

Decolonising visuality: Introduction

TERESA MENDES FLORES

ICNOVA e Faculdade de Ciências
Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa
e Universidade Lusófona
teresaflares@fcsh.unl.pt

FILIPA DUARTE DE ALMEIDA

Professora-investigadora de Antropologia Africana
do departamento de Antropologia
da Universidade Omar Bongo, Libreville
filipaduardealmeida@gmail.com

JOSEPH TONDA

Professor Catedrático de Sociologia e Antropologia,
Director da Formação Doctoral
da Universidade Omar Bongo, Libreville
josephtonda@yahoo.fr

What can we see beyond what is visible?

What does the hidden side of visuality reveal in colonial and postcolonial contexts?

This edition of the RCL proposes a reflection on the decolonisation of visuality, to which we have added the words “gazes, consciousnesses, ways of thinking and acting” precisely to point out the range that the term visuality proposes, noting the communicating vessels that are established between external images and internal mental images, between thoughts and actions, between perceptions and representations and the role played by images in the processes of acculturation and interiorisation of social norms, that is, in the constitution of subjectivities and forms of sociability. In the same way, they constitute forms of expression of alternative subjectivities, participating in social changes.

The concept of visibility, under the influence of Michel Foucault and French post-structuralist philosophy, is central to the formation of Visual Culture as a field of study¹. For W.J.T. Mitchell, visibility is the object of study of Visual Culture (Mitchell 2002), whose main purpose is to “show seeing” and to break the veil of familiarity surrounding the experience of images and vision. Visibility refers to the cultural and historical norms that conform visual experience and the very horizon of the perceptible. It regulates the ways and modes of seeing, and interacting with other non-visual perceptual experiences, reconfiguring interactions between the different senses and their synesthesia. Visibility is not only about images and the production of images, their different technologies, codes of representation, or forms of circulation and consumption, nor is it only about the aesthetic experience; it is about the rules governing what’s visible and what’s invisible, what is permitted or prohibited to see, or not seeable at all. It is about the rules and codes of gazes governing behaviours and bodies, in short, about understanding the underlying logics which confer given orders of visibility to given objects of visual experience (including the exclusions of visibility) and which produce certain subjects in the space-time of the social-body. It is about understanding how visual order is produced and disposed of in societies (and with them the other concomitant orders), in short, it is a political economy of the visible (Baudrillard 1981; Mondzain 1996; Poole 1997) that has constituted itself as the object of study of Visual Culture.

This (in)discipline, as Mitchell also calls it in the above-mentioned text (2002), brought together the issues of representation, ethnic, gender and class identities (namely, in the work of Stuart Hall), historical and post-colonial studies, queer studies or the studies of subalternity that greatly amplified the circumscribed field of Art History (from which many of the authors of Visual Studies and Visual Culture originated). The scope of Visual Culture studies themselves benefited from these other fields, going beyond the focus on modern technologised visibility, which had first oriented the earliest works. These were almost always limited to European visual culture, leaving colonial issues and non-European spaces aside. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, in *Sociology of the*

¹ This is a prolific area, which has had a very extensive bibliography since the end of the 1980s, when it began to be identified as a field of study, under the influence of Marxist, psychoanalytic and feminist criticism and French post-structuralist philosophy. Some of these early titles, mainly from the Anglo-Saxon tradition, are: Baxandall, M. ([1972]1988). *Painting & Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy. A primer in the social history of pictorial style* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press; Alpers, S. (1983). *The Art of Describing. Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*. University of Chicago Press; Mitchell, W. J. T. (1986). *Iconology. Image, Text, Ideology*. University of Chicago Press; Lauretis, T. De. (1987). *Technologies of Gender. Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*. Indiana University Press; AA.VV. (1988). *Vision and Visibility* (H. Foster (ed.)). The New Press; Tagg, J. (1988). *The Burden of Representation. Essays on Photographies and Histories*. University of Minnesota Press; Mulvey, C. L. (1989). *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Indiana University Press; Cartwright, L., & Sturken, M. (2001). *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford University Press. And the collections AA.VV. (1999). *Visual Culture. The Reader* (J. Evans & S. Hall (Eds.)). Sage Publications; Mirzoeff, N. (Ed.). (2002). *The Visual Culture Reader* (2nd ed.). Routledge. From Michel Foucault (1926-1984) we highlight Foucault, M. ([1966]1987). *The words and things. An archaeology of the human sciences*. Martins Fontes; Foucault, M. ([1969]2014). *Archaeology of Knowledge* (F. A. Cascais (ed.); M. S. Pereira (trans.)). Edições 70; Foucault, M. ([1975]2014). *To watch and to punish. Birth of the prison* (A. F. Cascais (ed.); P. E. Duarte (trans.); 1st edition). Edições 70.

Image (2015), is right when she points out with strangeness the absence of the colonial situation from the Foucauldian work, an absence she contributed to overcoming with her own works on the cultural space of Andean South America².

