinity (1992: 736).

Such antagonism most likely manifests itself as violence, which is crucial in upholding a dominant gender status quo. As Connell further states: ‘Terror is used as a means of drawing boundaries and making exclusions, for example, in heterosexual violence against gay men. (2005: 83). Given that a traumatic encounter can rupture a sense of Self, this could explain the shift in Zé’s portrayal of military masculinity; perhaps, through the emotional upheaval and destruction of the Self instigated by his sexual abuse, his ability to conform to a heteronormative military culture was consequently shattered.

Notably however, trauma, both physical and mental, is not restricted simply to veterans themselves. Within *A Costa*, Jorge makes evident that experienced military trauma had extremely detrimental effects on family relations and structures, where it ruptures interpersonal relationships and boundaries. Herman comments that ‘traumatic events call into question basic human relationships. They breach the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. They shatter the construction of self that is formed and sustained in relation to others’ (1992: 51), and this is apparent through the physical abuse of countless wives living at Stella Maris at the hands of their husbands (*A Costa*: 109); especially those who are excused from the fighting due to injury. The lust for violence that men have internalised and are unable to quench on the front line is brought back into the personal sphere and intensified through a fierce need for dominance, combined with undiagnosed trauma.

Whilst Jorge clearly critiques the issue of domestic violence against women within *A Costa*⁷⁵, from a male lens this criticism also draws attention to the lack of support for soldiers suffering from undiagnosed and untreated PTSD, with no outlet for their traumas. As Margarida Dias Martins succinctly commented: ‘[q]uer dizer; se a Guerra separa, o retorno não une’ (2006: 18). Whilst the discussion of the male voice here is by no means an attempt to diminish the direct trauma suffered by the emotionally and physically abused wives, it is imperative to understand

⁷⁵ An in-depth analysis of the domestic abuse suffered within *A Costa* will take place in the following chapter.

the circumstances from which this abuse stemmed, and that the violence experienced and enacted during the war is recreated within the personal sphere. Whilst Portugal fought the Colonial War on three fronts, the returning soldiers later seemed to face a fourth frontier –a new enemy to be fought from within, the Other within the Self (Ribeiro 2002).

3.2.3 An Uprooted Identity

The final trauma to be considered within this chapter is the disorientation of forced migration, which Cardoso articulates throughout Rui's time in the Motherland. The reader bears witness to his increased sense of confusion around his understanding of the Self, as his fervently held views around race, sexuality, masculinity, and the empire, previously discussed within this chapter, are suddenly thrown into question, concurrently so is his own identity. The Angola that Rui called home 'acabou' (*O Retorno*: 14) and his superior social positioning within colonial racial politics is now replaced with a marginalised status in Portugal. The most distressing facet of his migration, however, is the loss of his father's steadfast paternal protection.

In reference to refugees, but also of great relevance here, Li et al comment:

The process of uprooting one's life and adjusting to an unfamiliar physical and cultural environment poses significant social and interpersonal challenges for refugees. The social and interpersonal difficulties that can result from forced displacement may include ongoing family separation, social isolation, and discrimination from the host country, as well as the loss of social identity tied with former community and cultural groups. (2016: 82)

This process has thrown Rui's identity into a traumatic state of flux. The act of migration is often rife with distressing experiences that can add to the disorientation of displacement, and, whilst pre-migration trauma is of obvious importance in the mental health outcomes of migration, it is now considered equally valuable to assess post-migration stressors in new environments (Li et al. 2016). In Rui's case, the pre-migration trauma of his father's violent arrest is evident through his consistent flashbacks (*O Retorno*: 63) and obsessive analysis over his actions, or lack thereof,

during the event. The post-migration trauma also adds to his sense of instability as the family experiences financial insecurity, social stigmatization, and uncertainty regarding Rui's father's survival.

In addition, Rui's confusion upon discovering the "truth" of the Portuguese metropolis is a further source of instability. Unable to believe the empty rhetoric that was sold to him, he comments:

Portugal não é um país pequeno, era o que estava escrito no mapa da escola, Portugal não é um país pequeno, é um império do Minho e Timor. A metrópole não pode ser como hoje vimos no caminho que o táxi fez, ninguém nos ia obrigar a cantar hinos aos sábados de manhã se a metrópole fosse tão acanhada e suja, com ruas tão estreitas onde parece que nem cabemos. (*O Retorno*: 83)

Furthermore, to add to Rui's sense of uncertainty, any pillars of infrastructure which could function as stabilisers are seemingly vacant. His father is absent, and feared dead, he views his mother as overwhelmed due to her mental health episodes, and his education has been disrupted by his truancy, resulting from the mistreatment of the *retornado* pupils (*O Retorno*: 139).⁷⁶ In response to his perceived lack of support networks, Rui self-imposes his role as the sole carer for his mother and sister despite his age and inexperience, a responsibility which only adds to his anxious state: 'se nos puserem na rua não sei para onde levar a mãe e a Milucha. Não sei como tomar conta da mãe e a Milucha.' (*O Retorno*: 133). Rui's own expectation that he should be the one to protect his mother and sister in his father's absence displays his own internalised misogyny towards the capabilities of the women in his family circle.

3.2.4 Fluid Identities

The three authors interrogate the (im)possibility of recovery from the trauma of the Colonial War

⁷⁶ Concurrently, as the novel draws to a close so does the sexual/maternal relationship that he has developed with Silvana. Despite the unequal power dynamic of this relationship, it does provide Rui with a form of interpersonal constancy, albeit short lived. An in-depth analysis of this relationship takes place in the following chapter.

by both civilians, soldiers, and by extension, society. As discussed, the male characters have encountered a range of physical and mental trauma ranging from prisoner abuse, sexual abuse, PTSD, suicide, and uprooting. The severity of the trauma depicted prompts the question: do Jorge, Figueiredo, and Cardoso offer any hope for survival and recovery for their male characters?

The masculine characters discussed within the context of *A Costa* and *Caderno* ultimately end in death, with the assumed suicide of Luís Alex and Isabela's cousin, and natural death of Isabela's father, offering a bleak outlook for those involved in the colonising mission and Colonial War in Africa. The lone optimistic ending for male protagonists is constructed by Cardoso, in so far as Rui's family attempt to start a new life in Portugal after his father's safe return.

Whereas the emotional rupturing of relationships due to trauma is made clear by Jorge and Figueiredo, Cardoso depicts the reverse; indeed, Mário's personality change comes as a surprise. When Rui informs his father that he has been playing truant from school and expects to be physically beaten, his father replies: 'tens tempo, um chumbo de um ano não é nada que não possa remediar-se' (*O Retorno*: 260). Whereas, as aforementioned, in many circumstances the violence that was experienced during the war was recreated within the personal domestic sphere, in *O Retorno* this is not the case. This shift away from the violence that Mário endured in prison, shows a healthier trajectory for the family as Mário dedicates himself to reconciliation and a sense of hope for a stronger family unit.

On the other hand, it is challenging to identify the recovery outcome that Cardoso intends for Zé, the only surviving military protagonist within the three texts. The complex dichotomy within his identity reaches its peak towards the end of the text, when despite his presentation as gay, he eventually returns to the motherland with a female mulatto fiancée named Mena. This act can be viewed in two ways, the first as an act of 'passing' as a heterosexual, and the second as

simply an additional layer to his queer identity.

To begin with the act of passing, Rui, upon seeing his uncle for the first time in Portugal, says:

Mas não deixou de ser estranho ver o tio Zé na recepção sem um cinto com uma fivela em forma de borboleta...ainda tinha os lábios em forma de coração mas já não fazia beicinho como as raparigas, e não fazendo o beicinho era só um homem com os lábios. (*O Retorno*: 262)

The “politics of passing” as coined by Johnson (2002) are highly complex, and amongst queer theorists there is much debate over whether the act is transgressive or normalising, as it can assist in maintaining mainstream heteronormative identities and categories. In defence of its transgressive nature, Inness argues:

the lesbian who passes as heterosexual calls into question the distinction between heterosexual and homosexual. Ultimately, she threatens to overthrow the whole homosexual order because heterosexuality can only exist in opposition to homosexuality. (1997: 161)

However, in focusing too heavily on the way in which passing inverts dichotomies, one may lose sight of how such assimilation acts to maintain and strengthen the privileged position of mainstream identities, such as heteronormative heterosexuality (Johnson 2002).

Yet, nuance around safety must be applied to such a reading. According to Phelan (2001), we must acknowledge that members of the LGBTQA+ community who do not adhere to heteronormative societal standards have their values rejected and day to day lives made increasingly difficult. Therefore, in critiquing the potentially normalising aspect of passing we must also be mindful of the dangers within society that the LGBTQA+ community face which make it necessary. In this regard, Zé’s passing as straight may be due to the negative reception towards LGBTQA+ rights in Portugal given that upon his return to Portugal, despite the fall of

the dictatorship, homosexuality was still criminalised by law. As previously explored, the *Estado Novo* masculine ideal was centred around the strong nationalist male, who in addition to being white was also invariably straight; even within Portugal's new democracy, homophobic attitudes remained still dominant as part of the legacy of the regime and indeed remained so in subsequent decades. As Cascais comments:

The struggle of gays and lesbians thus appeared as essentially demobilising, carrying ultra-minority status and with no repercussions or benefit for broader struggles imbued with general social and political value a petit-bourgeois and/or leftist illusion. In the worst case (but very widespread) scenario, same-sex matters were viewed as an eloquent manifestation of bourgeois decadence and gays and lesbians as class enemies. (2009: 159)

Concurrently, gay relationships were not accepted in 1970s Angola, thus Zé may well have necessitated to return home due to the lack of safety surrounding living an openly gay lifestyle. The use of Rui as the principal narrator complicates our ability to understand the nuances of Zé's characterisation, and through the eyes of Rui little detail of Zé and Nhé Nhé's relationship is provided. According to Arenas and Quinlan: 'There is little evidence in Portuguese-speaking Africa of any communities or movements that openly assume the identity categories of "gay," "lesbian," or "bisexual", and the topic of alternative sexualities remain strictly taboo.' (2002: xvi-ii). Therefore, whilst Zé passing as heterosexual can, in some respects, be viewed as a subversive way to invert sexual identity binaries, it should also be noted that in the most critical sense it may simply be a survival strategy.

And yet, to return from the colonies to a Northern Portuguese town with a mulatto woman would be no easy task, as the racial politics within post-colonial Portugal at the time still stigmatized interracial relationships. Therefore, were Zé simply looking for a woman to hide his true sexuality, a white woman would seem like the easier choice. This prompts us to consider Zé's potential bisexuality, with the fluidity of his sexuality acting to explain his new-found relationship. Freud's (1918) "Wolf Man" study is insightful here, where, through a patient's

recurring dream about white wolves, Freud first explored in depth the contradictions of masculinity, ultimately noting that adult masculinity was underpinned by multiple layers of unconscious emotion. He stresses that masculinity, whether homosexual or heterosexual, is a complicated blend of feelings and processes which at times may result in structures which seem contradictory.

In praise of this seminal study, Connell states that ‘layers of emotion coexist and contradict each other. Each personality is a shade-filled, complex structure, not a transparent unit’ (2005: 10). It is clear then that any masculine identity, be it heterosexual or homosexual, is replete with tensions, and that it should always be considered as a state in flux. As Rui himself comments at the end of the novel, who is to say that Zé cannot be a myriad of identities:

Se calhar não é a metrópole que muda as pessoas e as pessoas mudam estejam onde estiverem, se calhar o que parece mudança não é mudança e o tio Zé sempre foi o que esteve aqui de mão dada com a mulata Mena, assim como ainda é o que passeava com o Nhé Nhé, se calhar o tio Zé sempre foi o que aceita ir para a terra e casar com a mulata Mena como ainda é o que se entusiasmava em ajudar o povo oprimido durante cinco séculos a criar uma nação. (*O Retorno*: 262)

This could in-fact be the most powerful act of transgression by Zé, where the undefinable nature of his queer identity highlights the fluidity of masculinity itself.

As an abused gay soldier, and indeed the only surviving central military character within the three texts, it is tempting to position Zé as the transgressive hero due to his sexuality and liberal politics; yet, such a reading runs the risk of erasing potential colonial power hierarchies within both his relationships. As with Nhé Nhé, viewing Zé’s relationship with Mena through the viewpoint of Rui allows minimal light to be shed on the nuances of an interracial relationship imported from Mozambique to the newly post-colonial Portugal.

Colonial domination plays a role in practically all relationships that take place in the empire, be it heterosexual, or homosexual (Aldrich, 2002), yet, it is unclear whether the colonial power hierarchy that exists within Zé's interracial relationships is unconscious or not. Zé uses Nhé Nhé's political acquaintances to help free Rui's father from jail: 'o Nhé Nhé foi tratar de tudo [...] o tio Zé tem a certeza que o Nhé Nhé convence os pretos a libertarem o pai' (*O Retorno*: 61-2) and this begets a dualistic reading. On the one hand, this act could be argued as an example of Zé attempting to appeal to both sides of the colonial system, and taking advantage his new-found position amongst nationalists as a tool to free his brother-in-law. Yet, on the other hand, and perhaps more likely, this is a caring brother trying to free the husband of a beloved sister, making use of a war-time culture that was often based on the giving and receiving of favours, indeed, Zé does have 'Amor de Irmã' (*O Retorno*: 47) tattooed on his arm.

Regarding Mena, Rui provides little detail as to her engagement to Zé, stating only that it is the couple's intention to relocate to the North of Portugal. Regardless of Zé's aforementioned potential "passing" or bisexuality, Mena's viewpoint on her arrival to Portugal and relationship with Zé is left untold. Indeed, neither Nhé Nhé nor Mena are given any dialogue in the text, and as such there is limited textual evidence to support a firm reading of either character. Through the representation of Zé, Cardoso offers an uncomfortable portrayal into the homophobic attitudes and abuse that was, and indeed still is, rife within the military and Portuguese society, and draws attention to this little documented aspect of Portuguese history.

3.3 Survival Strategies

To conclude, for male characters the post-trauma possibilities provided by the authors seem to be either flexibility of identity, or death. For some, such as Figueiredo's father, the racial beliefs that had been inherited were so entrenched that they could not be eschewed even on his death bed (*Caderno*: 149), and for the unnamed cousin and Luís Alex, suicide was deemed the only option. It is only within *O Retorno*, that Rui, Mário, and Zé offer a somewhat more hopeful vision for

the future and present the hope that in seeking a new way of life, recovery, or at least survival, from experienced trauma is a possibility.

