

Introduction: from process to objects

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Women have used images as a weapon in the context of worldwide liberation struggles and the internationalism that supported them — by using photographic and film cameras and, more generically, through the visual arts. This engaged political practice was also intended as a response to its use by the political, scientific, and economic propaganda that sustained the colonial-fascist order and ideology.¹ These practices were frequently suppressed, and they still are to this day.

In the Portuguese speaking world, amongst the women who photographed or made films with a political purpose, the names of Augusta Conchiglia (1948), Margaret Dickinson (1943), Ingela Romare (1937), Sarah Maldoror (1929-2020), Bruna Polimeni (1934) and Suzanne Lipinska (1928) come to mind. Meaning was brought to the filmed

¹ The link between fascism and colonialism is defended by authors such as Hannah Arendt, Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon, who have argued, in different ways, that fascism is colonialism in the metropolis. Alberto Memmi inverted the terms of this equation, when he reasoned that colonialism is one of the variants of fascism. Cf. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1962 [1951]); Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000 [1955]); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Groove Press, 2004 [1961]); Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (London: Earthscan, 1990 [1957]).

materials — recorded not just by women — by the editors Jacqueline Meppiel (1928-2011), Cristiana Tullio-Altan (1947) or Josefina Crato (?-2005); the latter the sole woman among a group of four young Guineans sent to Cuba by Amílcar Cabral to study film. More recently, a wealth of women has made decisive contributions towards historical, recollective and experiential (post)colonial reflection, by creating personal archives that challenge the colonial records and question the “politics of memory” emanating from the majority of official archives (which create difficulties in terms of access and use or fail to contextualise the images in their vaults): Margarida Cardoso (1963), Pocas Pascoal (1963), Maria João Ganga (1964) and Isabel Noronha (1964), through their fiction feature films; Kamy Lara (1980), Ana Tica (1979), Diana Andringa (1947) and Catarina Laranjeiro (1983), with their documental work; Eurídice Kala (1987), Vanessa Fernandes (1978), Melissa Rodrigues (1985), Filipa César (1975), Mónica de Miranda (1976), Ângela Ferreira (1958), Luciana Fina (unknown), Jota Mombaça (1991), Grada Kilomba (1968) and Patrícia Lino (1990), amongst others, with their visual arts projects, installations, performances and creations. Such contributions point to new modes of decolonising the colonial archive, reimagining Portuguese colonialism, and the struggle and resistance of those who opposed it.

This present issue of RCL departs from an initial and initiatic question: where are the women in the decolonisation processes? It then evolves into more specific interrogations. How have the women in the former Portuguese colonies perceived these liberation struggles? How have their perspectives been, or not, assimilated into the (re)imagining of colonialism? Is there an explicitly female vision of liberation from Portuguese colonialism? What knowledge and awareness do we have of/about these perceptions? And how do these intersect with the views of those women filmmakers, artists, curators, and academics who, today, question the archives, public and private, explore and visually reinvent their memories, and reimagine colonialism? What role does academic research, archive conservation policies, programming and curatorial practices play in the questioning or, by contrast, protraction of official “politics of memory”?

In the process, however, we have welcomed proposals that extended the strict thematic (and even geographic) latitude of this issue, but which responded to the challenge of reflecting upon “modes of seeing and knowing” of women involved in decolonisation processes, past and present, and to a specific editorial concern: how are women — in their academic, theoretical and/or artistic practices — responding to the current decolonial turn?

Concerning the editing process

As women academics who critically question their own subjection to a patriarchal and colonial system, and rehearse other forms of doing, knowing, and seeing, we wanted to counter the “coloniality of knowledge”, as identified by Walter D. Mignolo (1995),² and the rising tendency towards the neo-liberalisation of the Academia, in its violent operating mode. We did not want for the agency of our positions as editors to perpetuate this violence, so we instead used that position to stop it, as Arielle Aisha Azoulay has prompted us (2019). The theme itself demanded nothing less than such a stance from us.