One of the most disturbing and somewhat paradoxical aspects of the current situation, at least in Portugal — the European country with the longest history of colonisation, having been the first to “expand” and the last to lose its colonies (on April 25, 1974) — is, on the one hand, the unconscious tendency to consider the present without any relation to the colonial past, as if there are no connections between the two realities (a kind of subtraction of colonial issues, especially from public discourse); and, on the other hand, when the issue is considered, it is understood under the prism of a romanticised Encounter of Cultures, thus, legitimising the discourses claiming the progressive civilising role of Portugal, particular towards the African continent. Physical violence and, most strikingly, symbolic violence perpetrated through the erasure of the cultures of enslaved or colonised people are obliterated or excused.

Today, through the force of their representations, many images and texts perpetuate unnoticed ideas of diminished conceptions of the Other, in particular, the black Other. Colonial visibility remains naturalised and, in this way, normalised and invisible, requiring the theoretical tools of Visual Culture and of postcolonial and related studies to tear away this veil of familiarity, revealing colonial visibility’s ways of seeing and operating and, above all, making room for the emergence of counter-visualities that, as suggested by the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, in relation to stories, might produce a greater balance of visions and ways of seeing.

Whenever someone tells our story for us, we are held hostage to what they might say (for better or worse). The same may happen when someone makes our own image, even more so if it is photographic or filmic. The camera was born in the context of colonial expansion and configures, in its own “basic” apparatus (Commolli), unequal relations between those who see and those who are seen. However, these power relations can be distributed in a democratic and balanced way. Ethically. Cameras may as well be sources of emancipation. We believe that an anti-colonial, decolonising camera is possible. Aspects that we wanted to address in this issue.

The colonial and post-colonial situation

The world where the colonised territories were formally emancipated and liberated is also where many of their legacies endure, in the various forms of social and

² From the extensive work of Sílvia Rivera Cusicanqui we can highlight *Oprimidos pero no vencidos: Luchas del campesinado aymara y qhechwa de Bolivia, 1900-1980* (1986); *Ch’ixinakax utxiwa. Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores* (2010) or by Sílvia Rivera Cusicanqui y El Colectivo, *Ch’ixi, Principio Potosí Reverso*. Madrid, Museo Reina Sofía, 2010. On the criticism of the absence of the colonial problematic, we also highlight the work of Mirzoeff, N. (2011). *The Right to Look. A Counterhistory of Visuality*. Duke University Press, focused on French, British and Spanish colonialisms, drawing attention to this Foucauldian flaw in the erasure of the regimes of domination practiced by the French empire, which here Mirzoeff seeks to overcome, namely through the concept of “complex of visibility”, where the plantation regime is one of the historical moments he analyses. He also defends, as the title warns, the individual (and also collective) right to look, understood as the capacity of rupture and disturbance of these “complexes” of domination, in which he also gathers the influence of Ariella Aisha Azoulay when this author proposes a “civil contract of photography” (2008).

environmental oppression that we experience today, despite the many improvements achieved by democracies where they exist.

The space of visibility created by colonialism functions as a dream space composed of mental images that show what is not visible on the plane of the real. Whatever the colonial machine's and its agents' intention, what it exposes is the product of what it shows by "hiding", and so, when analysing them, these images will always say something more than the intention that gave rise to them. For example, the invisualisation of the images of the colonised reveals the intentionality of the colonial power in producing the human insignificance of the colonised.

But that is not all. This intentionality ends up revealing the unconscious thinking of the coloniser. His fear of the colonised shows the intention to produce the other into a non-subject. From this perspective, the domination and subjugation of the colonized end up projecting the dominant's subjectivity, revealing that which weakens him/her in relation to the other. From this point of view, it is a self-reduction to insignificance in the space of visibility.

In this respect, the visibility space of colonisation cannot be considered a clear space; it is a space of light and shadow, a space of *dazzle*³. What is more: the lights of the colonial visibility space are fluorescent effects of the shadows that inhabit the coloniser's interiority. It is his own shadows that make him move while also making him see the world of others differently than he is.

But the *invisualisation* of the other is not only done by the subtraction of his/her visibility — by the concealment, erasure, lack of focus of the image —; the movement of *invisualisation* of the other is also done by an unconscious process of his/her substitution by another who is not himself/herself. The most interesting thing about this substitution process is that the form, being, or entity through which the substitution takes place is not innocent. They are figures within the psyche of the dominant, in this case, the coloniser or even his distant descendants.

Thus, the true humanity of some is denied and replaced by others and the constitutive forms of the respective social imaginary. In other words, the animality that resides in the colonial and post-colonial unconscious and which is reflected in the body of the colonised, that is, in reality, the negative of the body of the coloniser, may appear in the form of animality. In other words, the body of the one who has been deprived of the right to the human figure is the body itself in negative of the one who is the author of this act of dehumanisation, but he cannot and should not know it. In this perspective, the Black man's animality appears as the negative of the White man's humanity, while this animality of the Black man is nothing but that of the White man. This visual process by

³ In the original "éblouissement", a concept by Joseph Tonda (Tonda, J., 2015, *L'impérialisme postcolonial. Critique de la société des éblouissements*, Paris, Karthala), to refer to a particular way of seeing the world and reality that undergoes a perceptual deficiency.

which one sees one's own inner reality as an outer reality is what characterises colonial and post-colonial dazzle.