Evidently, for human beings to come to terms with extreme forms of violence or atrocity, such as the Colonial War, a framework must exist through which these traumas are made intelligible (Quintais 2001). Rui's father is unable to find such a framework or, by extension, a vocabulary with which to explain the trauma that he suffered during his imprisonment, and as such his experiences are left untold. Similarly unable to find a formal support network within the infrastructure of Portugal, such as rehabilitation groups or social services, he creates one for himself. In Africa, overcome by a refusal to accept the defeat of his imperialist views, he allowed his family to be placed in danger, however, upon his arrival in Portugal, he attempts to build a better future for his family, quite literally, through a company selling breeze blocks. When commenting on the potential of his concrete factory, he states: 'é possível tornar a nascer' (*O Retorno*: 255). Under this ideological viewpoint, he avoids the use of violence within the family sphere, and endeavours to foster a healthier and more unified family structure, ultimately finding his own framework through which to navigate his trauma.

Rui seemingly enters a newly stabilised chapter of his life following his father's return. He resolves to catch up with his schooling, is no longer the sole carer of his mother, and is again under the paternal protection of his father, who moves the family out of the hotel and into a new home. Such an optimistic ending chosen is stark when held in comparison with the bleak outcomes illustrated by Jorge and Figueiredo in their respective works. The "fairy-tale ending" provided within *O Retorno* reinforces Cardoso's locus at the furthest end of the autofictional spectrum amongst the three texts, as argued in the first chapter of this thesis. As such, the only hopeful ending she could depict was a highly fictional one where her characters are able to embrace different versions of themselves and start their lives anew.

In keeping with this sense of hope, the closing tone of *O Retorno* shows Rui gaining a greater understanding of identity and the multiple facets of personal subjectivities. In contrast to the ideological restraints of the *Estado Novo*'s "homem novo" model and damning attitude towards identity difference, he observes:

Se calhar sou eu que vejo mudança onde na verdade não há mudança nenhuma, se calhar sou eu que invento mistério onde não há mistério nenhum, *se calhar a mudança não existe e vamo-nos só mostrando de maneiras diferentes*. Eu não sinto que mudei mas tenho certeza que se a mãe que usava o pó azul nos olhos me visse agora aqui ia dizer, não pareces tu. E não havia de ser só por causa de a barba ter crescido. (*O Retorno*: 262)
⁷⁷

Through Rui, Cardoso articulates that recovery from the trauma of the decolonisation period does not necessarily require a complete identity change, but rather an ability to take advantage of the many possibilities that the ongoing construction of identity provides. Such a rhetoric is reinforced by the final characterisations of Mário, and Uncle Zé, both of whom display new inflections within their self-presentation. Unmistakably, the multiple and varied experiences and traumas encountered within the Portuguese decolonisation process require an acceptance of fluidity and difference within depictions of masculinities. When it comes to recovery and survival, restrictive gender binaries are rarely, if ever, productive.

In the following chapter, I move from men to women and examine how trauma and mental illness are depicted within the female protagonists of my corpus.

⁷⁷ Italic emphasis my own.

Chapter Four

4. The Traumatized Female Psyche and Search for Solidarity

This chapter interrogates the intersections between trauma and the female mind, and the impact of the Colonial War and decolonisation period upon women's psyches. Firstly, this chapter explores the dream series depicted within *Caderno* and questions how a strategic use of dreamscapes offers an insight into the traumas experienced by the narrator Isabela. In contrast to Helena and Glória who are offered minimally optimistic outlooks at the end of each text, Isabela's final dream indicates a more hopeful possibility for control and renegotiation of her experienced trauma. Turning more specifically to female mental illness within *A Costa*, this chapter later explores Helena, fellow military wife of narrator Eva, and her depression and suicidality due to an abusive marriage. Subsequently, within *O Retorno*, I consider Glória, the mother of teenage protagonist Rui, who suffers from psychotic episodes and fits. Both women are experiencing resolutely different realities of the late colonial period, but share a common theme of mental illness and, most notably for my analysis, an uncomprehending and unsympathetic narrator.

4.1 Dreams, Nightmares, and Trauma

This chapter will first turn its focus to Figueiredo's *Caderno*, and the entanglement between traumatic experiences and unconscious sleep, focusing on how trauma is negotiated via the mind when dreaming. The autofictional protagonist highlights the childhood trauma experienced during the violent decolonisation process, and the emotional challenges and upheaval involved in migrating to Portugal as a *retornada*. There are three moments within *Caderno* that can be viewed as dreamscapes; the opening passage where Isabela faces the memory of her father's voice; Chapter 36 where she encounters one of her father's imagined illegitimate children; and the final chapter where Isabela finds herself connecting with a geographical site that can be assumed to be Maputo.

Dreams offer an insight into the unconscious mind's creation of events, which often reflect the anxieties and daily conflicts of a life lived when awake. In particular, dreams can elucidate the psycho-dynamic issues that a person is encountering, such as loss, grief, betrayal, and trauma. Through a manifestation of often latent content, dreamscapes offer the reader access to the repressed fears or wishes of sleeping subjects.

Historically within psychoanalysis, dreams were considered the starting point of a process of wish fulfilment whereby the unconscious desires of a child or adult would present themselves within a dream; however, in Freud's seminal work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), his encounters with First World War veterans led to a different understanding of dream significance. The dreams of the ex-soldiers' would often depict wartime trauma, and so, Freud came to understand that this replaying of battlefield suffering was not, in fact, an example of wish fulfilment, but rather a re-enactment of fear. Despite this new-found understanding, for at least the first half of the 20th century little additional scholarship was undertaken to interrogate the link between trauma and dreams (Barrett 2001: 2). Only in the 1960s, with the end of the Vietnam War and veterans returning home with PTSD, did the need for a modern psychological study of the corresponding connection between dreams and trauma become evident.

Undeniably, the relationship between trauma and the unconscious mind is a complex one. Whilst an obvious example of the link between trauma and dreams would be a repetitive haunting of a lived traumatic experience, exploring the healing capacity of dreams is also a productive line of enquiry. As Deirdre Barrett observes:

Dreams constitute a unique window on trauma and its effects. The window is not clear, however, but prismatic, showing us a changed version of events that is frequently distorted but can also bring chaos into resolution. This view can be both diagnostic and therapeutic. (2001: 1)

Taking Barrett's notion of therapeutic dreams as a starting point, the following analysis aims to explore the diagnostic and therapeutic aspects of the dreams depicted in *Caderno*, evaluating the traumas that they expose, but also their ability to initiate reconciliation and negotiation of experienced trauma.

In relation to trauma, dreams commonly recreate moments of extreme distress, and it is through such a reliving of distressing moments that dreamscapes are able to haunt us. Given the number of traumatic experiences that the protagonist Isabela has witnessed, such as decapitated heads used as footballs (*Caderno*: 120), or the bodies of her white neighbours mutilated and scattered across their plots of land (*Caderno*: 139), it seems reasonable to assume that such images could appear within the dreams, but this is not the case. Nor does the protagonist explore the physical and sexual trauma that she has experienced which often recurs in either an evident or latent manner as a survivor sleeps. Throughout the text, it is made evident that her father beats her: 'Senti durante muito tempo as violentas bofetadas do meu pai a arder no rosto e os golpes que espalhou pelo meu corpo; rosto, braços, nádegas, costas, pernas. Onde caísse. Foi bruto.' (*Caderno*: 56), however any long term traumatic association with this abuse is unclear.

Similarly, the instances of sexual harassment and assault that Isabela suffers are encountered sparingly despite their severity. The first instance occurs in Lourenço Marques where a young black man who 'abraçou-me com o braço esquerdo, esmagou o meu corpo contra si, arrebanhando com a mão direita o meu monte de Vénus, apertando-o com força, como espremeria um caju para sumo.' (*Caderno*: 138). Rather than a focus on the trauma encountered here, this act is used to illustrate the change in racial power during the period of decolonisation. The second instance occurs during her time in Portugal, where men verbally harass her daily on the way to school: 'Tinha 13 anos, e insultavam-me por evidenciar mamas, cona e rabo, não percebendo eu o desmerecimento. Insultavam-me por já ser uma mulher. Isso bastava.' (*Caderno*: 193). The third and final depiction is her sexual assault by Uncle Gusto, whom she lives with after her grandma is no longer able to care for her:

O ti Gusto fechava a porta aos domingos à tarde, por causa do frio. E ia-se encostando. Pousava as manípulas grosseiras no meu cabelo, agarrava-me o queixo, apanhava-me os braços e a cintura como se fosse meu mais dedicado protetor. O homem roçava-se em mim pelas estreitezas da fábrica. Sentia-lhe o sexo teso, enquanto me desviava. Empurrava-me contra a porta de zinco ondulado para me apalpar as mamas, esmagando-se contra mim, como podia, enquanto me esgueirava e, para não o irritar, disfarçava a consciência da ameaça, não se lembrasse ele de me vedar a saída. (*Caderno*: 196-97)

The sexual assault encountered in Mozambique and the verbal harassment suffered in Portugal can be found in both the *Angelus Novus* and *Caminho* editions of *Caderno*; however, the final and most severe instance of assault, perpetrated by her Uncle Gusto, was only added in the later 2015 *Caminho* publication. As explored in the introduction of this thesis, *Caderno* germinated from a collection of posts on Figueiredo's blog *Novo Mundo*, and the chapter which depicts this incident of sexual assault featured as a blog post on 9th December 2009⁷⁸, shortly after the *Caderno* was first published in late 2009.

Although Isabela is not experiencing a re-enactment of the aforementioned trauma, the three dreamscapes enable her to play out a series of unresolved psychological traumas and, unconstrained by the boundaries of reality, is able to explore three separate encounters: with her father, her half-sister, and finally herself.

4.1.1 Familial Encounters

The text opens with the depiction of a dream where Isabela happens upon the voice of her father. His presence is not depicted as an unwelcome haunting, but rather this encounter sets the tone of his omnipresence throughout the text and indeed within Isabela's unconscious thoughts. The emphasis that it is 'impossível não responder' (*Caderno*: 35) to his voice stresses that the text itself is a response to her father, to his beliefs, his actions, and his words, and that, as has been explained in the introduction of this thesis, Figueiredo no longer felt able to avoid an interaction

⁷⁸ To read the post in full see "O Homen Português", *Novo Mundo*, 9 December 2009.

with her family's colonial legacy. Therefore, it is not just his dreamt voice that she is unable to avoid, but his colonial identity in general.

Rather than using this meeting to construct an imagined shared moment with her father to help negotiate a troubled relationship, Figueiredo in fact utilises this fleeting dreamscape to signpost the thematic undercurrents of the text, namely the relationship and legacy of her father. The line 'e abri os olhos' (*Caderno*: 35) here most explicitly relates to the wakening from a dream state. Yet, it is fitting that this line features on the first page of the text given the raw depiction of the racist realities of colonial Mozambique that follows and demonstrate Isabela opening her eyes to colonial violence. Through this direct reference to waking from sleep, Figueiredo recognises the porous boundary between reality and the dream world, and how unresolved relationships and encounters can bleed from one into the other and create a sense of unease, both for the author and the reader.

The lengthiest dreamscape explores Isabela meeting a fictional half-sister, or as she states 'a outra filha do meu pai' (*Caderno*: 169); of this encounter she writes:

Podemos descansar os nossos pecados restos coloniais, se conseguimos fechar os olhos por minutos. Adormecer. Sonhar.

Não a conheço. É uma mulher morena, bronzada, alta, imponente.... Recostada num sofá individual, branco, descai o busto negligentemente, entreabrindo as pernas brisa feliz da primavera. (*Caderno*: 168)

The dream where Isabela encounters her half-sister is located between the two other dreamscapes which depict her father and the ultimate imagined return to Mozambique. The explicit evocation of dreaming through the verbs '[a]dormecer. Sonhar.' was added into the 2015 Caminho edition, and is not found in the 2009 Angelus Novus edition. Perhaps, Figueiredo wanted to ensure that the positioning of this chapter as a dreamscape was clear. Her half-sister is the embodied combination of her father and the Portuguese colony, self-assured and poised in deliberate

comparison with Isabela's own insecurity around her identity, where she holds a liminal space between her positioning as 'uma colonazinha preta, filha de brancos. Uma negrinha loira.' (*Caderno*: 69) and expresses an intense anxiety around situating her identity; 'precisava de uma identidade [...] a vida na colónia era impossível. Ou se era colono ou se era colonizado, não se podia ser qualquer coisa de transição, sem um preço, a loucura no horizonte.' (*Caderno*: 155-57).

Isabela affords great focus to the body of her unnamed half-sister and its exudation of corporeal power and sexuality. This emphasis relates to her own anxiety around her female maturity and the novel situates Isabela's newfound status as a *retornada* as synonymous with her entry into womanhood. Indeed, as she boards the plane to Portugal and is ordered to relay the "truth" about the situation in Mozambique, her mother states 'Agora és uma mulher. Já és uma mulher' (*Caderno*: 164). The disquiet over becoming a woman is mentioned multiple times as Isabela moves from Mozambique to Portugal and she states: 'diziam que eu já era uma mulher.' (*Caderno*: 136), implying that this status was never felt, but rather imposed onto her by others.

Indeed, Isabela's journey surrounding womanhood has been complicated and often associated with confusion; on the day of her first period, she trips, and exposes her blood-stained underwear to her father, cousin, and group of men (*Caderno*: 112); her developing female body is subjected to sexual assault and harassment; and she rarely feels secure in her own body, rather 'o meu corpo foi uma guerra [...] o meu corpo lutava contra si, corpo-a-corpo' (*Caderno*: 204). Whilst her search for a clear identity runs as a thematic constant throughout the text, so does her discomfort with her physical body held so often in comparison to her father's corporeal might. This discomfort is echoed through the dreamt encounter with the unnamed mixed-race half-sister, who radiates a strong and powerful adult femininity:

É uma mulher enorme, *inteira*, com um longo e farto cabelo escuro, umas longas pernas bem torneadas, como uma miss das ex-colónias, como a Ana Paula Almeida, como a

Riquita [...] Sinto-me insignificante perante o *esplendor sensual* daquela filha do meu pai. (*Caderno*: 169)⁷⁹

The use of the adjective ‘inteira’ highlights Isabela’s anxiety regarding her own female sensuality and power which she deems lacking. As with the corporeal fascination applied to her father, Isabela gives a detailed description of her half-sister’s body and, after her jacket falls open revealing her naked upper body, she compares her to ‘um nu escultórico, de mármore.’ (*Caderno*: 169) – this reference to a striking statue, reminiscent of the female nudes of classical antiquity, is stark when held in conjunction with Isabela’s self-definition as ‘uma estátua de culpa’ (*Caderno*: 214). And starker even still, given that sculptures of the female nude are generally constructed in white stone.