In that sense, and in the context of the call to reflect on the “modes of seeing and knowing” of women who have lived through decolonisation processes, we embraced a highly varied range of papers and visual essays — a genre that only recently the RCL has started to accept —, from authors of diverse origins, with contrasting artistic or academic backgrounds, and also at different stages in their careers. For some of the authors, it is the first time they get published. We also wanted the contributors to express themselves from their own “locus of enunciation” (Ribeiro 2017). With some of the more experimental formats, we wanted to challenge the idea that knowledge may only be determined by “specialists” and articulated in an academic format. We embraced polyphony and diversity, striving to potentiate all proposals and do justice to a decolonial editorial practice.

In the Portuguese version, we use the term *Decolonial* instead of *Descolonial*³ such that, as proposed by Luciana Ballestrin (Gallas and Machado 2013) and Catherine Walsh (2009), we avoid confusing it with terminology that points to the idea of “decolonisation”. Historically, the latter would indicate overcoming of colonialism. Likewise, the idea of decoloniality intends to make it explicit exactly the opposite, attempting to transcend that the “darker side” of Western modernity — coloniality (Mignolo 1995, 2017). Just as we must not confound “colonialism” and “coloniality” (Quijano 2005),⁴ it is important that we distinguish “decolonial” from “decolonisation”. The issue pertains to

² The expression “coloniality of knowledge” designates the continuous access by colonialism to the production, distribution, and reproduction of knowledge; a process that excludes other epistemes and downgrades different forms of knowing and producing knowledge. Cf. Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance, Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

³ The variant “*descolonial*” is, however, widely used in scientific articles translated to Portuguese, especially in Brazil, and by authors largely underestimated by the hegemonic centres of production of knowledge.

⁴ Colonialism means the subjugation of a population by political and/or military force to guarantee the exploitation of riches and labour by and to the advantage of colonisers, placing the sovereignty of those who are colonised beneath the interests of a colonial power. Coloniality is perceived as a complex historical phenomenon that extends beyond colonialism, referring to a pattern of power that operates via the naturalisation of territorial, racial, cultural, gender and epistemological hierarchies. Naturalisation is thus the apparatus that makes it possible the reproduction of relations of domination. This pattern of power maintains and guarantees the exploitation of humans by fellow humans; subordinating and obliterating the knowledge, experiences, and ways of living of those who are exploited and dominated (Quijano, 2005; Restrepo et Rojas, 2012).

the utilisation of the prefix “de”, which — as the prefix “post” in postcolonial⁵ — does not aim to designate an overcoming of colonialism, but rather to allude to a range of political, epistemological and social tools engaged in the critique and disabling of the oppressions and structures that buttress the triad capitalism-coloniality-patriarchy, as engines for the international circulation of Power and its discursive structures.⁶

For this present edition, we wanted the word decolonial to transcend its basic function as mere theoretical manifestation; we wanted it to develop into a praxis, as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) proposes. We tried to counter our own obedience to ways of knowing and disseminating that remain largely colonial and patriarchal. Although we understand the importance of blind peer reviewing, we nevertheless sought ways to surpass some of its limitations — the dehumanisation caused by an objectivity model which deliberately eschews identity and the conditions subjacent to the production of a text or visual essay. Once the blind review stage was concluded, followed by “final” revisions by the authors, we immediately concentrated on the rereading, the editing, and the communication with contributors, in strict accordance with the specific competencies and propensities of each editor. This rereading entailed a great amount of dialogue between the editors and the authors, enriched by everyone’s availability to discuss differences of opinion, to read anew, and consider changes that were regarded as potentiating. It was a process of immense learning, during which we faced the need to generate an apportionment of gestures that enhance humanisation in academic thinking and transversal critical debate (something that applies also to the editing of academic journals), without losing track of the mandatory need for rigour.

The decolonial here meant not just an exclamation along the lines of “And what about the women?”, since it sought to incorporate and reorganise their role in the historical and memorial process of colonialism as well as the fight against it. Above all, it

5 The postcolonial is a discursive reality resulting from the independence of countries formerly under colonial rule and arises from the questioning of a false distinction between colonialism, as a system of political governance, and colonialism, as a system of knowledge and representation (Hall, 2003). It presupposes a reading of colonisation as a global process and, considering its transnational and transcultural character, often expresses itself in the diasporic rewriting of the grand imperial narratives of the past, in which “The differences, of course, between colonising and colonised cultures remain profound. But they have never operated in a purely binary way and they certainly do so no longer” (Hall 2003b, 108).