To illustrate this particular form of *invisualisation* of the other, we will take the example of what happens in post-colonial situations in ex-colonial countries, and more particularly in the visual space of football stadiums in France (but also in Portugal and elsewhere), where African or African-descendant players are the object of this animalisation during certain matches.

The fact that people with a Cartesian culture and tradition see monkeys instead of humans can only be explained by the mental patterns formed during colonial history. In other words, the collective hallucination produced by the collective dazzle of football excitement can be explained by the colonisation of the interiority of the spectators by the colonising animal.

The illusion here is real, and the spirit of football is formidable. This visual process by which one sees one's inner reality as an outer reality characterises colonial and post-colonial situations.

The postcolonial situation is a situation common to colonising and colonised countries. The "Encounter" has colonised forever and in a radical way the imaginaries, the realities and the ensuing behaviours, as well as the relations between the different actors. Post-colonialism is the current reality.

The issues of visibility and invisibility, of light and darkness, of the revealed and the hidden, addressed in this issue, from different prisms and in relation to multiple circumstances and conjectures, are mainly related to the role, paradoxically violent and subtle, of that which is visible in the "invisibilisation" of the other. It is thus a visuality that imposes itself as a paradigm of a reality built on the conscious and/or unconscious suppression of the other because the other is understood as an element lacking importance, value, image, and humanity.

The questions that occupy this issue draw on this situation.

In this issue: strategies for decolonisation

What have we learned about decolonising looks and ways of thinking and acting through the articles published in this issue? All the authors respond in more than one way to this question, as set out in the call for papers for this issue. Still, we have systematised these responses by identifying some strategies that we believe to be common to several articles (without prejudice to the fact that the same article may fall into more than one of these categories).

Thus, one of the strategies we found is the re-signification of the analysed images, through the revelation of hidden or devalued historical contexts, in some cases from re-interpretations of elements represented in the images, in other cases from knowledge related to the history of what is represented but that is not directly evident in the image (the out-of-field). In still other cases, re-signification is achieved by bringing the context

of production and circulation of the images, or a combination of these various aspects. By adding these pieces of knowledge, which start from points of view that are alienated from the preferred interpretation and bring in different places of speech and points of view, a change in the meaning of the image is produced before our eyes. The meaning becomes completely different from the usual hegemonic reading (this is the case of the articles *The State of the World: abolitionist reading practices* by Hadley Howes; and *Beyond Surface Matters: Unsettling Views of a Western American Landscape* by Laura Smith).

Another strategy to “unlearn colonialism” is to present cases of visual practices that denounce unjust political situations or cases of human rights offences—denouncing images and images that are part of activist manifestations (this is the case of the articles *An Invitation to Look: the Role of Vernacular Photography in Scrutinising and Understanding Romania’s Communist Past in the Context of Everyday Life* by Ushi Klein; *Arquivo Reativo: the images of Latin American political art from the 1960s-1970s and the contemporary gaze* by Tainan Barbosa; *de Imemorial: Steps in Captivity — Ritualising Absence in a Walk with Ghosts* by Rui Filipe Antunes; and *Archival Bodies in Ayana V. Jackson’s Demons/Devotees I-IV* by Julia Stachura). Some images propose the reversal of the symbolic values of darkness and light (Tomás Ribas’ article *Remote Sensing: Images of light and darkness and the idea of development*).

A third strategy identified is that of writing the history of artists or personalities who are on the margins of official historiography, giving them visibility and doing justice to their artistic contributions or their community and popular importance. It is another historiography that is asserted here as a political gesture of reparation or affirmation (the cases of Catarina Laranjeiro’s article *Devising “Bissauwood”: Ground-breaking Modes of Production and Distribution* and *“All World Art Comes from the Black”: Wilson Tibério, Black Artist and Internationalist Activist* by Ana Lucia Araujo).

Finally, still in the field of historiography, there are cases of critical historiography which, by unveiling the ways of thinking and acting of the colonial system and its visual culture, allow us to identify the colonial strategies of domination and the prejudices from which these practices and knowledge were built, allowing a critical look (the case of *Photography and colonial teratology* by Sílvio Marcus de Souza Correa, *A degenerescência na fotografia da Antropologia colonial portuguesa* by Mariana Gomes da Costa and *Imagens pensantes do indígena brasileiro no filme Rituais e Festas Bororo, de Luiz Thomaz Reis, 1917* by Beatriz Avila Vasconcelos).

First strategy: the unveiling of suppressed stories and points of view

In her article, *The State of the World: Abolitionist Reading Practices*, Hadley Howes analyses Canadian writer Dionne Brand’s proposed re-interpretation of Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre’s famous photograph “View of the Boulevard du Temple, Paris”, dated 1838, which makes us consider aspects that have been erased from the interpretation of this image.