Whilst the focus on her half-sister’s naked body stresses Isabela’s anxieties around her own womanhood, so too does her sexualised gaze reinforce a Lusotropicalist attitude towards her mixed-race half-sister. There is a dualistic portrayal of Lusotropicalism here; firstly, where her half-sister is the result of her father’s “miscegenation” with a black Mozambican woman; and secondly, where Isabela conforms to the sexual exoticization of black and mixed-race women and imposes this view upon her half-sister.

Despite the fear that she feels towards her half-sister (*Caderno*: 170), an element of self-protection exists within this dreamscape. Isabela expresses resistance towards having contact with her half-sister, who extends her hand and is shown to be welcoming and affable; in contrast, Isabela, overcome with fear, is unable to reciprocate any such gesture. This self-protection demonstrates the emotional tensions surrounding the issue of her father’s illegitimate children and corresponding sexual encounters with black women in Mozambique.

⁷⁹ Italic emphasis my own.

4.1.2 Dreaming of “Home”

In comparison with the earlier dreamscapes, which make specific reference to the opening and closing of eyes, this third and final dream does not bear a clear indication of sleep, but rather a nod to impending nightfall: ‘caiu a noite’ (*Caderno*: 218). I would argue that this chapter can be considered as a dreamscape due to its mythical and lyrical writing style, which sits outside the realms of reality within a fluctuating sleep-like state of consciousness. Here, Isabela engages with the landscape, assumed to be Mozambique. At this point, Figueiredo was yet to return to Mozambique since her departure as a teenager, and therefore any encounter on Mozambican soil can be considered as fully fictional.⁸⁰

The dreamscape depicts Isabela’s relationship with the Mozambican earth, which, up until this moment, has ordinarily exemplified and highlighted her difference in relation to her homeland. Yet, the opening line indicates a shift, and Isabela is now positioned as inherently linked to the earth: ‘caiu a noite sobre todas as coisas que nascem da terra’ (*Caderno*: 218). The relationship presented between Isabela and Mozambique here is one of stimulatory overload, and affects all five of the senses; she is able to feel insects crawling on her arms, taste the sweet clay-infused soil, hear the rustle of the wind, smell the damp leaves and dirt, and see the birds perched in the trees.

In contrast to the previous dreamscapes, there is no dialogue. There is, however, laughter: ‘Ris. Ouves o teu riso incomodar a noite. Que silêncio’ (*Caderno*: 219).⁸¹ This laughter has a disruptive quality that is in keeping with Michel Bakhtin’s theory on laughter and the carnivalesque (1963, 1968). Bakhtin argues that disruptive carnival laughter is not only *destructive*, but also *constructive* and can indicate a process of change and shift in authority. Carnivalistic laughter is often aimed at an authorial power or structure, and, in the case of

⁸⁰ Figueiredo only returned to Maputo for the first time in 2016, forty-one years after her forced departure.

⁸¹ Interestingly, *A Costa* also ends with disruptive laughter.

Caderno, Isabela seems to be exerting her own sense of agency and empowerment against the historic control of her father, and by extension the wider power structures of the Portuguese colonies. The changing shift of authority here sees Isabela become more in touch with her identity and personal relationship to Mozambique.

Bakhtin notes that carnival laughter enables the subject to momentarily “transcend” their day-to-day reality, and find themselves within an alternative existence. In this instance, such an alternate reality can be seen as this dream-like state, where typical rules no longer apply. Indeed, there is a carnivalesque tone to the dreamscape more generally, in which the prohibitions and restrictions encountered by Isabela during her childhood are suspended, and the world is presented in an “upside-down” state: ‘a noite é o teu dia.’ (*Caderno*: 219). As previously explored within the second chapter of this thesis, Isabela was consistently dressed in white clothing and chastised for dirtying herself in the blood red earth; her positioning as an outsider within her own childhood home was exemplified by the starkness of this whiteness, regarding both her clothing and her skin, against the vibrant soil. This distance is now reversed, and she is at one with the soil; rolling in it, dirtied by it, tasting it, and comforted by it.

The tone of this dream feels contrastingly hopeful against the rest of the text and suggests Isabela's fledgling newfound sense of acceptance over her complex and multi-faceted identity. This dreamed encounter does not involve a human interaction as per the preceding dreamscapes, but rather, depicts Isabela engaging with herself and the land, reaffirming her own identity in relation to her nostalgia and love of the place where she feels most at home. The lone interpersonal encounter that does occur however is between herself and a pack of wild dogs; she notes that, like herself, they are hybrids: ‘nada bem definido, nem cães nem lobos’ (*Caderno*: 219). This canine contact highlights an awareness of the multifaceted nature of any single identity. According to Bakhtin, carnival laughter is often rooted in both death and rebirth (1984: 127) and this dichotomous relationship is evident within the final dreamscape. Her renewed connection with the red earth, and companionship with the wolf-like dogs, facilitate a sentiment

of regeneration and revival. This perceived rebirth symbolically takes place above ‘a cova onde o teu passado apodrece’ (*Caderno*: 219). Her rebirth is only achievable through a simultaneous act of self-burial, with the dogs as her witness.

Dreamscapes can disrupt linear temporalities and portrayals of time and, whilst linear depictions of time are often fragmented with *Caderno*, the three dreams seem to sit within their own differing timeframe. The narrative voice depicted within the dreamscapes utilises only the present tense, and thus, a sense of temporal urgency is created. This positioning of the spheres of action within the present is absent from the remainder of *Caderno* where, through the constant use of the preterite and imperfect past tenses, it is understood that the protagonist is retelling past events. The dreams are inconsistent with this and, through their utilisation of the present tense, offer glimpses of a multi-layered autofictional Self – the autofictional protagonist of the past, and of the present. Through the act of dreaming, Figueiredo offers the reader access to this additional version of the autofictional protagonist, and to the corresponding anxieties of her unconscious mind. Isabela seems to view herself from above, looking down upon the scene that she is narrating. The tone of the dream is soft and soothing in stark juxtaposition with the explosive narration of the previous chapters. In the introduction to their translation of *Caderno*, Rothwell and Klobucka state:

the last chapter’s discursive literalization of the narrator’s divided self—split into the first and second persons—and the fact that it occurs in the guise of animal metamorphosis open up a subjective and potentially political line of flight from Notebook’s merciless dissection of the individual and collective retornado condition. (2015: 15)

This mention of the ‘divided self’ echoes my argument of a dual autofictional protagonist, and the two narrative voices seem to battle against each other, as the past vies to overpower the present, and vice versa. As previously stated, all three dreamscapes take the present tense, and whereas traditionally within traumatic dreams, the past interrupts the present, in this instance an

inversion occurs where the present intersects with the past; such a temporal disruption reinforces the notion that the past itself cannot remain fixed.

If the three dreamscapes are considered as a series, a gradual form of initial mastery regarding Isabela's experienced familial trauma is evident. Often within the realm of psychological theory regarding trauma and dreams, mastery over an experienced trauma is constructed via the act of repetition; within the three dreamscapes depicted here we are not presented with a re-enactment of a traumatic episode, but rather, with a series of encounters that demonstrate the unconscious anxieties that plague Isabela's waking days. The first dream creates an injunction to speak where it is impossible to ignore her father's voice and her traumatic past; the second is rooted in fear of what her half-sister represents; the final dreamscape, however, offers a more hopeful outlook.

Despite the violence, racial, physical, and sexual, that is played out on the pages of *Caderno*, this final dream culminates on a somewhat hopeful note signifying that there is potential for recovery in the future. The strategy of ending on an interrogative, 'para onde vais, agora?' (*Caderno*: 219), implies that Figueiredo is mindful that there is still some way to go towards acceptance of a colonial past. Indeed, the sense of mastery that is depicted within the final chapter hints towards a *renegotiation* rather than a *resolution* of the trauma surrounding the protagonist's identity crisis; this renegotiation invites space for continuing growth and recovery through the understanding that trauma is never "solved". Significantly, the text ends centred upon an understanding that Isabela herself is able to be multi-layered and multi-dimensional, as she states: 'uma vida tem muitas vidas' (*Caderno*: 219), no longer just her father's white colonial child, nor simply the white stigmatised *retornada*.

4.2 Hurting Helena de Tróia

Before embarking on a discussion of female mental illness within *A Costa* and *O Retorno*, a cautionary note should be made regarding analytical considerations of mental health. We must

take care when reflecting upon traditional presentations of madness and mental illness: in recent literary criticism they have all too often been monolithically conflated with female political and societal rebellion, whilst the actual challenges of a reality lived alongside mental illness have most frequently been overlooked.

It is thus necessary to interrogate the utility of mental illness as a symbol of female resistance, and explore what is gained, and indeed lost, by such a metaphor. Turning to Phyllis Cheslar is instructive here. Of the purpose of her book *Women and Madness*, she states ‘it has never been my intention to romanticize madness, or to confuse it with political or cultural revolution’ (1974: xxii). Felman, in agreement, adds:

Depressed and terrified women are not about to seize the means of production and reproduction: quite the opposite of rebellion, madness is the impasse confronting those whom cultural conditioning has deprived of the very means of protest or self-affirmation. Far from being a form of contestation, "mental illness" is a request for help, a manifestation both of cultural impotence and of political castration. (1975: 8)

It is therefore not my intention to position the mentally unwell Glória and Helena as symbolic sites of resistance against the Portuguese context of the Colonial War, but rather to explore a female trajectory overlooked within scholarship on both texts. Both Cheslar and Felman’s use of the term “madness” should also be considered, where arguably a slippage of language between madness and mental illness has the potential to limit critical analysis. As Donaldson astutely comments: ‘one could argue, when madness is used as a metaphor for feminist rebellion, mental illness itself is erased.’ (2002: 102). As such throughout this analysis the term mental illness will be used as opposed to madness to avoid any such erasures.

In general, any exploration of female mental illness within *A Costa* and *O Retorno* has been neglected. It thus seems important, and timely, that these illness narratives are scrutinized so that we might better understand how they represent or disrupt the textual archetype of mentally unwell women. In doing so, one must consider the responsibilities towards Helena and Glória not

only as characters, but also as women. This of course presents its own critical problems and challenges within this chapter, insofar as I seek to “tell” the stories of these unwell women, but not to “speak” for them.

The investigation that follows traverses Jorge’s depiction of mental illness within *A Costa* focusing mainly on Helena, also nicknamed “Helena de Tróia”. It is my intention to not only highlight the ways in which Helena’s illness is presented through the eyes of narrator Eva, but also the insight that this presentation offers into Eva’s own attitudes around mentally unwell women. In addition, my discussion will situate the commonalities possessed by the two women alongside the subtext of depression that runs beneath their relationship, and interrogate how, despite their shared trauma, there is little if any female solidarity between them.

As has been well documented (Ferreira 1992) (Kaufman 1992) (Medeiros 1999), *A Costa* has a dual-structure, and the second section functions as a response to the first, a presumed male-authored short story named ‘Os Gafanhotos’. This response involves the narrator, Eva, commenting on a series of her own recollections which illustrate her life; likewise, it becomes evident that she is the unnamed military bride depicted within ‘Os Gafanhotos’. Eva as the narrator provides observations and explanations on the actions of the protagonist, who we know to be a young Eva, but in-fact refers to the woman as Evita. In contrast to the short story, Eva’s depiction of events is far more feminocentric, not only focusing on the dual relationship between narrator Eva and protagonist Evita, but also the military wives living in the Stella Maris, and most importantly for the purpose of this chapter, Helena.

Helena is depicted as beautiful, contradictory, and submissive – yet also deeply unhappy. Held within an emotionally and physically abusive marriage, she is depressive, and towards the end of the text Eva recalls Helena’s contemplation of suicide. The purpose of the following analysis is by no means to present Helena as insane, mad, or hysterical in the traditional Victorian sense, but rather as suffering from bouts of depressive periods and suicidal thoughts. It is my

intention to explore the depictions of such suffering when held in comparison with the other more performative traits of Helena's personality, and to argue that one does not necessarily counter-act the other.

In the initial encounters between the two wives, in both 'Os Gafanhotos' and Eva's narration, Helena's mental instability is touched upon: she is described as absent from conversation (*A Costa*: 72) and overcome with nerves (*A Costa*: 96). Like many of the wives living in the Stella Maris hotel, it is evident that Helena is subjected to various forms of abuse within her marriage to Forza Leal – both emotional and physical:

Mas naturalmente que Helena de Tróia tinha de concitar o olhar. Naturalmente que o capitão reparou nos olhares que choviam como dardos. Naturalmente o capitão esbofeteou a mulher [...] Naturalmente, os outros pares procuravam imitá-los, mas era difícil imitar, e as bofetadas não conseguiam ter aquele impacto violento e estético que havia sido obtido pelo capitão do noivo. Mesmo assim, uma mulher [...] sob o impacto da mão fechada do marido, embateu fortemente no gradeamento e quase saltava pela borda fora [...] o marido amparou-a com um golpe de judo [...] um fio de sangue escorria do orifício do ouvido dela. (*A Costa*: 29-30)

Por instantes, porém, o verde-limo da luz era tão vivo que conseguia anular os objectos vermelhos do terraço. Havia-os – alguns carros de encaixar de crianças, um ramo de rosas que sobejara do dia anterior, o fio de sangue que ressumava da orelha daquela rapariga batida pelo marido e que ia caindo à praia, tudo isso era vermelho. Sobretudo os vergões que muitas delas tinham pelas caras. Os cinco dedos da mão de Forza Leal ainda estariam visíveis como se esculpidos na face esquerda de Helena de Tróia (*A Costa*: 32-22)

A Costa offers an intimate insight into the female realities of the Colonial War and the violent undercurrent present within its marital relationships. Helena is not the only women who faces domestic abuse within her marriage, where it is in fact portrayed as “*naturalmente*” and mentioned frequently within 'Os Gafanhotos', which is considered by critics to mimic the “official” and sanitised version of Colonial War events.⁸² The inclusion of the physical abuse suffered by the military wives here thus stresses not only the prevalence of this violence, but also

⁸² For an in-depth discussion on the use of “*naturalmente*” within this extract, see: Raquel Trentin Oliveira, “Formas de contar: “Os gafanhotos” e *A costa dos murmúrios*”, *Nau Literária*, 2 (1), (2006): 5-6.

the uncomprehending and ambivalent narratorial attitude towards such abuse, whereby it is not felt to be hidden by the narrator of ‘Os Gafanhotos’ in the same way as the other aspects of violence that are uncovered within Eva’s (re)telling of events. The widespread interpersonal issues that became apparent due to the war are depicted as not only known and tolerated, but normal within the female circles of the Stella Maris.