6 This elaboration stems from a critique seeking to radically reposition Latin America in the postcolonial debate, while simultaneously criticising it. Generally speaking, the criticism was based on the idea that postcolonial theory suffered from an excess of culturalism, especially insofar as it was influenced by the Birmingham Group, and because it remained Eurocentric, given how it was affected by poststructuralism (for instance the sway Michel Foucault held over Edward Said, Jacques Derrida over Gavatri Spivak or Jacques Lacan over Homi K. Bhabha); aspects that were made more conspicuous for the fact that the discussion was being driven by parties of Asian, North-African and even Antillean elites. Notwithstanding, it does not seem tenable that the discussion proposed by Latin-American intellectuals was, at any point, driven by a need to oppose the terms decolonial and postcolonial. Common to both is the valorisation of peripheral minority discourses and alternative narratives in general, to combat colonialist epistemicide and its promotion of subordinate group suppression, and to problematise the historical process of modern European colonisation, deconstructing colonialist discourses in literature, art, science, politics, justice, the media, and in everyday practices and experiences. Put another way, both indicate the ways in which colonised peoples have been represented, in the context of modern European colonialism, at the same time that they denounce coloniality’s persistence in the fabric of social, intercultural, and political relations between the global North and South.

meant the forging of an “elsewhere” for the production of knowledge, as roused by Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012). We tested this “elsewhere”, albeit conditionally, through a decolonial approach embracing “multiplicity” and “messiness”, in support of a “more libertarian imagination” (Vergès 2021b).

Concerning the texts: ways of seeing and knowing

It is mostly this decolonial editorial praxis that accounts for the heterogeneity and hybridity of the articles and visual essays on the present edition of RCL. More than a thematic issue, this issue should be understood as a patchwork opening out on to a range of mostly feminist perspectives whose origins lie in a broadest field of study — postcolonial and decolonial critique.⁷ When drafting the Index, we opted for an alphabetical order based on the first names of authors. On the one hand, this decision serves the purpose of making it impossible that any narrative propelled by the editors may condition the reader and, on the other, it challenges the statutory and academic hierarchies between published authors.

Some articles here published sheds light on the importance of women’s roles in liberation struggles, problematising representational politics in all its complexity. These are “Arma diplomática e dicção: As mulheres nos filmes da luta de libertação da Guiné-Bissau” (Diplomatic weapon and fiction: Women in Guinea-Bissau’s liberation struggle films), by Catarina Laranjeiro, and “Mulheres, nação e luta no cinema anti/pós-colonial guineense” (Women, nation, and struggles in anti/postcolonial cinema in Guinea-Bissau), by Sílvia Roque. They point to the absolute importance of women’s roles in these struggles, but also to the suppression of such prominent presence, so that a certain liberation narrative could succeed. In “Bertina Lopes: a militant with a brush”, Nancy Dantas reclaims the memory of the Mozambican artist, her experience of Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique and her opposition to the colonial status quo in her artistic practice, anchored in a modernism with African roots, particularly as the illustrator of *Nós matámos o cão-tinhoso* (We killed mangy-dog, 1964), and later on, during her exile in Rome, a time when her house became a place of refuge.

The reality is that women’s political involvement in the fight against colonialism achieved more than just local expression, also attaining a transnational dimension through political alliances that fomented a whole multiplicity of gender representations, as Giulia Strippoli’s “Images beyond borders. The production of knowledge about women’s activism against the colonial wars” reveals. It does so through the study

⁷ Despite the differences, common to both practices is the valorisation of peripheral minority discourses and alternative narratives in general, to combat colonialist epistemicide and its promotion of subordinate group suppression, and to problematise the historical process of modern European colonisation, deconstructing colonialist discourses in literature, art, science, politics, justice, the media, and in everyday practices and experiences. Put another way, both indicate the ways in which colonised peoples have been represented, in the context of modern European colonialism, at the same time that they denounce coloniality’s persistence in the fabric of social, intercultural, and political relations between the global North and South.

of images, particularly of internationalist feminist events, which testify immediately to the intersectional character of the anticolonial struggle, long before it was perceived as such, and the images of international campaigns for the liberation of members of the resistance to Portuguese fascism and colonialism.