The gaze strongly canonised by the historiography of photography, incorporating progressive ideas of the coeval discourse on the photographic image and a certain heroic history of the “first times” — which, despite being an epistemological position already criticised, still exerts its fascinations —, sees this daguerreotype — one of the first photographic technologies — as the “first time that a human figure was photographed”. It is the famous figure of a man shining his shoes, which has become an iconic example in the history of photography. This man remained in the image because he stood still, in a pose, long enough to be recorded, as the sensitivity of the emulsion was still small. All the usual bustle of the Parisian streets disappeared due to the long exposure. It is thus, from a historiographical point of view, considered an example of the path that still had to be travelled towards capturing the visible in static and well-defined images.

Now, the exercise Hadley Howes invites us to, following Dionne Brand’s proposal, is to try what happens if our reading values the blurred figure of the shoeshine boy and the very event that is the act of shoe-shining. What changes in the understanding of this image? Suddenly, from the static and monumental, we value what is fleeting, moving and fading. From the consensual recognition of a certain power of the man who shines his shoes (and of the machine that captures and monumentalises him), we recognise another — probably also — man, who, sitting or crouching, shines his shoes: a person blurred in the image, reduced to a stain, a technical error, which corresponds, on the other hand, to his reality as a socially and politically invisible person. Suddenly, with this change of focus (literally), the reading of this image becomes consciously political. We realise, in this same transit, how photographic technology exercises control over the visible, translated into the possibilities of intervention in space-time, and how this desire is rooted in the colonial/imperial project then underway.

In the same vein comes Laura Smith’s proposal in *Beyond Surface Matters: Unsettling Views of a Western American Landscape*. The author analyses a photograph of a landscape of the American Nevada desert by photographer Glenn Rand (Nevada 1979), taken from Interstate 80, an American symbol of freedom. At first glance, the image frames, before our eyes, a vast expanse of bare, monotonous and beautiful territory, represented through the sharpness of its lines and shapes, in the aesthetic tradition of formalism and *New Topographics*.

But in the face of this apparent emptiness, only disturbed by a stain that marks an ephemeral moment of a moving car, and with a view to evoking the aforementioned freedom — freedom to travel, to go, to cross — the author confronts us with the relationship between the visible and the invisible, similarly to what happened with the shoeshine boy mentioned in the previous text.

Laura Smith then proposes an analysis not only of what is visible but, above all, of what this visibility conceals and erases: the suppression of the memory and history of the original American peoples, slaughtered and finally thrown into a nearby reserve, consigned to a darkened existence, out of the field of lenses, gazes and consciousness.

The author also brings us the conception of nature in indigenous cultures, where it is intrinsic and inseparable from humans, and confronts it with Western and positivist logics, where the rupture between Culture and Nature appears evident, as in this photograph, whose landscape is revealed as human exteriority, which extends (*res extensa*) as a spectacle and receptacle. Thus, by evoking these other conceptions of nature, space and time, and in the face of this “other look”, the author calls for a re-interpretation of landscape as an aesthetic model under the authority of the colonial Western tradition, allowing us to question what we see, and to think what we do not see.

Playing with the dual meanings of the words “settler” and “unsettle”, Laura Smith alludes to the political programme of decolonising visuality, which her text fulfils.

Second strategy: Manifestos and/or activist images.

Images that denounce and expose differences between hegemonic political and official discourses, and the hidden side of lived realities

In the article *An Invitation to Look: the Role of Vernacular Photography in Scrutinising and Understanding Romania's Communist Past in the Context of Everyday Life*, the author, Uschi Klein, through an exegesis (interpretation, decoding) of vernacular photography, seeks to unveil the invisibilised side of history during Romania's Communist period, between 1947 and 1989, proposing vernacular photography as a discourse of resistance and denunciation of Ceaușescu's Communist regime, relying on Ariella Aisha Azoulay's (2008) notion of “civil contract of photography”. Through the analysis of five photographs of daily life (one casual, one propaganda and three “forbidden”) taken by ordinary people, the author gives them an intrinsic character of the manifesto as she decodes them, transforming them into images-document, revealing the hidden side of the communist regime's propaganda.

The essay intends to emphasise the importance of vernacular photographers, not so much as artists, but above all as activists in the urgency to denounce the daily life in a violent political regime, immersed in obstacles and social dilemmas of various orders, ranging from food shortages to alternative markets, to residential evictions. Thus, through reading each photograph, the author tells the story of a collective experience, of collective memory, transporting us to the social and individual situation in a regime that imposed its visuality (through propaganda), invisualising the daily struggle of each individual.

Rui Filipe Antunes's article *Imemorial: Passos no cativoiro — Ritualizar a ausência numa caminhada com fantasmas* [*Imemorial: Steps in Captivity — Ritualizing Absence in a Walk with Ghosts*] also focuses on collective memory and memory policies. The author presents the community *site-specific* art project with this designation — Imemorial: Steps in Captivity — developed by the Portuguese association Substantivo Mágico in 2022. Through the affective-sensitive, corporal, personal and performative power of the walk, the association conducted a series of routes through the public space of the city of

Lisbon to make participants aware of the hegemonic presence of imperial and warrior marks in the city and how the mythology of the Discoveries systematically covers up the signs of slavery, the same whose places of memory are visited and remembered. The walk also recalls the signs of Africanity that constitute Portuguese culture, valuing these contributions and knowledge.