The thematic inclusion and critique of domestic abuse was incredibly progressive for the time of the novel’s publication. In fact, the issue of inter-marital violence as a result of the Colonial War has only recently been explored in depth within the Portuguese media.⁸³ Campos, in her seminal work *An Oral History of the Portuguese Colonial War: Conscripted Generation*, explores the realities of the war time experience on veterans through interviews carried out across three years, and depicts the frequent instances where the Colonial War created violent repercussions within the family sphere, often resulting in domestic abuse, family break ups, and divorce (2017: 174, 210).

The physical brutality of Helena’s marriage is made explicit towards the end of the novel when her suffering is particularly pronounced. Here she confides in Evita about her affair with a customs agent during her marriage to Forza Leal, and names this man as the love of her life (*A Costa*: 205). Forza Leal became aware of the affair, Helena believes through the houseboys, and at gunpoint demanded that Helena reveal the identity of the man – which she ultimately does (*A Costa*: 206). Forza Leal and two henchmen physically assault the customs agent and partake in a lethal game of Russian Roulette to “win” Helena, foreshadowing the later death of the journalist, Álvaro Sabino, when Evita’s own affair is discovered. When the game claims no victims, the customs agent is taken out to sea and dropped into the ocean, his disfigured body washed ashore

⁸³ For media reports on the impact of violence carried out within the home see: Sónia Morais Santos Leonardo Negrão, ‘O 'stress' de guerra é contagioso e crónico’, *Diário de Notícias*, 24th April 2006; Catarina Gomes, ‘Os filhos dos ex-combatentes também têm memórias da guerra’, *Público*, 21st March 2011.

three days later (*A Costa*: 207-08).⁸⁴ This masculine battle to the death over Helena clearly echoes the mythological origins of Helena's nickname, Helen of Troy.

In a further unsettling example of violence and emotional blackmail, Forza Leal is described as utilising tactics of self-mutilation such as burning his finger on a lighter and cutting the inside of his mouth with a blade (*A Costa*: 99), to secure Helena's word that she will remain sequestered in the house whilst he partakes in his military operations.

Ambiguity acts as a cornerstone of Eva's lens on the marriage of Helena and Forza Leal. Eva describes the controlling elements of their relationship together with Helena's "playing up" to a traditional feminine stereotype of submission, docility, and naïve ignorance. There is certainly a performative element to Helena, from her play acting with Forza Leal (*A Costa*: 50), to her awareness of Eva's sexualised gaze upon her. A particularly illustrative example of this performativity centres around the recurring theme of weaponry. In the first instance, the two wives are observing their husbands' target practice, then Forza and Helena begin a cat-and-mouse display of power and submission. Helena, knowingly, incorrectly guesses the contents of an ammunition bag and later playfully pretends to be fearful of its exposed contents (*A Costa*: 50); then, at Forza Leal's demands, she declares that a revolver is missing from the bag. Later in the text, Helena shows a revolver to Evita, assumed to be the same one, which she has hidden in a drawer in her bedroom dresser (*A Costa*: 202); then, she goes on to compare the internal workings of a pistol and a revolver, showing a marked familiarity that was noticeably absent from the docile ignorance she performed for Forza Leal.

⁸⁴ This mirrors the later potential suicide of Luís Alex, whose body is retrieved from the ocean.

4.2.1 Captive in the Home

For much of the text, Helena remains sequestered in her isolated house by the ocean. Jorge maintains a sense of uncertainty around the cause of Helena's isolation; at times it is due to Forza Leal's demands, at others Helena's self-sacrifice:

Já percebeu que desejo ficar fechada em casa enquanto o Jaime não estiver. Sim, enquanto ele não voltar não quero sair daqui custe o que custar...a minha alma eu aprisiono-a aqui, embora não esteja aqui, esteja lá. Sem que ele me tenha pedido, sem que ele me tenha dito um som, um aceno de incitamento sequer. Aqui, fechada, privada de liberdade por vontade minha, privada de ar livre por ditame meu. Quero eu mesma fazer a minha prisão! Só assim eu o vou acompanhar. (*A Costa*: 97)

The depiction of mentally unwell women contained in private homes is by no means a novel notion. As early as the sixteenth century, women deemed “insane” or “mad” have been cloistered in the home, the convent, or the asylum. Whilst Helena's mental suffering is not the reason for her captivity, when analysing Jorge's depictions of her trauma, the use of domestic space is of relevance given it augments Helena's displacement from the other military wives despite their shared trauma.

When speaking of women confined to their private homes, Elaine Showalter, in the pioneering work *The Female Malady*, writes:

The suffocation of family life, the boredom, and patriarchal protectivism gradually destroys women's capacity to dream, to work, or to act...Deprived of significant spheres of action and forced to define themselves only in personal relationships, women become more and more dependent on their inner lives, more prone to depression and breakdown. Sickness presents a tempting escape from the feminine role. (1985: 64)

Helena's overwhelming boredom is evident throughout the text as she occupies herself with excessive exercise, organising housemaids, and indolently discussing suitably “feminine” topics such as underwear and facemasks. She only becomes truly engaged with the mention of news or dramatic moments from the “spheres of action” in the Stella Maris hotel (*A Costa*: 119). Despite

Helena's refusal to stay or socialise with the other military wives in the hotel, she is keen to be kept up to date of the quotidian comings and goings and questions Evita about their clothing, hairstyles, food, and social interactions, comparing one wife to another (*A Costa*: 119). Her sense of isolation and loneliness are stark.

Helena's own lethargy is mirrored by that of house and, as Eva observes, 'a casa de Helena era tão real que se parecia com a vivenda do sono, a casa onde alguém se tivesse deixado *adormecer* para uma sesta de longos anos, enquanto as árvores ganhavam ramos e frutos – e silêncio.' (*A Costa*: 91).⁸⁵ The use of the verb 'adormecer', or "to fall asleep", in the early pages of Eva's narrative foreshadow a later description of Helena, where Eva wonders if she has taken her own life: 'Se cortou a carótida o sangue já se decompôs e ferveu em redor da bela adormecida. A bela adormecida, em África, deveria ser acordada pelo príncipe dentro duma luminosa floresta de fungos.' (*A Costa*: 222). Eva positions Helena as an inverted and grotesque Sleeping Beauty figure, surrounded by death and decomposition, and the eternal slumber that Eva alludes to is, in fact, suicide. The house, without doubt, incites lethargy and sleep, but, returning to Showalter, certainly not dreams – fairy-tale or otherwise. At the culmination of *A Costa*, upon arriving at the house Evita is informed by Forza Leal that Helena is to be found in bed, which he deems her rightful place (*A Costa*: 254). Rather than Forza Leal waking her to live happily ever after, he is preoccupied with burning evidence of his participation in war atrocities.

In an analysis of space within *A Costa*, Jordão argues 'Helena parece assim utilizar o seu espaço como um espaço de ruptura (sexual e política) no carácter coeso da nação' (1999: 55); however, how rupturing can this be if once again mentally unwell women are confined to the home? Jorge creates a stark geographical distancing between Evita, Helena, and the other military wives; and Helena, whose emotional trauma is the most pronounced, is relegated to the home, isolated, and removed from female support networks.

⁸⁵ Italic emphasis my own.

Indeed, the only individual that Helena feels linked to in the house is the houseboy, Mateus Rosé, the sole member of staff that she was able to select independently. Helena explains how Forza Leal dictated the employment of all the other staff members (*A Costa*: 129), and later alludes to how he would bribe them to spy on her (*A Costa*: 205). It is Mateus Rosé who later drinks the poisoned alcohol and dies under Helena's convertible, a cruelly ironic twist given he is named after a wine. In doing so, the only aspect of the house that Helena felt was within her, notably colonial, reach is removed. It is therefore of no surprise that, from the outset, Helena often calls upon Evita to keep her company in the house, keen to build a relationship upon their shared experiences as military wives, but still within her isolated location.

4.2.2 Worsening Mental Health

As the military operation involving both Luís Alex and Forza Leal draws to a close, Helena becomes increasingly preoccupied with her husband's imminent homecoming, and develops an obsession with military death counts and casualties. The root of this obsession is later exposed by Eva - Helena has been hoping that her husband will not return, and she will be set free from her abusive marriage. This prompts Eva to muse over Helena's contradictory feelings about Forza Leal:

[...] é aí que ela quer, e sempre quis, que rebente uma mina debaixo dos pés de Forza Leal tão explosiva que o deixe desfeito. Não era difícil adivinhar – disse Eva Lopo. Helena veste-se, fala, ri e mente. Mas porque mente? Porque termina as imprecações do duche e vem acenar à porta do salão italiano dizendo que engordou por sacrifício em favor do sucesso de Forza? (*A Costa*: 201)

In the days preceding the military unit's arrival, Helena's despair becomes more pronounced. Her mental health worsens, and themes of suicidality emerge involving the slitting of her wrists in the bath. As comes to be common, Eva probes Helena's emotional intentions from a position of superiority and sarcasm:

[...] a sua tristeza, como no dia anterior, ainda é descomunal. Diz, como se falasse duma doença incurável, que esperou e não aconteceu – Agora já não acredita. Desistiu de acreditar [...] Helena está triste, desceu á simplicidade, e por isso está com Deus, está sob a alçada da sua santa guarda [...] É por isso que Helena só diz o que Evita sabe antecipadamente que Helena vai exarar – Helena deseja morrer.

Quer morrer, porque não suportará o regresso de Jaime contra quem se fechou em casa durante oitenta dias, negociando o desaparecimento de Jaime, negociando com Deus [...] Helena, contudo quer aniquilar-se quando os mainatos estiverem bêbedos como cachos. Quer embebedá-los com bom vinho, para quando acordarem, já ela estar definitivamente morta, e acordando eles possam ir correndo, chamar o capitão à base, com os seus enormes pés pretos e descalços. Quando o capitão chegar, ela não quer estar viva.

O demónio? Pois o demónio sabe, não ri mas sabe que não é verdade, sabe que ela não quer morrer, ela só quer imaginar como a chorariam depois a morta, para se certificar do choro, da pena e da impossibilidade de ser substituída no coração das pessoas que a estimam, que a conhecem e amam. Helena de Tróia diz que quer matar-se com aquela veemência, só porque quer viver. Morrer significaria ter a coragem de renunciar à imaginação de que se é amado, e Helena não tem coragem – ela é a pessoa mais débil que inspira e expira naquela costa. (*A Costa*: 220-21)

As Hilary Owen succinctly describes, Eva takes up ‘the detached pose of the cynic’ (1999: 86) and her later musings over Helena’s possible suicide oscillate between the grotesque and the romanticised. Eva considers how mould would envelope Helena’s body if left to decompose in a room without air-conditioning, and how bugs would consume her (*A Costa*: 222). The lens through which Eva imagines Helena’s death is centred around a morbid curiosity, coupled with a certain sense of sardonic apathy.

Through Eva’s optic, Helena is portrayed as languid, melancholic, and narcissistic, and it is this presentation of melancholy that is of particular relevance when exploring her mental illness. There is a particular melancholic glamour that Eva associates with Helena, as she lounges on the sofa, or on the bed with her hair spread around her, and Eva seems both patronising towards Helena’s evident depression, whilst also drawn to it. Eva seems to view Helena’s expressions of despair not as depression, nor a complex survival strategy to combat her loneliness, but as attention-seeking melancholia. As Sontag writes ‘unromantic depression has supplanted the romantic notion of melancholy. "A fitful strain of melancholy," Poe wrote, "will ever be found inseparable from the perfection of the beautiful. " Depression is melancholy minus its charms—

the animation, the fits.’ (1978: 50). Eva seems to be unable, or resistant, to suggest Helena is depressed, but rather suffering from a performative romantic melancholia as she laments her murdered lover and toxic marriage. Eva inherently links this perceived performativity to Helena’s physical beauty. Eva’s critical stance towards Helena’s emotional response to her dysfunctional and abusive marriage places her in a somewhat damning patriarchal light.

The most striking set of similarities between the two women is found within their marriages. Where Forza Leal’s demands that Helena remains in the home, upon threat of his own physical self-mutilation, Luís Alex has mirrored the very same strategy. He requests Eva’s isolation in a room in the Stella Maris hotel until his return and, when she does not concede, begins to pull a knife against the side of his mouth (*A Costa*: 83). Likewise, upon discovering of Evita’s affair with the journalist Sabino, Luís Alex recreates the Russian Roulette challenge previously undertaken by Forza Leal and the unnamed customs agent. Therefore, even prior to Luís Alex’s traumatised return from the military operation, as explored in the previous chapter, his marriage to Evita was strained.

The perceived melancholia that seems to dominate Helena, which Eva refers to as ‘descomunal’ (*A Costa*: 220) and ‘intensa’ (*A Costa*: 98), does not however afflict her alone. Evita too is despondent throughout the text, and Helena asks her:

“Você é muito triste. Porque é você assim tão triste?”

Sim, sei que pareço triste mas não sou. Nem posso perceber porque pareço triste porque me escapa a verdadeira razão. Mas se não me escapasse e se soubesse, não seria para dizer a Helena de Troia a quem me une apenas um homem por ser uma imitação de outro homem. (*A Costa*: 101)

Eva goes on to explore how the apparent sadness is in fact merely an expression of the cynicism handed down to her by her mother (*A Costa*: 101), and, as is common throughout the text, Eva positions her personality traits and opinions as a result of her intellectual superiority. After its

inception during the Elizabethan era, melancholy became fashionable amongst young men and was seen to be linked to intellect and genius. Yet, as Showalter argues ‘the epidemic of melancholy associated with intellectual and imaginative genius “curiously bypassed women”. Women’s melancholy was seen instead as biological, and emotional in origins.’ (1993: 81). Although there is a deep sense of melancholia within both women, Eva seems to brand her own as that of the male intellect, whilst she relegates Helena’s to her inherent feminine emotionality, from which Eva seeks to distance herself. Despite their shared experiences, Eva is unable to be vulnerable with her emotions despite the opportunity for mutual support between the two women. Indeed, throughout Evita’s encounters with Helena she rarely, if ever, engages on a truly honest and emotional level.