The viewpoint of those women involved in the structure of colonial authority, negotiating their existence within, and even resistance to, the patriarchal and colonial order, is given us by the study of Margarida Cardoso's film *A costa dos murmúrios* (*The murmuring coast*, an adaptation of the homonymous novel by Lídia Jorge) in "Female gaze and subjectivity in *The Murmuring Coast*", by Inês Cordeiro Dias. The article is a *mise-en-abyme* of four perspectives sharing the same genealogy: Eva's gaze, which is Lídia's, which turns out to be Margarida's, and of Cordeiro Dias as well. The gaze that white women have of the history and violence of colonialism. Maja Figge, in turn, floats this same theoretical framing of the gaze, when she examines the film *Sambizanga* (1972), by Sarah Maldoror, unearthing the concept of "caring gaze" as a directorial element characteristic of the film's decolonial aesthetics. In dialogue with Frantz Fanon, Achille Mbembe and Kara Keeling's theory of decolonisation, she suggests that *Sambizanga* might be considered as a "work of reparation".

Yasmin Zandomenico also focuses on decolonial aesthetics and reparation, by examining the artistic production and clinical practices of Castiel Vitorino Brasileiro in "Modos de descolonizar em *O trauma é brasileiro*, de Castiel Vitorino Brasileiro" (Ways to decolonize: *O Trauma é Brasileiro*, by Castiel Vitorino Brasileiro). What she describes as "*macumbeira* aesthetics",⁸ an aesthetics of insurgence, which takes shape through performative acts of cure by the artist with the aim of unlearning the colonial trauma inscribed through laceration of the black body, as Fanon so cogently saw (2004). In contrast, religion's impact on the colonisation of protestant black female bodies and the interreligious debate between modes of obedience and the liberation strategies black women developed is the theme of Deyse Luciano de Jesus Santos' and Jamile dos Santos Ferreira Trindade's article "Educação, sexualidade e religião: (Des)colonizando corpos femininos" (Education, sexuality, and religion: (De)colonising the female body).

On a different note, bringing to the discussion resistance practices based on ancestral knowledge and traditions "Ilustrando las prácticas de partería de las mujeres embera chamí" (Illustrating the midwifery practices of the *Embera Chamí* women), by Sara Ortiz Ospina, with illustrations by Mónica Berrío Vélez, focuses on the obstetrical practices of *Embera Chamí* indigenous women as a form of resistance to a colonial reality which perpetuates control over female bodies, and the destruction and commodification of knowledge.

The black body's representativity is the focus of two additional papers. In

⁸ *Macumbeira* derives from *macumba*, a word also present in the English dictionary that delimits syncretic religious practices in Brazil combining elements of African and other religious practices with those of Christianity [translator's note].

“*Dissemina Lab* — novos enfoques de gênero e raça na mídia contemporânea” (*Dissemina Lab* — new approaches to race and gender in contemporary media), Geisa Rodrigues, Pedro Henrique Conceição dos Santos and Monique Paulla question the power relations (re)produced by the media and defend the importance of a multiplicity of views, concretely of black people, in media production. On the other hand, Micaela Cabral and Sônia Sá in “The representativeness of black women on social media: the Brazilian collective “Pop Afro”” examine the online mediatic production of black collective Pop Afro, part of the *Dinheiro Negro* (Black Money) movement, to validate their discursive strategies as a means to empower black women.