The article defends the importance of artistic practices and art as a “catalyst of socio-cultural change” to build more just, peaceful and balanced societies. The walk sets in motion the “right to look” Mirzoeff (2011) talks about, the individual right to a look that overcomes and resists the “visuality complexes” of empires.

Tainan Barbosa, in her article entitled *Arquivo Reativo: as imagens da arte política da América Latina dos anos 1960-1980 e o olhar contemporâneo* [*Reactive Archive: Images of Latin American Political Art from the 1960s-1980s and the Contemporary Gaze*], seeks to analyse both the role of archive images in their dual artistic function and political intervention and the role of the viewer vis-à-vis these same images. The author emphasises the importance of political artwork as a document that conveys an image, a discourse, a narrative, and a manifesto. The essay thus aims to “problematise the dynamics between revolutionary artistic practices and archive” in the context of Latin America, to understand how the contemporary gaze can update memories and resistance, and abolish the distance between art and the spectator, where both will finally be participants of the same reality, of a common experience.

From the “idea that the archives of artworks possess the capacity to create technical and poetic conditions so that such practices can activate experiences in the present”, the author assumes that what is visible is understandable and shared. Thus, the viscosity of the narrative, by breaking the boundary between Archive images — sensitive images, active images -, which reflect not only their own visual image recorded on paper but, above all, reflect common struggles, memories and discourses, will join with the one who captures it, provoking a shared experience, at the same moment, with the same intention.

In the article *Remote Sensing: Imagens da Luz e da Escuridão e a ideia de desenvolvimento* [*Remote Sensing: Images of Light and Darkness and the Idea of Development*], Tomás Ribas starts by analysing words’ intention, meanings, and representations through the symbolic systems underlying them. The essay begins with a comparative exercise between the city of London in Joseph Conrad’s novel “The Heart of Darkness”, a city that was once “wild” (dark) and that overcame darkness to become luminous (because civilised) and a satellite image of present-day London, whose function (among others) is to monitor the artificial lighting of cities at night.

From this parallel, the author shows how the light/dark duality, from a hegemonic point of view, constructs models of positive or negative emotions concerning light and dark referents (light and white are usually seen as “positivities” — metonyms of civilisation, progress, reason, truth, transparency -, while dark and black are understood as

“negativities” — indicative of savagery of nature, danger, falseness, backwardness and opacity), and how the light/dark contrast in the satellite images between the “developed” and the “developing” countries legitimises the cultural and racial prejudice of “The Heart of Darkness”, where London appears as an example of the subjugation of darkness to light — of the savage to civilisation.

Remote Sensing, more than an analysis of the metonymic relationship between light and development, reflects how “light feeds on darkness to sustain itself” and how, by this order of ideas, light can be apprehended as a colonising force of darkness. Through the manipulation of satellite images, Tomás Ribas, by inverting the light spots into black spots (and vice versa), also inverts the value of the representations of the symbolic system light/darkness, proposing a reflection on the representations of these and their articulation with the notion of development, ending up appealing to the fact that “to ensure a less bad future, as much as rethinking the idea of development it is essential to reflect on the place of light and darkness”.

Archival Bodies in Ayana V. Jackson’s Demons Devotees I-IV, by Julia Stachura, reflects on the power of images of Africa and its existence in the collective memory of the West. From the perspective of postcolonial and decolonial studies, the author sets out to conceptualise archival bodies as liminal bodies, where they are concomitantly containers of power relations and the “historical burden of representation”. To this end, the author surveys Ayana V. Jackson’s artwork, *Demons Devotees I-IV*, which consists of a mini-series of four photographs, with reference to a self-portrait of the English photographer Alice Seeley Harris with a group of Congolese children, dated 1905, during the regime of Leopold II (*Devotees I* is our cover).

Through the four photographs that raise questions of gender, race and nationality, articulating “with power relations between men and women, women and women, adults and children, blacks and whites and photographer and model”, Julia Stachura invites a revision of the notions of colonial power, collective memory and the body, having as a principle the rupture with the colonial gaze, challenging the hegemonic and “whiteness” centred narratives.

In this essay, the author argues that, if on the one hand, the archival bodies are watertight images crystallised in memory, paradoxically, these same bodies are also mobile and alive images insofar as they circulate and are re-updated by artists, researchers and academics.

The author thus proposes a “reconstruction of the colonial gaze through the gaze of a black protagonist playing the roles sometimes of the victim, sometimes of predator” according to four contemporary versions of archive photographs, through a current interpretation of the agency of colonial images, where the archived-body must be understood as a transversal element to the social, the cultural, the political and above all the foundation of colonial power.

Third strategy: Articles that write the history of people or cases marginalised by historiography

The essay “*Bissauwood*”: *Devising Alternative Modes of Production and Distribution* focuses on vernacular film and audiovisual production in Guné-Bissau as a vehicle for social analysis, particularly with regard to gender issues.

Constituting fertile ground for the perception of the contemporary History of Guinea-Bissau paradoxes, Catarina Laranjeiro wonders if these films and the respective audiences do not participate in innovative and alternative cinematographic production, defending the fact that filmic narratives may contribute to the decolonisation of cinema.