4.2.3 A Critical Narrator

As discussed, at the centre of Eva’s depictions of Helena’s mental health is an underlying tone of judgement, and a sense that her feminine performativity in fact outweighs the legitimacy of her emotions. Eva seems to be unable to accept Helena as a complex and multi-faceted woman, who may indeed have conflicting opinions on her marriage, gender role, and sense of Self. What is it then, given their situational similarities and shared melancholic disposition, that causes Eva to observe Helena’s mental suffering at such a distance? Paula Jordão has observed that Eva’s relationship with Luís Alex reveals not only a dependency, but also an internalisation of the hegemonic patriarchal order, and argues that her presentation of Helena further demonstrates this:

o seu comportamento aparece imediatamente reprovado por Evita...que vê nele uma demonstração de superficialidade e subordinação sexual. Esta reprovação de Evita não é ocasional, mas obedece à sua intenção de apresentar Helena como o seu contrário negativo. Ao apresentá-la como seguidora obediente da ordem patriarcal vigente, Evita contrapõe-lhe assim a sua própria imagem de inconformista a essa mesma ordem...Também Evita, ao apresentar-se como figura rebelde e contestatária da ordem vigente em que está inserida, não consegue esconder uma cumplicidade com essa mesma ordem, visível na sua relação de poder com o Outro. Nessa relação, o Outro é frequentemente colocado numa posição de inferioridade, através de um discurso—que, ideologicamente, é muito semelhante ao usado na manutenção e reprodução da ordem—, em princípio, por ela contestado. Assim acontece na relação de Evita com Helena, a quem ela aprisiona numa imagem de superficialidade e subordinação, empregando para

isso um discurso repleto de imagens e expressões denunciadoras de uma ideologia sexista e colonialista. (1999: 55-8)

This attitude is all the more surprising given the similarities between Eva and Helena. Indeed, the two women in fact share a nickname – pomba and pombinha, and Ferreira has noted that colloquially the latter term signifies the female pubic area (1992: 275). Eva refers to Helena as pomba, or dove, and consistently refers to her dainty physical attributes: ‘via Helena frágil, uma pomba frágil’ (*A Costa*: 90) and ‘era muito interessante que aquela voz saísse dum corpo que dormindo seria a personificação da pomba. O corpo calou-se, estendeu um pé que era branco e leitoso, evocando a maciez da pomba.’ (*A Costa*: 94). Contrastingly, Eva is nicknamed pombinha by the journalist Sabino with whom she later has an affair (*A Costa*: 127, 147, 164, 166, 173). It is thought-provoking that Eva’s nickname takes the diminutive suffix -inha, contrasting with her consistent self-positioning as superior to Helena. Despite Eva’s view that Helena is weak and submissive, she can express her emotional vulnerability, albeit melodramatically, whereas Eva ultimately cannot.

Jordão explores how Eva moves from disruptive to complicit within the patriarchal order with regard to Helena; using sexist language to describe her, and frequently asserting her intellectual superiority. I would extend this interpretation and argue that there is an added element of emotional superiority at play here, concerning Helena’s mental illness and experienced trauma, which Eva regards with very little concern. Eva seems to imply that Helena has little control over her emotions, and thus perceives her as chaotic and unrefined. Indeed, in keeping with such a reading, within the friendship Eva steadily positions herself as the “mind” – logical and rational – whilst Helena is the “body” – constantly observed, objectified, and measured, primarily, by her physical beauty. In comparison to Eva, Helena is presented, as stated by Jordão, as ‘o seu contrário negativo’ and most certainly a woman of lack. Both women are thus intrinsically linked, Eva as reason, and Helena as non-reason. These embedded patriarchal views around female mental illness encourage Eva to suppress her own emotions, and indeed disregard Helena’s.

This internalised misogyny sees Eva determined to “analyse” Helena in a way that, when linked with mental suffering and suicidality, seems inherently clinical and Freudian. Sousa has argued, in conjunction with Mulvey’s well-known work on the “gaze”, that there is a complex gaze relationship at play between the two women, with Eva consistently looking at Helena through the ‘theoretical film spectators gaze’ (2002: 173). I would extend this interpretation and argue that a clinical gaze is also present. Eva “visits” the confined Helena in her home, observing her mannerisms and movements in a pseudo doctor/patient relationship, with her narrative at times functioning as observational notes and musings. Such an idea of the clinical gaze is in keeping with Eva’s self-fashioning as the mind/reason, and Helena as the body/non-reason; and indeed, as with any patient, Helena is aware of her role as an observed object. Sousa has argued that Eva views Helena in dual form: the material, and the abstract (2002: 175). Eva can identify with the material Helena, and indeed their similarities have been explored above, but it is the beautiful and performative abstract Helena that she “gazes” at, at times sexually, but also clinically.

Resultingly, it is complex to consider where best to place Helena’s mental illness and trauma. Evita’s refusal of Helena’s suggestion of lesbian sexual revenge against their husbands has been positioned by Owen (1999: 86) as an assertion of dominance over the male narrator of ‘Os Gafanhotos’, whilst Helena’s proposition is read by Sousa (2002: 172) as a signal of female solidarity against binding patriarchal structures. Sousa goes on to insightfully take an etymological approach of the question itself ‘*vamos vingar-nos deles?*’ (*A Costa*: 225), stating ‘while “revenge” (an act of opposition) is clearly the primary sense of the verb in context, unlike its English cognate, *vingar-se* also means “to vindicate oneself,” “to affirm oneself” — acts potentially of self-constitution in any mode, not necessarily in a mode of opposition.’ (2002: 172). I propose an extension of Sousa’s reading here by inserting Helena’s mental illness into the equation. If, as Sousa posits, the sexual elements from Helena’s suggestion are removed and the request is viewed instead as a proposition of self-affirmation and female solidarity, it can likewise

be considered an appeal for female connectivity against shared trauma. Thus, it seems reasonable to position the proposition as a cry for female support and collective cathexis, particularly given its occurrence after scenes of Helena's suicidal ideation.

Evita's proceeding refusal, 'não posso, Helena. Se me aproximasse de ti até te tocar, mergulharia num lodo cor de sangue.' (*A Costa*: 225) is explained away as the fault of embedded heteronormative attitudes from the Church and her mother. Yet, when viewed once more as an offer of self-affirmation detached from its sexualised context, Eva can be seen as sub-consciously rejecting both the opportunity to 'aproximar-se' towards her own gendered trauma, and the feminocentric support model that Helena suggests. Eva's inherent rejection, instilled by society, towards the lesbian encounter in the first instance, is the same rejection with which she does not allow herself any true female solidarity against male-inflicted trauma.

After rejecting Helena's advances, Evita states: 'entre ti e mim a identidade é um espelho que nos reflecte e implacavelmente nos isola' (*A Costa*: 226). Seemingly, it is not just their 'identidade' that is reflected within the mirror, but their shared trauma and sadness; yet, through Eva's superior attitude towards Helena, they must share it separately. It is then in reality a distorted mirror, as, for Eva to explore Helena's mental illness and her own, these explorations must pass through the patriarchal ideological centre and are therefore not reflected, but rather refracted within that mirror. Any potential for female solidarity is squandered and despite what Evita states, it is less the mirror and more her applied patriarchal lens that 'nos isola'.

Whilst Evita does offer Helena a version of friendship throughout the text, it is consistently imbalanced in its power hierarchy, since, ultimately, Evita does little to truly assist Helena in her struggle. As Owen has argued, 'the women of the Stella Maris do not, therefore, emerge from Eva's re-telling as empowered agents of their own history.' (1999: 85) – and indeed neither do the female protagonists Evita and Helena. If anything, through Eva's narrative approach towards Helena's mental illness, Jorge indicates that female solidarity cannot be activated. It is thus ironic

that Eva, named symbolically after Eve who must endure a life of sorrow, bestowed upon womankind as punishment for her transgression of seeking knowledge, is unable to discover a more feminist understanding of female trauma and mental health.

4.3 The Unwell (M)Other

The following section of this chapter is preoccupied with maternal mental illness in *O Retorno*, and seeks to better understand the complicated relationship between Rui and his mother, Glória. An exploration will be undertaken of Rui's portrayal of his mother's undiagnosed illness, pertaining mainly of psychotic episodes and fits, with consideration given to its possible reinforcement of familiar tropes whereby mentally ill mothers are viewed as sub-standard. Through the Kristevian notion of abjection, I propose that Glória is viewed as the abject twice over, firstly due to her maternal positioning, and secondly due to the disruptive nature of her illness. This hypothesis will be examined through a close reading of Chapter 12,⁸⁶ where Rui adopts the role of his absent father in temporarily controlling Glória during one of her fits. I link this shift towards a paternal role within the wider symbolic order, whereby the law of the father must be reinforced to dominate the abject mother.

The final line of enquiry in this section will discuss how, through an act of symbolic matricide and maternal rejection, Rui replaces his mother with a new female figure, Silvana. Rui and Silvana develop a sexual-maternal relationship indicative of the new father-son hybrid role he has embodied. Much of *O Retorno* comments on the evolving relationship between Rui and his father, and the repercussions of his presence and absence on Rui's identity formation; however, in contrast his relationship with his mother(s) and specifically her mental illness has gone unexamined by critics – the following analysis aims to fill this lacuna.

⁸⁶ Whilst the text does utilise a chapter-based structure, each “chapter” is not numbered. I have added a numbered system here for ease of reference.

4.3.1 Seeking a Better Life

Little by little throughout *O Retorno*, Glória's trajectory to Angola can be pieced together. She left Portugal to marry a boy from her village, who had migrated to the African colonies seeking better economic prospects. The impoverished life that she led in Portugal is made clear; she worked daily in the fields, embroidered linen at night, and collected water from a well which she would carry in a jug atop her head (*O Retorno*: 19). Yet, through the description of her departure and journey aboard the *Vera Cruz* (*O Retorno*: 23), the challenging reality of a young girl is made evident as she uprooted her life and travelled alone across the world for nine days, with her hair plaited in ribbons, suggestive of her youth (*O Retorno*: 23).

The *Vera Cruz* is in fact a real ship, sailing between 1952-73, under ownership of the Companhia Colonial de Navegação. Although the ship first voyaged with the main purpose of colonial trade, it later became a passenger ship, transporting migrants from Lisbon to Angola and Mozambique. Glória's arrival contrasts with the description of the 'noivas como deve ser' (*O Retorno*: 24) who disembarked the boat wearing tiaras and veils, carrying bouquets, and leapt into their fiancé's arms upon arrival. In comparison, the awkwardness of Glória's arrival is palpable, and a far cry from the emotionally charged reunion of childhood sweethearts:

Quando desceu do paquete a mãe procurava no cais o rapaz que tinha fugido muitos anos antes à miséria da aldeia, o rapaz do retrato que trazia ao peito no cordão de ouro. Em vez dele, um homem acenava-lhe discreto do sítio mais escondido do cais [...] a mãe chegou ao pé do pai com os sapatos na mão e em vez de o cumprimentar disse-lhe, não pareces tu [...] a mãe cumprimentou o pai sem o abraçar, nem da voz do vosso pai me lembrava, era uma miúda quando o vosso pai veio para cá, nunca pensei que escrevesse a pedir-me em casamento. (*O Retorno*: 24-5)

Thus, aside from Glória's surprise at the marriage proposal itself, her marriage was most likely strained from the very beginning, given that, for all intents and purposes, she and Mário were strangers. It was common for young women to travel to the African colonies to follow their husbands, facilitated by State initiatives which encouraged such emigration. As Ribeiro writes:

Relembre-se que, ao mesmo tempo que decorria a Guerra Colonial, o regime estimulava a ida de famílias para colonizar as terras africanas, oferecendo passagens, concedendo empréstimos para explorações agrícolas através das Juntas Provinciais de Povoamento e outras facilidades. (2004a: 16)

Given that Glória had little real or prior relationship to speak of with Rui's father, Mário, it is plausible that her relocation to Angola was motivated by a desire to escape her impoverished village and build a new life in the colonies, which the *Estado Novo* presented as abundant with exciting new opportunities. Indeed, as Rui repeats throughout the text, Glória's unknown illness is considered to have begun once in Angola and therefore is potentially linked to her marriage, separation from family, isolation, and culture change.

4.3.2 A Female Diagnosis

Throughout *O Retorno*, Glória's mental illness is presented through the teenage eyes of narrator Rui. Diagnosed by doctors as simply 'as doenças dos nervos' (*Retorno*: 95), Rui comments on her 'cabeça fraca', 'esquecimentos' (*O Retorno*: 10), and 'as suas fitas' (*O Retorno*: 78). This description has clear evocations of the attitudes that have historically surrounded female mental illness, rooted in explanations of hysteria and nervous episodes. In the ground-breaking work *The Female Malady*, Elaine Showalter chronologically maps the shifts in mindsets and diagnoses of female mental illness from the Victorian era through to the late 1900s, and explores how, up until the Great War, English psychiatry was dominated by the epidemic of the 'female nervous disorder' (1987: 164), which Glória's diagnosis echoes.

Showalter's work corroborates the warnings posed within Betty Freidan's seminal research *The Feminine Mystique*, which describes the 'problem that has no name' (1963: 19) that afflicted American housewives in the 1960s. Freidan goes on to investigate how female suicide, depression, emotional breakdown, and consequent reliance on tranquillisers amongst housewives lay rooted in a dissatisfaction with the domestic ideal sold to women. This archetypal concept of the perfect housewife is imitated by Glória through her dedication to household tasks and

performed domesticity, inspired by idealised housewives that she had seen depicted in Hollywood films and magazines (*O Retorno*: 9). Rui is dismissive of his mother's pursuit of female domesticity, be it the undercooked rice pudding with their initials sprinkled in cinnamon (*O Retorno*: 13), the modern vacuum she desires (*O Retorno*: 117), or the roses that she cultivates (*O Retorno*: 13). The description of Glória as the "medicated mother" is stressed through the repeated mentioning of the pills that she consumes: 'ajeita as côdeas com o mesmo cuidado com que todas as manhãs ordena os comprimidos antes de tomar' (*O Retorno*: 8). Incidentally Glória's medication is symbolically kept in the kitchen (*O Retorno*: 9).