“Pode o subalternizado recordar? Um olhar sobre as recordações de Fernanda do Vale” (*Can the subaltern remember? An analysis of Fernanda do Vale’s memories*), by Carla Fernandes, is a reflection, departing from the work *A Preta Fernanda: Recordações d’uma colonial* (*Nigger Fernanda: Recollections of a colonial*), about the social representation of black women and the impossibility of accessing their memories without the mediation of a third-party or a structure epistemologically foreign to them. Sandra Lourenço, in contrast, and employing the methodological framework of memory studies and curatorial practice, explores the East-Timorese *tais* as “practiced memory”. In “Tecendo o (pós)colonialismo em Timor-Leste: o *tais* como objeto de memórias praticadas” (*Weaving (post)colonialism in East-Timor: the tais as an object of practiced memories*), she reflects on how the *tais* precedes, crosses, and survives colonialism in different forms: as a sacred object, as touristic *souvenir*, or as a process that mobilises contemporary artistic imaginings. The centrality, in this number, of the memorial question is also inscribed in Laís Gonçalves’ contribution, in “Realizadoras brasileiras e a ditadura militar: Protagonismo, militância e resistência” (*Decolonizing cinema and memory of the Brazilian dictatorship: documentaries made by women after 1985*), which addresses the recollective reconstruction of the Brazilian military dictatorship via the lens of female directors.

Last but not least, “A crítica à dicotomia de gênero como forma de descolonização epistémica” (*Criticism of the gender dichotomy as a form of epistemic decolonization*), by Maria Augusta Babo, proposes an archaeology of western epistemology, advocating that what is often presented as a new perspective in the postcolonial and feminist frameworks is actually rooted in poststructuralist critical thought.

Besides the articles, the present issue also incorporates two visual essays. This is a format which has been growing stronger, as a response to a certain deficiency in the canonical forms of knowledge production, which often reproduce and perpetuate colonial violence, such as in the use they make of images. Indeed, colonialism inaugurated an epistemological tradition moulded by images, which were vital technologies in the process of colonial production, in the accumulation of knowledge, in the formation of a colonial imagination (Said 1995, Mignolo 1995, Latour 1987), and a pivotal part in the foundation of scientific “objectivity”, as Dalston and Galison (1992) so well observed. It is also

for this reason that many women, inside and outside the academy, have started to create their own devices, so often hybrid and situated beyond the colonial canon of knowledge production, daring to think *with* images and *through* images instead of just on images.

Examples of this are the two visual essays included in this issue, which are, fundamentally, intuitive creative interventions. The photo-performance “Lentes Femininas para anti-reflectir o colonialism” (Female Lenses to anti-reflect colonialism), by Livia Gaudêncio, in collaboration with the performer Violeta Luna, compiles a “decolonial oracle” of twelve cards. The work intersects the violence perpetrated against women with the colonial violence of extractivism (the colonial erotica illuminated by Anne McClintock), remitting to the act of “lassoing”⁹ indigenous women and to how miscegenation, made into a propaganda instrument, as much in late Portuguese colonialism as in Brazilian identity narratives, amounts to no more than what results from the rape of black and indigenous women. Follows, “Infra-representadas: aquelas que correm” (Infra-represented: those who run), by Catarina Miranda, highlights the representation of women in football, through a montage of TV images captured by a phone camera during the live transmission of games. The visual essay is traversed by Maria Isabel Barreno’s interrogation: standing face to face with a history taught and perpetuated as “of Men”, “where are the women?”¹⁰

In the section dedicated to reviews, we have two texts about two different devices, both establishing a counterpoint to the logic of the archive and its present colonial uses: *O kit de sobrevivência do descobridor português no mundo anti-colonial* (The Portuguese discoverer’s survival kit in the anti-colonial world), by the visual poet Patrícia Lino, reviewed by Pedro Eiras, and *Recognition*, a composition-film by the composer Sara Serpa, reviewed by another musician, Aline Frazão. Last, Rogério Almeida Santos appraises Marissa Moorman’s *Powerful frequencies radio, state power, and the Cold War in Angola, 1931-2002*, a study about the use of the radio as both an anticolonial tool and an instrument for the consolidation of national unity in the recently independent country. Still in this part, we publish the biographical article “Será que as estrelas falam?: Biografia de Carolina Maria de Jesus” (“The stars, will they speak?” Listening to Carolina Maria de Jesus’s voice), a literary voice from the Canindé favela, by Rita Ciotta Neves, her translator into Italian.