Based on the comments and shares between Guinea-Bissau and the diaspora countries, these films are creating new communities of spectators, generating debates around cultural challenges, and questioning and contesting social paradigms. Through analysing five vernacular cinematographic productions conceived in Guinea-Bissau and made available in European diasporas, Catarina Laranjeiro discusses their narratives, production modes and distribution strategies as contributions to the study of the contemporary history of Guinea-Bissau, with special emphasis on gender issues.

Through the impact of these narratives on the Guinean population inside and outside the country, the author questions the normalised violence in Guinea-Bissau that affects mostly women. By submitting them to academic debate, the author invites a reflection on how films produced with scarce resources, by non-professional teams, with “non-actors”, can, on the one hand, open new perspectives on the ironies and paradoxes of the contemporary history of Guinea-Bissau and its diasporas and, on the other hand, how these works can function as research ground when reflected upon as autonomous agents that transform not only African cinema but also the discourses on colonial legacies of film production and distribution.

In her article “*All World Art Comes from the Black*”: *Wilson Tibério, Black Artist and Internationalist Activist in the Era of Africa’s Decolonization*, Ana Lucia Araujo focus on the life and trajectory of Wilson Tibério, a black artist and political activist in a context of invisibility imposed on black Brazilian artists of the 20th century.

The author intends this essay to contribute to the literature on black Brazilian artists and intellectuals of the twentieth century, revealing the dimensions and national and international impacts of their activities, highlighting, in particular, the political and artistic contribution of other black artists from Rio Grande do Sul, a state that despite being marginalised in the Brazilian national context, has a long history of artistic production and black activism. If it is true that, from the 1980s onwards, the works of black artists began to be progressively studied at an academic level, on the one hand, and, on the other, to appear represented in Art Museum collections, their visibility is still very much overshadowed both nationally and internationally. According to the author, this invisibility rests fundamentally on racial prejudices, which are felt socially, artistically and academically.

To illustrate this path between visibility and invisibility, the author unveils the artistic and activist career of Wilson Tibério and his political engagement that, by confronting black invisibility, will operate a struggle to transform artistic realities and racial values. Tibério was one of the few black Brazilian artists whose work portrayed the African descendent populations in Brazil and West Africa.

Fourth strategy: Articles that dismantle the logic of the hegemonic discourse through historical analysis

This strategy is in evidence in the article by Sílvia Marcus de Souza Correa *Fotografia e teratologia colonial [Photography and Colonial Teratology]*, which presents a genealogy of the main publications since the 15th century on the European belief in a deviant and monstrous difference in the sexuality of African women and men, in particular around the invention of the “atavistic” race of the “Hottentots” and “Bushmen”. This step back in the colonial imaginary allows us to understand the cultural origin of the ways of thinking that made the set of photographs analysed in the article possible. One of these sets is the gynaecological photographic records representing vaginas of women (considered by the colonisers as) “bosquímanas”, to identify the supposed disease of “macronínia”, an anomaly of the labia majora which would present themselves with disproportionate dimensions. These photographs were taken as part of the campaigns of the Angolan Anthropobiological Mission, led by António de Almeida, who published an article on the subject in 1956, illustrated with some of these images. The aim was to carry out observations and respective photographic records to prove or otherwise the said anomaly (which was not proved). The author associates other sets of photographs taken by the same anthropobiological mission, such as the photographs of penises of the same population, in studies about the semi-erect penis, and the photographs of sexual acts, which appear in the same context about the unruly sexuality of Africans.

The critical procedure that the author calls upon is to align this colonial scientific discourse to the continuity of the pornotropical and teratological imaginary that ends up determining the questions, the methodological choices and the results expected by anthropobiological science, while discussing its context, namely in relation to German eugenicist theories, which allows us to understand in depth these images and the visual culture from which they emerge and which they reproduce.

In turn, the article by Mariana Gomes da Costa *A degenerescência na fotografia da Antropologia colonial portuguesa [Degeneration in the Photograph of Portuguese Colonial Anthropology]* presents the epistemological and political framework of Portuguese colonial anthropology, which was, in the period under study, essentially a physical anthropology of the races, in the wake of the nineteenth-century tradition of this discipline, having as its object the natural evolution of the human species, in the wider context of natural history. An evolutionist tradition which quickly led to the degenerationist theories inspired by Benedict Morel (1809-1873) and eugenicists, mainly of the

German tradition. The idea of organic failure in development is used to explain mental alienation, i.e., psychiatric illnesses. In this sense, as the author clarifies, it ends up explaining other types of deviations, whether crimes (particularly recidivists) or people considered “primitive”, in the light of this evolutionist anthropology. Thus, the analysis of these ways of thinking enables us to understand the photographic practice of these missions as a visual device of proof and objectification of the signs of degeneration inscribed and visible on the bodies of colonised people, particularly black African people.