For Rui, mental illness is undeniably interlinked with Glória's maternal identity and consequently responsible for her "bad mothering"; be that the psychotic episodes where she threatens to kill the children with knives (*O Retorno*: 157) or by driving their car into the bay (*O Retorno*: 161), or when the children must go to neighbouring houses to be fed (*O Retorno*: 137). This depiction falls into the classical trope whereby mentally ill mothers equal unfit mothers, and mental suffering is portrayed as an inherent lack or flaw. Undeniably, from the very outset of the text Rui distances himself from the authority of his mother and mentally separates the family unit – Rui, his father, Mário, sister, Milucha, are together, whilst his mother is isolated and Othered: 'sempre foi difícil adivinhar o que vai na cabeça da mãe. Desde que isto começou também é difícil adivinhar o que vai na cabeça do pai, da minha irmã, na minha, é como se todos tivéssemos ficado parecidos com a mãe' (*O Retorno*: 22).

Yet, it is not solely Rui who positions Glória as different and Othered, but also the gossiping neighbours who find her mannerisms and appearance unusual. They laugh at her excessive make up, clothes, and hair (*O Retorno*: 16), and criticise her care-giving capabilities (*O Retorno*: 10). It is only when Mário brings back gifts of French perfume and peaches from trips to South Africa that Glória 'deixava de ser a D. Glória que tinha problemas e passava a ser a D. Glória que tinha os seus problemas, o que era completamente diferente de ter problemas, toda a gente tem os seus problemas, mesmo as vizinhas' (*O Retorno*: 94), and such a narrative

stresses the fickle nature of gossip and limitations of inter-female support within the community. Through Rui's optic, and depiction of his mother's societal status, it is apparent that mental instability equals unwelcome difference and parental limitations. As Garden-Thomson observes:

Women with disabilities, even more intensely than women in general, have been cast in the collective cultural imagination as inferior, lacking, excessive, incapable, unfit, and useless. In contrast to normatively feminine women, women with disabilities are often stereotypically considered un-desirable, asexual, and unsuitable as parents...Tearing down such attitudinal barriers is one of feminist disability studies' aims. (2005: 1567)

Rui's attitude towards Glória's illness allows many of the ways in which she ensures the stability of the family unit to go unnoticed. A particular example is when Glória takes her jewellery to be sold at a pawn shop to raise money for the family. At first, she wishes to sell a bracelet, but when the offered price is lower than expected, she resolves to sell her beloved gold locket, containing a photograph of her husband Mário as a boy (*O Retorno*: 182). Rui comments that his mother will be unable to do so, due to the locket's sentimentality:

a mãe tira o cordão de ouro da balança, não consegue vendê-lo, o cordão faz parte da mãe, quando está mais nervosa agarra o medalhão e a fotografia do pai sossega-a, a mãe vai tornar a pôr o cordão ao pescoço e vai dizer-me, vamos embora. A mãe abre o medalhão, retira a fotografia do rapaz que nunca apareceu no cais, torna a pôr o cordão em cima da secretária, quero vender a duas coisas, diz sem hesitar. (*O Retorno*: 183)

Rui shows little awareness of the courage that his mother musters when her children are in need, and has indeed absorbed misogynistic and negative stereotypes about female strength, believing that only his father's return will guarantee his family's survival.

As the text progresses, Glória becomes the familial link with Portugal. She tells stories of the splendour of the metropole to the children, shows photographs of family members (*O Retorno*: 25), physically manifested through her brother Zé who arrives to fight in the Colonial War. Despite the depictions of her challenging life working in the fields prior to her arrival in

Angola, the romanticised connection that she feels toward Portugal is evident and held in stark contrast to Rui's father:

O pai nunca fala da metrópole, a mãe tem duas terras mas o pai não. Um homem pertence ao sítio que lhe dá de comer a não ser que tenha um coração ingrato, era assim que o pai respondia quando lhe perguntavam se tinha saudades da metrópole. (*O Retorno*: 11)

Given that Glória ultimately becomes synonymous with the Motherland itself, it would be tempting to use her mental state as an example of the body politic, whereby her illness acts as a conceptualisation of the socio-political reality of the time. However, caution must be exerted to not oversimplify her characterisation through such an analysis. Drawing on Sontag is of use here, specifically her work *Illness as Metaphor* (1978), where she explores the change in disease imagery and metaphor over time. She argues that within classical formulations of the metaphor, such as Plato, the idea of balance is key – illness equals imbalance, and therefore by extension political imbalance. Whereas more modern treatments of the metaphor are centred around notions of punishment – not illness as a punishment per se, but rather something to be punished in and of itself (1978: 81). Whilst Sontag is referring to physical disease, extending this to encompass mental disease also seems to be of use.

The mental suffering of Glória runs alongside a discussion of the family's return to Portugal, fleeing the violence of Angolan decolonisation, and both topics are deemed uncomfortable:

A nossa ida para a metrópole é um assunto ainda mais difícil do que a doença da mãe. Também nunca falamos da doença da mãe [...] a doença da mãe e esta guerra que nos faz ir para a metrópole são assuntos parecidos pelo silêncio que causam. (*O Retorno*: 9)

Rui seems to exert the more classical use of the illness metaphor here, wherein Glória's mental instability is synonymous with the political instability of the Colonial War.

Rui is preoccupied with ascertaining the origin of his mother's illness and shifts between Portugal or Angola as the root cause. Rui comments: 'a culpada de a mãe ser assim é esta terra. Sempre houve duas terras para a mãe, esta que adoeceu e a metrópole, onde tudo é diferente e onde a mãe também era diferente.' (*O Retorno*: 11); however, in a later shift of perspective when describing his mother's arrival in Angola, he questions: 'talvez a mãe já fosse como é, talvez não tenho sido culpa desta terra, deste calor, desta humidade' (*O Retorno*: 24). This dualistic need to find reason and logic within the non-reason and illogicality of his mother's illness hints at Rui's desire to maintain a sense of order. This trait becomes even more evident when he is subsequently faced with one of his mother's fits, the repercussions of which will be discussed in due course.

This desire to find the origin of his mother's illness, and by extension a source into which to deposit blame, negates the fact that Glória's mental illness is simply part of her multi-faceted identity. Rui's understanding of Glória's infirmity goes against that which Foucault suggests, where 'we must try to return, in history, to that zero point in the course of madness at which madness is an undifferentiated experience.' (1965: ix). A return to Garland-Thomas' interpretation of feminist disability theory is crucial here, and her stressing the importance of 'interpreting disability as human variation rather than essential inferiority.' (2005: 1567).

Whilst Rui tries to find a straightforward reason for his mother's illness, his father takes a more hybrid and pragmatic approach regarding her treatment, utilising both European and Angolan medical traditions:

Os médicos diziam que eram crises dos nervos da cabeça fraca mas afinal, a doença da sua mulher não é coisa de médicos, disse um dia um dos porteiros do hospital quando a mãe saía de lá apoiada no pai, conheço um sítio onde a pode levar. E o pai passou a levá-la também aos curandeiros. Primeiro os curandeiros brancos e depois aos curandeiros pretos. (*O Retorno*: 155)

After limited help from white doctors, despite his racial politics (*O Retorno*: 21) Rui's father seeks the help of a black healer named Senhor José, who runs illegal seances in various parts of

town. In comparison with the medication offered by the white doctors, the seances did not involve medicines of any kind. Instead, the seances, albeit clandestine, proposed a more public treatment with an element of spectacle. With chairs laid out like a cinema, Glória is free to shake, shout, speak in tongues, and contort her face, whilst Senhor José delivers a pseudo-exorcism: ‘expulso-vos em nome de deus todo-poderoso’ (*O Retorno*: 159). These words become a mantra of sorts for Rui’s father who recreates Senhor José’s banishing of demons, and this strategy is later adopted by Rui who, in Mário’s absence, assumes the role of monitoring his mother’s mental stability. He expresses his fear in a letter to Uncle Zé over the ‘demónios que rondam a mãe’ (*O Retorno*: 133), his concern over her inability to eat or sleep (*O Retorno*: 149), and changes in behaviour:

A mãe está a torcer as mãos nos bolsos do casaco que lá usava no cacimbo. Conheço aquele torcer de mãos, a mãe está a ficar pior, os demónios andam a rondá-la. Afinal a culpa não era daquela terra, a mãe aqui também não está a salvo das crises. (*O Retorno*: 123)

Through the text’s bildungsroman narrative style, Rui’s adoption of the pseudo-exorcism strategy in his father’s absence ultimately engenders a coming-of-age moment. The following section explores this scene in detail.

4.3.3 Healing Words

Immediately after Chapter 11, which succinctly opens with ‘o pai morreu’ (*O Retorno*: 153), Chapter 12 is dedicated entirely to Glória’s illness (*O Retorno*: 155-62). The subsequent analysis explores this chapter in depth and the presentation of two elements: Rui’s shift into a hybrid father-son role, and the role of language within Rui’s curative measures towards Glória. The following extract acts as an edifying starting point for such an analysis, where we find the family at the hotel, queuing for dinner, and Glória begins to have a fit:

Está a acontecer. A mãe não tem razão e a culpa não era daquela terra. Os demónios tomaram conta da mãe. A bicha desfaz-se e ficam todos à volta do corpo da mãe aos estremeções na alcatifa azul do corredor do hotel, os gritos da mãe tão altos que até os que estavam no restaurante vieram ver, ninguém diz nada, ao princípio ficaram surpreendidos, depois assustados, a mãe com as feições mudadas, as pernas abertas sem vergonha de mostrar as cuecas. (*O Retorno*: 160)

It is worth considering here that which Potter describes as ‘the illusory stability of physical bodies’ (2014: 261), and, in Glória’s case, during her fit-like episode her body is unstable and disruptive. Rui needs to stabilise his mother’s uncontained body and physical state, to steady its resulting rupture to the patriarchal order. Only through a reinstatement of dominant masculine logic can the spectacle of female madness be controlled and Glória’s unruly body, and mind, must be controlled to avoid public embarrassment and indecency. The weight given to the reestablishment of male logic is amplified by Rui’s use of this moment to unconsciously engender his own individuation and, in turn, Glória’s fit acts as one of the pivotal stages of the text as a bildungsroman. Yet, for Rui to discover his own agency, his mother must be at her most vulnerable.

In order to temporarily reinstate the ‘illusory stability of physical bodies’ and “control” his mother’s fit, Rui is cognisant that he must embody the power of his father. The reader is made privy to his anxiety in building the courage to re-enact the pseudo-exorcism that his father has historically used to calm Glória:

a minha irmã ao meu lado a chorar, encho o peito, vou levantar a mão e repetir as palavras, não posso ter medo, vou levantar a mão, não vou ter medo, não há mais ninguém para salvar a mãe, tenho de ser eu, levanto a mão, e se a voz não me sai, se tremo, tenho o braço esticado em direção à mãe, a mão toda aberta, a mãe grita ainda mais alto, toda a gente deu conta da minha mão levantada, não vou ser capaz, sei as palavras, não vou ser capaz, sei as palavras, tenho de dizer as palavras, tenho de dizer, expulso-te em nome de deus todo-poderoso, expulso-te em nome de deus todo-poderoso. Expulso-te em nome de deus todo-poderoso. Tenho a mão levantada e *reconheço a minha voz*. A mãe sossega. Agora é só esperar que a mãe venha a si, que pergunte confundida o que aconteceu, que componha o vestido e que aceite a minha mão para a levar daqui. (*O Retorno*: 161-62)⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Italic emphasis my own.

Rui's ability to find the self-confidence to "arrive" into a position of male dominance hinges on his ability to say the specific words that expel the perceived demons from his mother. In expelling the demons from her body, he also expels his own weakness. Language is thus critical here, and as Glória's body becomes volatile, so does her ability to access normative language. Speaking of an earlier mental crisis, Rui comments:

a mãe diz coisas terríveis com uma voz que não é a dela, às vezes nem se percebia o que mãe dizia e o Sr. José explicava que a mãe estava a falar noutra língua, que há demónios de todas as línguas e feitios.' (*O Retorno*: 156).

For Rui to, as he puts it, 'reconhe[cer] a minha voz', his mother must be detached from normative language and speak 'noutra língua'. This combination of demonic possession and glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, reinforces the neo-Pentecostal references that surround Glória's experiences at the seances with Sr. José.

It would be tempting to view Glória's glossolalia as an attempt to find subjectivity within said patriarchal and religious language, where her different voice and language function as a discursive disruption of the structured language which constrains her. Her fits show her in a struggle between the symbolic and the semiotic, and a possible fight to return to the semiotic *chora*, coined in Plato's *Timaeus* but further defined by Kristeva as the prelinguistic state of the womb (1974). Yet such a reading would without doubt romanticise the very real presentation of Glória's mental illness during an acute moment of crisis and as such it is not my intention to position her glossolalia as an example of disruptive subversion against a logocentric discourse. As explored at the beginning of this chapter through the work of Cheslar, Felman, and Donaldson, to position the struggle of a woman at the height of a mental episode as feminist rebellion would be reductive. What I do seek to explore rather is Rui's need to linguistically dominate his mother in her moment of helplessness.

Patriarchal language has failed Glória in the sense that it is too limited to define and diagnose her illness, and likewise descriptions of her by Rui and the neighbours reinforce exclusionary language around mental illness and disability. Despite the inability of traditional normative discourse to support a more sympathetic understanding of Glória's illness, it is through religious patriarchal language that her psychotic episodes are supposedly "cured". As previously stated, the line 'expulso-te em nome de deus todo-poderoso' has been utilised by two men before Rui; firstly the healer Senhor José, and secondly his father. Therefore, Rui continues the chain of dominant male language, "passed down" from man to man, which has sought to contain Glória's illness through demonic expulsion. This strategy is heavily invested in the patriarchal structure, whereby fathers, or father figures, provide the resolutions that rescue the teenage protagonist from a mother's mental illness. Through an evocation of God, Rui avoids subjugation to an uncontrolled maternal figure and the fear that this rupture of the symbolic order creates.