The interviews section includes two important contributions. First, the interview “Mulheres e descolonização: o que exibem as telas?” (Gendering decolonization: what’s on display? Interview with Maíra Zenun), given to Michelle Sales by the programmer and director Maíra Zenun, cocreator of *Mostra Internacional de Cinema na Cova*. In it, what is normally exhibited comes into question and means of decolonising the screen are discussed, specifically through the programming of films produced, directed, and distributed by black, African, and Afro-descendant people. Patrícia Yxapy and Sophia Pinheiro’s

⁹ “Pegar pelo laço”.

¹⁰ Face a uma história ensinada e perpetuada como “do Homem”, “onde estão as mulheres?” (1989, 17).

contribution consists of the film *Teko Haxy — ser imperfeita* (*Teko Haxy* — being imperfect; 2018, colour, 39'), their “research arena”, which can be viewed. It consists of a “relational diary” comprising the editing of video-letters exchanged between the authors, an indigenous filmmaker and an artist and anthropologist, in which we gradually learn how challenging dialogue can be for those set out to do it. Dialogue can suggest a deferment of the decolonial process, but it is also a necessary step towards it — just as the establishment of other relational spaces and of other circuits of solidarity also are.

This issue includes a total of eight articles by Brazilian authors revealing the effervescence of the Brazilian academia and its impact and ramifications in Portugal, which have contributed towards great progress in the debate about colonialism and its legacies (namely racism), shaped by emancipatory prospects, particularly feminist and decolonial.

Inference: rehearsing decolonial feminism

In order to rebuff the “industrial academic complex” (Tuck and Yang 2014), in this number of RCL, we essayed a decolonial and feminist editorial route. A “decolonial feminism”, forewarns Françoise Vergès (2021), requires, amongst many other factors, a shift in the way we understand the logic of exploitation, the institutions, such as the academy, and the devices which reproduce them, such as academic publishing. However, if oppression is multiple (colonial, patriarchal, capitalistic), rhizomatic and palimpsestic, as the *de-colonials* would have it, then, a compromise must also be made with respect to multiplicity; the multiplicity of ways of knowing, seeing, and producing knowledge.

Here, we endeavoured. Not just to reposition women at the epicentre of decolonisation and the decolonial processes happening today, but also to include different formats, some even experimental, and a profusion of voices (*profusion* is the opposite of *confusion*, as certain Amerindian cosmogonies have it), in an editorial praxis at the intersection of academic, political and artistic concerns, which sought to dilate and even surpass the limits of its own exercise.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank all academic reviewers for their vital contributions. In a special edition, which aims to contribute to decolonial thinking and praxis, it is never superfluous to highlight the obvious: that we rely on “blind” peer reviews, by specialists who, rather graciously, have given their time and knowledge, contributing with critical readings, and suggesting revisions to the original proposals. Their expertise and generosity have been decisive in the refashioning of occasionally frail arguments and the potentiating of qualities in all the articles and essays.

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Hired researcher at ICNOVA/FCSH, an assistant professor at the Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa and a film programmer. Among other publications and books, she published *Projectar a ordem. Cinema do Povo e propaganda salazarista* (Projecting the order. Cinema do Povo and Salazar propaganda, 2020), *Azuis ultramarinos. Propaganda colonial e censura no cinema do Estado Novo* (Ultramarine Blues. Colonial propaganda and censorship on Estado Novo's cinema, 2015), and, with Teresa Castro, edited *(Re)Imagining African Independence. Film, Visual Arts and the Fall of the Portuguese Empire* (2017).

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Cultural and art historian interested in the migration of images across time and space and the ways in which the coloniality of seeing sustains the coloniality of knowledge. She is an editor of *La Rampa* and has been working in documentary films. Inês holds a Ph.D. in Media, Culture and Communication from New York University, a Master in Contemporary Art History from New University of Lisbon and a BA in Art History from University of Lisbon.

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