The author argues that despite the application of the photographic system of Alphonse Bertillon (1853-1914), the man responsible for the development of criminal anthropometry in the prefecture of the Judiciary Police of Paris since the 1880s, and which will have a strong international implementation, the framings and poses that were chosen for the photography of degeneracies mainly obey the requirement of returning an evident visual representation of the *stigmata* to be highlighted. They are not limited to the typical frontal and profile poses on a neutral background of forensic photography (also massively used in colonial anthropobiology). Mariana Gomes da Costa calls upon colonial teratology, in whose context she presents reproductions of some of these images of stigmata. By choosing to display these images as an integral part of her critical argument in the context of the epistemopolitics that made them possible, the author seeks to contribute to the constitution of a denouncing gaze on these images. Images which, as Sílvia Marcus de Souza Correa underlines, are above all evidence of the type of gaze of medical anthropologists more than they ever characterise the people photographed.

Beatriz Avila Vasconcelos' article *Imagens pensantes do indígena brasileiro no filme Rituais e Festas Bororo, de Luiz Thomaz Reis (1917)* [*Thinking-images of the Brazilian Indigenous in the Film Rituais e Festas Bororo, by Luiz Thomaz Reis (1917)*] analyses two frames of this film, considered one of the first ethnographic films. The chosen frames are surprising because they constitute an interruption in the film's diégesis, characterised by following the daily life of this community on the occasion of a funeral ritual. In the sequence chosen, the story is interrupted to re-introduce clearly two characters from the film, filming them from the front and in profile next to a hedge that served as a “back-drop”. Now, this moment of “filmed portraits” will make the author elaborate in her visual memory a set of relations with similar images that she knows belong to a visual archive of which these images may be part. Proposing that visual culture is this set of memory-images that are mobilised to think each other, with each other, Beatriz Avila Vasconcelos applies the concept of thinking-image that she borrows from the French philosopher and art historian Georges Didi-Hubermann and Étienne Samain.

The montage exercise of free association will reverberate this archetypal archive of images that construct visibility. From these *Warburgian* montages, we become aware of the visual codes and the thinking dimension of all the images, raising, in this associative exercise, the possibility of their critique.

Visual essays as thinking-images

In continuity with the concept of thinking-images, the visual essays presented take images as the *medium of thoughts*, problematisations, and modes of conceptualisation and not as illustrations of texts. Both text and image work in parallel, in a tension that seeks to be creative and instigate critical reflection. The three visual essays published explore these possibilities.

Goan authors Vishvesh Prabhakar Kandolkar and R. Benedito Ferrão present in *A Short Visual History of the Long Life of Goa's Basilica of Bom Jesus*, a collection of images representing that basilica, located in Goa, India. Celebrated as a symbol of the Portuguese presence in that territory, the authors discuss the use of conceptions of the monument's original appearance for political disputes in the period of colonisation and post-colonisation. For the Portuguese authorities who had the exterior walls of the basilica plastered off in the 1950s, an unplastered basilica made the message of Portugal's ancient historical rights more credible by giving it an older look, legitimating colonisation. However, visual research on the basilica's history shows that the plaster has existed since it was first built, even though the contemporary Indian state sees advantages in maintaining this 'old' look, as it more easily matches the imagery of monuments' ancestry and thus attracts more tourists. This is an example of how the manipulation of heritage's visual and material character merges present-day post-colonial purposes with those of the colonial period.

The visual essay by the Portuguese artist Ana Janeiro *Performing the (Private) Archive, Rethinking History and Rewriting Memory*, reflects on the condition of women during the fascist regime of the Estado Novo from a careful look at the photographic albums of her maternal and paternal grandmothers. She organises the images in such a way as to make the comparison between the lives of one and the other photographically perceptible.

In the tradition of photographic self-representation and performances intended for photographic capture, Ana Janeiro identifies certain repeated or representative gestures of her then-young grandmothers' activities. Namely, gestures of caring for small children. The author incorporates these gestures, eliminates their context, and mimics in her body the observed postures. She removes all excess. Reduces. And finally, it makes us think about how life marks bodies and how the political regime and social morality shape each body. Judith Butler said that "the personal is political", and so is its performatisation.

Matamba Kombila is a Gabonese filmmaker who lives between Gabon and France. She presents a visual essay asking "*What do you see?*" questioning crossed identities and her identity as Gabonese and French: both or neither? The answer is sought through the presentation of frames from her films in a search that does not have to have a definitive answer or a single reading.

This personal quest, which is also a quest for humanity, is not human species centred, nor should it be. Kombila affirms the need to deconstruct and criticise one of the legacies of European modernity, the separation between humans and nature, a separation that has no meaning in the Gabonese cultural tradition and in a great majority of African popular traditions that should finally be listened to and followed by Westerners.

We would like to thank all the authors who have contributed to this issue, even those whose texts were not accepted but who have instigated numerous reflections and fruitful debates among us. This issue includes articles by male and female authors at different stages of their professional careers and from four continents. A number of colonialisms are addressed, as well.

We thank the many reviewers and the availability that they always had for the heated debates that took place. A word of gratitude also goes to the artist Ayana V. Jackson and her gallerist Mariane Ibrahim who lent us the image for the cover of this issue.

We wish you a good reading!