Cardoso's use of paternal dominance both within the family and religious institutions does little to shift any traditional discourses around curative measures of disability and illness, and indeed reinforces the historical tradition of masculine intervention into female "madness". Turning to Butler's (2004) analysis on Foucauldian ideas of power, the body, and the institution is instructive here. Butler argues that a reciprocated interchange of power occurs between the physical body and the body of the institution (2004: 186). Rui's use of language is intertwined with the raising of his hand, to both linguistically and physically dominate the encounter with his mother. The solution that Rui seeks is reinforcement of the patriarchal law of the father, not just through his symbolic appropriation of a familial paternal role, but also the biblical paternal where the strong evocation of God expels the demons from Glória. Rui's shift into a paternal role provides some temporary symbolic stability and normative logic, but in turn exposes his fidelity to larger patriarchal structures. His body is thus rooted in two patriarchal institutions: the family, and the Church.

4.3.4 Replacing the Abject Mother

In many ways, maternal mental illness can be explored through the lens of Kristeva's abject, given its definition as that which 'disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.' (1984: 4). A brief departure into theory is instructive here. Principally through a collection of abject encounters, Kristeva first defines the abject through phenomenological terms centred around bodily functions, such as fluids, death, illness, childbirth, vomiting, and defecation, and consequent feelings of revulsion. Yet, she later interrogates the notion of the abject in connection with the maternal and Lacan's psychoanalytical mirror-stage theory, which depicts the moment where a subject gains agency in the symbolic realm. Such a focus on the maternal by Kristeva seeks to correct the maternal deficiency within Lacan's work, emphasising its importance within the development of subjectivity. She writes: 'abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be' (1984: 10).

Indeed, for Kristeva, for an infant to become an independent subject it must be violently detached and abjected from the maternal body. Thus, within the development of subjectivity, the primary example of abjection is birth, and any consequent abjections should be seen as echoes of this initial departure from the maternal body. As Kristeva comments: 'for man and for woman the loss of the mother is a biological and psychic necessity, the first step on the way to autonomy. Matricide is our vital necessity, the *sine qua non* condition of our individuation.' (1989: 27). Thus, it is evident that despite a varying range of potential abjections in one's life, all originate from the primary abjection of birth, which can be considered as the initial enactment of maternal rejection and symbolic matricide.

Returning then to *O Retorno*, I propose that Glória functions as doubly abject, firstly by her maternal position, and secondly due to her mental illness. Kristeva argues that the abject acts

a threat to the symbolic order and identity, and as such must be ‘jettisoned from the symbolic’ (1984: 65). That said, Kristeva also comments that the abject is unable to ever be definitively removed, and is therefore always present within the symbolic order. My earlier analysis of Rui and Glória’s relationship makes clear that she now acts as a double threat through her double abjection, with her psychotic episodes acting as a constant risk to the symbolic order. As such, Rui becomes increasingly watchful over his mother’s behaviour, expressing anxiety towards any imminent outburst and consequent disruption of order.

Rui’s attempt to control and diminish that which is abject, both his mother and her illness, is most striking through his repositioning into the quasi-paternal role. Through the aforementioned linguistic and physical domination of his mother, Rui further distances himself from any maternal authority Glória may possess by restoring the symbolic law of the father, and thus transforms his own position into a son-father hybrid. This in turn can be viewed as a rejection of his mother and the symbolic death of Glória’s maternal authority, echoing the primary example of matricide as depicted by Kristeva. Indeed, if our primary act of agency and identity formation is found within the matricide of birth, as we are ejected from the maternal body, Rui thus discovers a deeper sense of agency during Glória’s fit, which, in turn, can be viewed as a second act of symbolic self-affirming matricide. It is after such a matricide that Rui is ready for a new maternal figure – which appears in the form of Silvana.

Silvana is first mentioned within Chapter 13, not so coincidentally, immediately after Glória’s fit in the previous chapter. She is portrayed as somewhat of a sexualised femme fatale, known to flirt with other men in the hotel who are not her husband (*O Retorno*: 211). Yet, it is in Chapter 16 that the relationship between Silvana and Rui develops. Rui is unwell with a fever, and his mother and sister have left the hotel room having asked that the cleaning take place another day so that Rui can rest (*O Retorno*: 213). It is in this context that Silvana enters the room in her role as a chambermaid and begins to care for Rui; following this, she initiates a sexual relationship blended with maternal elements:

A Silvana pôs-me o dedo nos lábios, chiu, os doentes não falam [...] a Silvana sentou-se na minha cama e passou-me uma toalha húmida na testa, sabe tão bem, e a Silvana disse, eu sei que sabe bem, a voz dela estava diferente, como se estivesse rouca, eu sei sabe bem. (*O Retorno*: 213)

Their sexual affair continues with Rui frequenting Silvana's home which she shares with her husband Queine, a porter at the hotel. Ultimately, in the final pages of the text, Silvana breaks off the relationship and Rui asks 'quem trata de mim se voltar a ter febre' (*O Retorno*: 266), reinforcing the maternal element of their relationship. Likewise, as the conversation plays out Silvana is baking a cake, which prompts Rui to begin an internal recollection around the cakes that his mother would try, and fail, to prepare. This maternal comparison, rooted in stereotypical female domesticity, is illustrated by Silvana's cakes with coloured icing and sprinkles, and Glória's cakes which would never rise (*O Retorno*: 264). This contrast further reinforces the rejection that Rui enacted against his biological mother, whilst stresses the gendered norms that he imposes upon both women. Yet again, as with their first sexual encounter when Rui was unwell, Silvana's maternal characterisation here is followed by an element of the sexual:

A Silvana passou o dedo indicador na taça que tinha o resto da massa do bolo e lambeu-o. Deu-me a taça e eu fiz o mesmo. Durante algum tempo ficámos de pé um ao lado do outro a lamber o resto da massa do bolo com os dedos. (*O Retorno*: 266)

This sexualised maternal relationship with Silvana is in keeping with the new male positioning that Rui assumes after Glória's fit; additionally, there are echoes of a masculine identity crisis as Rui attempts to find his place within a patriarchal order. His father's ultimate return to Portugal coincides with his relationship with Silvana ending, and he is therefore no longer required to embody a paternal role in either case. To add a further layer to Rui's complicated father-son positioning, he has developed a separate father-son like relationship with Silvana's husband Queine. In his father's absence, Queine develops a paternalistic manner towards Rui, for example, buying him a bicycle and offering advice in times of need. This bicycle becomes, in fact, the mode of transport Rui uses to travel to Silvana's house to carry out their

affair and is therefore symbolic of Rui's sexual freedom and journey towards maturity.⁸⁸ Queine therefore, unknowingly, replaces Rui's father as the figurehead who encourages Rui's sexual development and independence. Consequently, Rui's role within Silvana and Queine's relationship situates him within an Oedipal positioning. Ultimately, Silvana ends the relationship with Rui after falling pregnant, and the identity of the father is never revealed. Given that the father could indeed be Rui, the Oedipal locus that he now embodies is contorted further still.

4.3.5 A Dysfunctional Narrator

As has been evaluated, it seems reasonable to suggest that to speak of Glória's mental illness is also to speak of Rui's identity development. His relationship with Glória is rooted in his portrayal of her illness as the reason for her poor parenting, and he proceeds to Other his mother through exclusionary language. Rui's optic reinforces normative and pejorative tropes around mental illness and motherhood, emphasising patriarchal constructs rather than taking the opportunity to explore new female identities. Rui's response to Glória's fit is rooted in patriarchal dominance, and a desire to restore the symbolic order through his embodiment of the paternal figure. Likewise, the curative measures of containment put in place for Glória's illness reinforce the historical importance given to stable, and able, bodies and minds, and the anxiety caused by those that are not. Rui's defining moment of agency within the text is achieved at the expense of his mother's lucidity during her public mental health breakdown and the containment and domination of his mother, at her most vulnerable, engenders an individuation process that allows Rui access into a system of power. This does very little to move narratives of mental illness away from hegemonic and patriarchal discourses.

⁸⁸ The bicycle as a coming-of-age motif is also present within Jorge's *A Instrumentalina* (1992), and I am grateful to Hilary Owen for drawing my attention to this similarity. Of this motif, Ana Paula Ferreira writes: 'a time-space is created through a representation - the homonymous bicycle of the story's title - that is an instrument of freedom but also of emotional maturity resulting from trauma, from loss of a dream.' (1999: 102). Indeed, for Rui the bicycle is both a vehicle for his individuation, but also for the trauma of his first heartbreak, after Silvana ends their relationship.

With Rui as narrator, there are no dominant, contrasting opinions or attitudes towards female mental illness depicted, and there is no textual evidence as to Glória's own mindset regarding her illness, nor the other family members. However, in the final pages a passing mention is given to a softer and more inclusive attitude towards mental illness by Milucha's new boyfriend, who Rui names 'o sabichão' (*O Retorno*: 261):

a teoria do sabichão é que as doenças dos nervos às vezes melhoram ou até desaparecem quando há mudanças grandes nas vidas das pessoas [...] Mas eu queria era ver o sabichão quando a mãe estivesse a ter um dos ataques, fugia a sete pés e a minha irmã nunca mais o via. (*O Retorno*: 261)

In the first instance, Cardoso's own attitudes cannot be conflated with the stereotypes that Rui perpetuates. Yet, we must question to what extent Rui's ableist viewpoint in the characterisation of his mother's illness are an intentional metaphorical strategy, or whether they are perhaps echoes of Cardoso's own blind spots. It is plausible that the limited nuance surrounding Glória's illness is connected to generational lacunae within Cardoso's own presentation of mental illness. It is important here to underline the limited nature of disability studies within Portugal itself, a delay which Fontes considers to be the fault of pejorative cultural conceptions of disability during Salazar's dictatorship, compounded with the restrictive attitudes of the Catholic Church (Fontes et al. 2014). Cardoso's use of Rui as the sole narrator problematises a straightforward analysis of the portrayal of mental illness. Through such a lens there is limited scope to reframe Glória's unwellness as empowering; indeed, the presentation of Glória's mental illness does little to challenge normative discourses and reaffirms dualistic constructions of female mental illness resulting in sub-standard maternal abilities. I would argue that through the presentation of Glória as the mentally unwell mother, Rui reinforces what Potter and Parsons call the 'culturally sanctioned gender-disability narrative' (2011: 135). In viewing this narrative as 'culturally sanctioned', Rui's attitude can be a metaphorical strategy whereby a dysfunctional, and traumatised, character in turn exposes a dysfunctional system. In this regard,

Rui exposes, not only the attitudinal stigma attached to mental illness during the decolonisation period, but also the limited vocabulary available with which to discuss the issue.

4.4 The Lonely Road

This chapter has sought to explore in detail the interactions between trauma and the female mind; focusing initially on how the emotional trauma suffered by the protagonist in *Caderno* is explored through a series of dreamscapes, resulting in an ultimate renegotiation of such trauma. This chapter then interrogated examples of mental illness suffered by two significant, but secondary, female characters, seen through the eyes of the narrators: Helena, in *A Costa*, and Glória, in *O Retorno*. Both Helena and Glória allow for an interrogation into how pejorative stereotypes of women regarding beauty, emotion, and motherhood remain inseparable from depictions of mental illness and disability. As has been explored within *A Costa*, Eva is unable to differentiate Helena's depression and suicidality from her melodramatic and contradictory personality, and within *O Retorno* Glória's psychotic episodes remain synonymous with maternal failure.

Both *A Costa* and *O Retorno* require that, for female mental illness to be understood, albeit poorly, it must pass through the centre of internalised misogyny - through the cynical and critical lens of Eva in *A Costa*, and the embodied paternal position of Rui in *O Retorno*. Due to the viewpoints of both narrators, neither Helena nor Glória are given space to narrate their own experiences and, as such, their stories are appropriated on their behalf. The two texts make it starkly evident that there is little, if any, solidarity to be had for these two women. Glória is mocked by other women and her community, is passed from doctor to doctor, suffers masculine domination in her times of need, and is ultimately trapped within a deficient understanding of mental health. There is no recognition of her ability to keep her family afloat whilst living with mental illness, but she is, instead, seen as a figure to be "cured".

Helena is not even afforded the luxury of any attempts at curative measures, no matter how patriarchal they may be. She is subjected to the clinical gaze of Eva, with her mental health disparagingly explained away by her ambiguous character and performative emotion. Trapped within this patriarchal reinforcement of negative tropes around female mental health, Eva is unable to engage with her own trauma or consider the idea of a feminocentric support model. Jorge seems to intimate that any hope for female solidarity in light of traumatic commonalities is all but a myth for the women of the Stella Maris hotel, and that, with regard to female mental illness, a patriarchal optic continues to reign supreme.

Both Jorge and Cardoso are successful in stressing a bleak outlook for unwell women, highlighting the limited vocabulary or infrastructure available with which to deal with female mental illness at the time. Neither do the authors offer the women a sympathetic narrator, or alternative narratives of mental illness. They do, however, make increasingly clear the difficult path upon which unwell women had to tread – most unequivocally alone. Figueiredo equally walks a lonely road regarding the emotional recovery of her protagonist: her father has passed away, she eschews the potentially healing relationship with her half-sister, and ultimately only finds a sense of mastery over her identity anxieties through an encounter with the land - with animals acting as her support, as opposed to human beings. Through unconscious sleep, Figueiredo offers a tentatively hopeful trajectory for recovery, in contrast with Jorge and Cardoso. Yet, the very fact the protagonists' self-reflection occurs outside of "reality" indicates an understanding that the dreamworld can often be a safer world than the post-colonial reality which the protagonist has to navigate.

Concluding Remarks - The Road to Recovery: Surviving Colonial War Trauma

[...]a sobrevivência não passa dum fruto da nossa cabeça.

Lídia Jorge, *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, p.112

‘What is the goal of the survivor?’, asks Susan J. Brison, ‘Ultimately, it is not to transcend the trauma, not to solve the dilemmas of survival, but simply to endure.’ (1997: 31). As has been explored within this thesis, the strategies required to endure trauma are vast, wide-ranging, and, at times, unsuccessful. The gendered traumatic experiences revealed within *A Costa, Caderno*, and *O Retorno* are relentless and unflinching, ranging from PTSD and suicide to sexual and domestic assault. The characters struggle in their attempts to outlive one of the most brutal eras of contemporary Portuguese history, and, despite their shared experiences, show little sign of collective solidarity or empathy.

In this thesis, I have argued that we may consider *A Costa, Caderno*, and *O Retorno* as works of trauma autofiction. The traumatic encounters interrogated here are rooted in the lived experience of the authors, be that trauma they themselves confronted, or suffering that they witnessed second-hand. As such, their literary subjects oscillate between moments of fiction and of reality. In this regard, trauma autofiction allows a for a controlled “re-living” of traumatic instances. Whilst the notion of mastering trauma through repetition is by no means a new concept, I propose that trauma autofiction has the potential to act as the literary equivalent of Freud’s fort-da game.⁸⁹ Freud interpreted this method of controlled disappearance and retrieval as the child mastering his anxiety around the trauma of his mother’s departure. In repeating the coming and going of the spool, or in other words, his mother, the child is ultimately able to create a sense of joy around the event of departure. Freud argues that, where there was more departure, “fort”, and

⁸⁹ Freud observed his one-and-a-half-year-old nephew who, when alone, would play with a spool and string. Holding onto the string, the child would throw the spool away from the cot, and make an “ooo” sound when it could no longer be seen. His mother explained that this was his interpretation of the German word “fort”, meaning “away”, and, when the child would pull back on the string to retrieve the spool, he would say “da, meaning “here” – hence Freud’s naming of the process.

less retrieval, “da” of the spool, and the game was left unfinished, the child sought to enact further control over the leaving, wherein he is the active force dispelling his mother. Freud, in turn, considered this as the child attempting to enact a sense of mastery over his world in general.

Through trauma autofiction, an author may “safely” repeat and return to the locus of their experienced pain, whilst contorting the narrative from a protected distance and camouflaged position. This strategy functions in a similar way to the re-enactment of the traumatic departure of the mother by Freud’s nephew, which he practices in a controlled and safe space. The autofictional techniques applied by Jorge, Figueiredo, and Cardoso enable the authors a sense of “protected” vulnerability by depicting various fictional versions of a past Self through whom they can traverse depictions of trauma and make use of the cathartic properties of an active listener/readership, whilst simultaneously remaining protected at a safe distance. In this respect, the traumatic encounters experienced by the authors can be navigated and negotiated from a position that requires less open vulnerability.

Where distance is required as a protective measure, so too is it required for creation of their literary work in the first place, and all three authors have commented that a form of “distance” from the trauma of the Colonial War and decolonisation period was necessary to write their respective narratives. Jorge has spoken of the paralysis caused by the overwhelming nature of her experiences after her return to Portugal:

Eu sabia dos crimes que se praticavam contra os nativos, e também vi muitos portugueses jovens mortos, estive no meio do problema. Quando regressei a Portugal achei que nunca escreveria sobre uma coisa que me fez sofrer tanto [...] Não queria falar. Da Guerra Colonial, dos estropiados, dos homens que tinham pesadelos de noite, que batiam nas mulheres, nos filhos, gente enferma mentalmente, que não era capaz de falar da sua experiência, que odiava África e a gente de África. Tudo isso existia, escondido, dentro de casa. (Coutinho 2018)

For Jorge, the writing of *A Costa* was ultimately motivated by a concern that the realities of history may be lost, and a desire to navigate her own sense of guilt (Coutinho 2018). The time

lag of over fifteen years between Jorge leaving the African colonies and publishing *A Costa* suggests the temporal, and geographical, distance required to navigate the intricate feelings of her personal involvement in the imperial project, and indeed of this, in an interview with Manuel Vitorino, Jorge herself has stated: ‘há necessidade de um certo distanciamento para que se possa falar das coisas com o calculo que a literatura exige’ (1988: 24). Yet, ultimately, as she states: ‘não imagino sobreviver sem ser através da escrita [...] a minha forma de lutar contra esse apocalipse seria continuar a escrever. Acho que se sobrevive dessa forma.’ (1988: 24).

Likewise, for Figueiredo the writing of *Caderno* acted as a foundational building block for the exploration of her own culpability and pain, but, in the first instance, she too was required to separate herself emotionally from her colonial past: ‘Precisei de esconder que era retornada para não sofrer, só para viver’ (Coutinho 2018). This notion echoes Brinson’s argument that, more often than not, a survivor must simply endure their trauma rather than process it. Making clear the healing capacity of artistic production, she states:

Creio que a arte é resultado da experiência pessoal em um contexto social, desde sempre. As gravuras rupestres testemunham essa natureza. A experiência das coisas pode ser elaborada em um nível simbólico que mascare a experiência da primeira pessoa, mas a relação do artista com o mundo dificilmente poderá ser excluída ou negada da obra que esse artista construiu. No meu caso, a arte surge como tentativa *de reconstrução de algo que me foi roubado: o Paraíso*. E não sou a única. Crescer é nos tornarmos livres, mas essa liberdade pode cobrar um preço alto. Uso as vivências passadas e também as presentes, cruéis ou prazerosas, para me equilibrar emocionalmente. A arte é um labor e uma terapia. Por outro lado, vejo-a também como uma missão, um serviço prestado ao outro. (2020)

Figueiredo makes the transformative effect of her writing plain, and the concept of using artistic production to recreate something she argues was stolen from her. Through a blend of fiction and memory, this ‘reconstrução’ of the past sees her embark on a search for a stolen form of personal ‘Paraíso’ – which could, in the context of trauma, be understood as the safe and stable world prior to the violence and chaos of the decolonisation period, or a return to the innocent ignorance of her family’s involvement in the Portuguese imperial project.

When asked about her own painful memories of Angola, in direct comparison to Figueiredo, Cardoso entirely rejects the concept of writing as therapy. She comments:

I *disassociated* from it. I did not forget what happened, but I forgot what I felt. The recollection is without pain but not what I felt, and there was no point in my continuing to feel it [...] It is not therapy. The memories stopped hurting me before I started writing. Or else, they hurt me but not in the sense of considering myself as an injured party. I was only able to write like this because I had already done the work of reconciliation myself; I was no longer furious. (2020: 63).⁹⁰

Cardoso's use of the verb 'disassociated' is pertinent, echoing the work of Janet and Brinson which agrees that a process of disassociation is employed to facilitate survival from trauma. As previously explored within this thesis, this disassociation pertains mainly to the body and involves either a splitting of the traumatised Self or creation of multiple selves to avoid complete emotional destruction. Whilst Cardoso does not view her writing as a therapeutic strategy, nor herself as an 'injured party', there is a recognition that a version of pain still exists, albeit removed from previous feelings of anger.

In the three instances, a dissociative temporal, geographical, or emotional distance from the trauma of the decolonisation period was required and, as I have argued in this thesis, this distance has bled into the corresponding authorial choices. In their literary works, Jorge, Figueiredo, and Cardoso utilise varying degrees of autofictionality as an exploration of survival strategies which enable them to "endure" such trauma and navigate complex corresponding emotions of guilt, shame, and anger.

Isolation functions as a commonality amongst the traumatised subjects of *A Costa*, *Caderno*, and *O Retorno*, either due to restrictive gender stereotypes, unempathetic narrators, or an active rejection of support. Through this sense of loneliness, Jorge, Figueiredo, and Cardoso

⁹⁰ Italic emphasis is my own.

individually reinforce the lack of vocabulary available to discuss, and mitigate, the suffering and pain experienced during the decolonisation period. When considered alongside each other, the texts highlight plainly that traumatised subjects are to be found in every corner of the decolonisation process, regardless of gender, sexuality, or race, yet, little solidarity is able to be mustered. Consideration of the epigraph of this chapter, taken from *A Costa*, is salient here: ‘a sobrevivência não passa dum fruto da nossa cabeça’ (112). Jorge’s negative verb formation is implausibly accidental, hinting at her despondent attitude towards any real possibility of recovery from Colonial War trauma. If ‘fruto da nossa cabeça’ is considered as ‘the fruit of our imagination.’ (1995: 112), as in the English translation of the work by Ronald W. Sousa, then a nod to the fictional “imagined” elements of *A Costa* are clear. Yet, in focusing purely on imagination, I believe a subtler intention is conceivably mislaid. Jorge’s lexical selection of ‘cabeça’ seems to hint at more than just imagination, and hints towards the necessity of agency and empowerment when attempting to navigate the traumatic past. This endeavour for agency should not be merely personal, but collective, as stressed by the possessive pronoun ‘nossa’. Perhaps then, if recovery is all but a myth, to render the pain of the traumatic imperial past endurable, imagination is required, but more so a resolved sense of collective action that extends beyond the personal.

Brison has argued convincingly that healing cannot take place in isolation, and, in order to rebuild the Self after an experienced trauma, two conditions are required: a constructed narrative, and a listener of that narrative (1997: 29). The former cannot exist within a vacuum, and as such, the latter is fundamental to the creation of a new sense of selfhood. Brison states:

trauma survivors are dependent on empathetic others who are willing to listen to their narratives...not to be heard means that the self the survivor has become does not exist. Since the earlier self died, the surviving self needs to be known and acknowledged in order to exist. (1997: 29)

Whilst the subjects of *A Costa*, *Caderno*, and *O Retorno* are unable to fully verbalise their suffering, or find a sympathetic listener – what of the authors themselves? Encounters with trauma narratives are often challenging, given that they depict the incomprehensible, and trauma survivors often encounter denials by the listener as to their narrative’s authenticity. If a sympathetic listener is required to assist the healing process, within the field of literature, this “listener” is in fact a “reader”. Whilst the child partaking in the fort-da game is able to do so alone, the creation of a literary work is a two-player game, to be participated in by both author and reader. As has been explored within Chapter One of this thesis, the fictional elements of trauma autofiction can, in fact, render the portrayal of trauma more believable and, therefore, facilitate a productive version of this symbiotic relationship between reader and author.

Where destructive moments of history can tear notions of shared community asunder, so can they also engender mutual recovery. In bringing traumatised narratives to the fore, Jorge, Figueiredo, and Cardoso offer insight into their experiences of the Colonial War and *retornado* status. The potential regenerative properties of literature, which can aid the unification of fractured groups, are clear within the three texts. Each has accelerated public discussion and engagement within Portugal around the multifaceted and problematic topic of remembrance and decolonisation. Of note is Figueiredo’s presence at the 2016 exhibition entitled ‘Retornar – Traços de Memória’, which explored the turbulent end of the Portuguese empire and featured a reading of *Caderno*. The exhibition was held, provocatively, in front of the *Padrão dos Descobrimentos* monument in Lisbon, which famously celebrates and glorifies 15th and 16th century Portuguese maritime explorers. Cardoso has stated that Portuguese literature has no characters with whom people can identify (2020: 54). Due to the sheer proportion of Portuguese society who have some experience of the Colonial War and decolonisation period, the three authors undoubtedly have created characters that are easily identifiable within the wider collective experience.

To close, when considered as a triad, the texts demonstrate that the only way to seek some sense of recovery from colonial trauma, both personal and national, is to expose all that has been hidden. Be that the stigmatisation felt by the *retornados*, the vicious impact of the war on young male bodies and minds, war atrocities carried out against civilians, or the brutal realities of the colonial day-to-day. Jorge, Figueiredo, and Cardoso expel these examples of trauma from the private into the public, from past into the present, and encourage us to encounter these necessary feelings of loss, grief, and perhaps most critically, discomfort. In doing so, they stress that it is only through knowledge, and acknowledgement, that we may be directed towards a more open remembrance of Portuguese decolonization.

Appendices

Appendix 1.

Family photograph illustrating the physical disability of Figueiredo's father.



Retrieved from: Isabela Figueiredo, 'O Meu Presépio', *Novo Mundo*, 25 December 2014.

< <http://novomundoperfeito.blogspot.com/2014/12/o-meu-presepio.html> > [accessed 21 July 2020]

Appendix 2.

Fig. 1

Geographical map of the northern Cabo Delgado district of Mozambique.

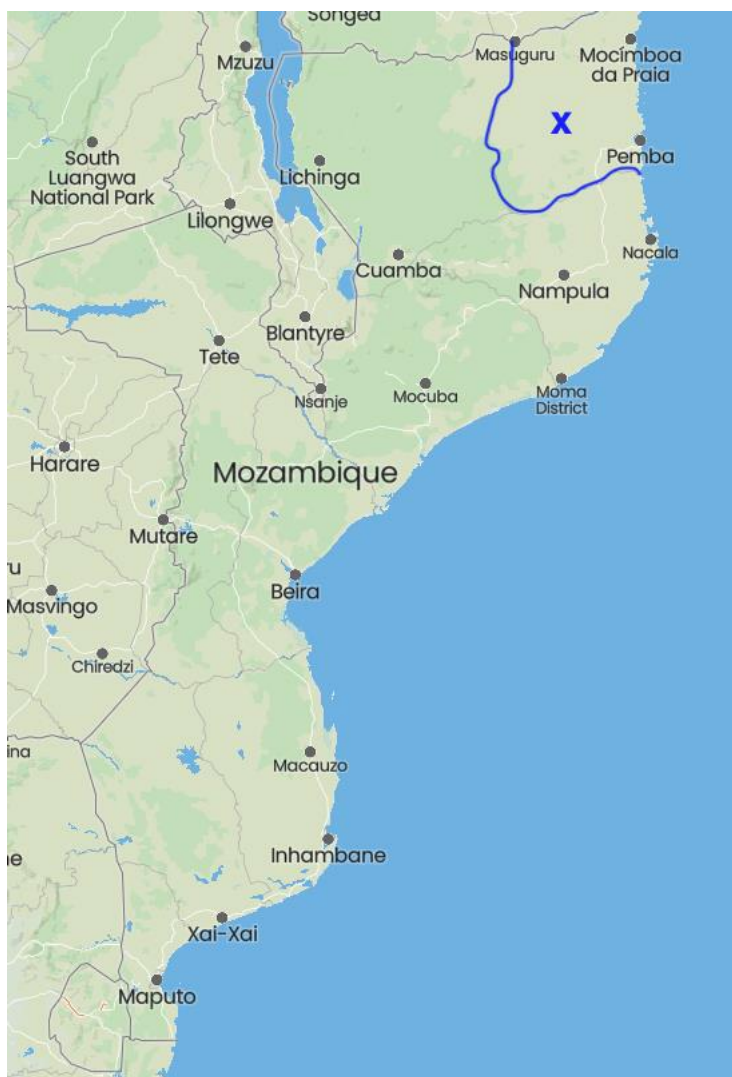


Fig 2.

More detailed map of the Northern Cabo Delgado district, showing the general location of Nangade, Nancatarí – now known as Nancatar – and the River Sinheu.



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