Bibliography

- Azoulay, A. (2008). *The Civil Contract of Photography*. Zone Books.
- Baudrillard, J. ([1972]1981). *Para uma economia política do signo*. Edições 70.
- Cusicanqui, S. R. (2015). *Sociología de la imagen. Miradas ch'ixi desde la historia andina*. Tinta Limón.
- Joseph Tonda (Tonda, J., 2015, *L'impérialisme postcolonial. Critique de la société des éblouissements*, Paris, Karthala)
- Mitchell, W. J. T. (2002). Showing seeing: a critique of visual culture. *Journal of Visual Culture*, 1, 165–181. <https://doi.org/10.1177/147041290200100202>
- Mirzoeff, N. (2011). *The Right to Look. A Counterhistory of Visuality*. Duke University Press
- Mondzain, M.-J. (1996). *Image, icône, économie. Les sources byzantines de l'imaginaire contemporain*. Editions du Seuil.
- Poole, D. (1997). *Vision, Race, and Modernity. A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World*. Princeton University Press.

TERESA MENDES FLORES

photography and film historian and researcher in media archaeology, visual culture and semiotics. D. in Communication Sciences from Universidade Nova de Lisboa (2010), she is a researcher at ICNOVA and Assistant Professor at the Department of Communication Sciences at Universidade Lusófona. She has published the books *Cinema and Modern Experience* (Minerva Coimbra, 2007), *Photography and Cinema. Fifty Years of Chris Marker's La Jetée* (Cambridge Schollars, 2015), *Politics in the Feminine* (Aletheia 2016) and *Images&Archives. Photographs and Films* (ICNOVA Books, 2021), in addition to several book chapters and articles. She was the principal investigator of the research project “The photographic impulse: measuring colonies and colonised bodies. The photographic and filmic archive of the Portuguese missions of geography and anthropology.” (PTDC/COM-OUT/29608/2017), funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology, and one of the curators of the exhibition “The photographic impulse. (Un)tidying the colonial archive” (on view at the Museum of Natural History

and Science in Lisbon). Co-director of the *Journal of Communication and Languages*, she was, until recently, coordinator of the Research Group Culture, Mediation&Arts at ICNOVA. Currently, she integrates the team of the projects *Curiositas: Peeping Before Virtual Reality. A Media Archaeology of Immersion Through VR and the Iberian Cosmoramas* (PTDC/COM-OUT/4851/2021) and ‘Decolonising the Panorama of Congo: A Virtual Heritage Artistic Research’ (H2020). Her interests include gender and visual culture, archaeology of optical and immersive media, photography in colonial contexts, and postcolonial and memory studies.

ORCID

[0000-0002-8866-3129](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8866-3129)

Ciência Vitae ID

[631F-C550-8E29](https://cienciavitae.org/631F-C550-8E29)

Institutional address

Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas
Universidade Nova de Lisboa.
Avenida Berna, 26-C | 1069-061 Lisboa.

FILIPA DUARTE DE ALMEIDA

Filipa Maia Duarte de Almeida was born in Lisbon in 1969. She has a degree in Industrial Design from the Faculty of Design, Technology and Communication (IADE), a Masters in the History of Africa from the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon, and a PhD in Anthropology, specialising in African Religions, from the University Omar Bongo (Libreville-Gabon). Lecturer at the Anthropology Department of the Omar Bongo University, responsible for the Master's Degree course in Sensitive Anthropology. Member of the Research Group Corps, Société et Pouvoir, and of the Séminaire Interdisciplinaire des Études et Recherches Africaines, where she has coordinated and/or participated in various research projects, seminars and colloquia, including the International Colloquium "Le sexe postcolonial en Afrique Centrale et Ailleurs", held in April 2022. Author of several articles and speaker at various seminars, conferences and colloquia.

ORCID

[0009-0008-6888-8647](https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6888-8647)

Morada institucional

Université Omar Bongo, 680,
Avenida Leon Mba, B.P. 13131
Libreville, Gabão

JOSEPH TONDA

Joseph Tonda, of Congolese/Gabonese nationality, was born in Mekambo (Gabon). He grew up and studied in the Republic of Congo and completed his university studies in France. He is currently Full Professor of Anthropology and Sociology at the Omar Bongo University (Libreville, Gabon). He is regularly invited by the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Paris) and several international universities (USA, South America, Europe and Asia) as a lecturer and seminarian. Author of *La guerrison divine en Afrique Centrale* (2002, Paris Karthala), *Le Souverain Moderne. Le corps du pouvoir en Afrique Centrale* (2005, Paris, Karthala), *L'Impérialisme postcolonial. Critique de la société des éblouissements* (2015, Paris, Karthala), and *Afrodystopie. La vie dans le rêve d'Autrui* (2021, Paris, Karthala), Joseph Tonda focuses mainly on social power relations and forms of cultural and religious expression in Central African societies. He was ranked by New African magazine among the 50 most relevant contemporary African intellectuals. He is the author of the novels *Chiens de Foudre* and *Tuée-tuée mon amour*.

ORCID

[0009-0006-6196-813X](https://orcid.org/0009-0006-6196-813X)

Morada institucional

Université Omar Bongo, 680,
Avenida Leon Mba, B.P. 13131
Libreville, Gabão

DOI <https://doi.org/10.34619/araa-bqbh>