

THE HOUSE FOR THE STUDENTS OF THE EMPIRE (CEI), AFRICAN WOMEN POETS FROM THE 1950S, AND SARAH MALDOROR'S FILMS

A CASA DOS ESTUDANTES DO IMPÉRIO (CEI), AS POETAS AFRICANAS DA DÉCADA DE 50 E OS FILMES DE SARAH MALDOROR

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In the 1950s, in Lisbon, several students coming from different Portuguese colonies in Africa met at CEI – *Casa dos Estudantes do Império* – a cultural and leisure centre for college students and other scholars from Africa or Asia. I would highlight names such as Amílcar Cabral (1924–1973), Mário Pinto de Andrade (1928–1990) and Agostinho Neto (1922–1979), famous activists that, at the time, invested in cultural forms of resistance against colonialism, being literature a means to raise political awareness among students. The high-profile women writers in this *milieu* were Noémia de Sousa (1926–2002), Alda Lara (1930–1962) and Alda do Espírito Santo (1926–2010). My research will assess the role of these three women in the cultural front of a collective political awakening, which later led to the independence struggles in the set of Portuguese colonies in Africa. These three women were also the first canonised women writers in their own national literary systems, thus being founding figures in a women's genealogy of literary achievement. However, their works also represent a particular generation, framed by the atmosphere lived at CEI. As a consequence of the political activism developed by the CEI *milieu*, some of the involved young scholars had to leave Portugal going into exile in Paris, where they gathered around the magazine *Présence Africaine*. This paper also explores CEI's "Paris connection", via Mário Pinto de Andrade and his wife, the film director Sarah Maldoror (1938–), who eventually adapted Luandino Vieira's texts to cinema (*Monangambé*, 1968 and *Sambizanga*, 1972). At the time, Maldoror's work was conceived as a means to promote international awareness of the regime Angolan people were fighting against. The final aim of the research is to explore the articulation between the works by these four women with regard to CEI's activism.

Keywords: African poetry in Portuguese. The 1950s generation. Sarah Maldoror. Noémia de Sousa. Alda Lara. Alda do Espírito Santo. Mário Pinto de Andrade.

Nos anos 50, em Lisboa, vários estudantes provenientes de diferentes colónias portuguesas em África encontraram-se na CEI – *Casa dos Estudantes do Império*, um centro cultural e de lazer para universitários e intelectuais vindos de África ou da Ásia. Sublinharia nomes como Amílcar

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Cabral (1924–1973), Mário Pinto de Andrade (1928–1990) e Agostinho Neto (1922–1979), famosos ativistas que, naquela altura, investiram em formas de resistência cultural contra o colonialismo, sendo a literatura um dos meios para despertar reflexão/ consciência política no meio estudantil. As mulheres que se destacaram neste meio cultural e académico foram Noémia de Sousa (1926–2002), Alda Lara (1930–1962) e Alda do Espírito Santo (1926–2010). Esta investigação reavalia o papel destas três mulheres na frente de intervenção cultural para a formação da consciência política coletiva que desembocou nas lutas de independência das colónias portuguesas. Estas três mulheres também são as primeiras autoras integradas nos respetivos sistemas literários nacionais, tornando-se figuras fundadoras numa genealogia do contributo literário das mulheres. No entanto, as suas obras também representam uma geração particular, enquadrada pela atmosfera da CEI. Como consequência do ativismo político desenvolvido nos corredores da CEI, alguns dos jovens intelectuais comprometidos tiveram de deixar Portugal, exilando-se em Paris, onde se reuniram em torno da revista *Présence Africaine*. Este artigo também explora a ligação da CEI a Paris, via Mário Pinto de Andrade e a sua mulher, a cineasta Sarah Maldoror (1938–), a qual adaptou textos de Luandino Vieira ao cinema (*Monangambé*, 1968, and *Sambizanga*, 1972). Na altura, o cinema de Maldoror foi um meio para divulgar internacionalmente o regime contra o qual o povo angolano lutava. O objetivo final desta investigação é explorar a articulação entre a obra destas quatro autoras e o ativismo político da CEI.

Palavras-chave: Poesia africana em língua portuguesa. A geração de 50. Noémia de Sousa. Alda Lara. Alda do Espírito Santo. Sarah Maldoror. Mário Pinto de Andrade.

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1. The ‘Estado Novo’, the last stage of colonialism and the activities at CEI

The Portuguese regime of Estado Novo (1933–74) conceived its colonial possessions in Africa and in the East as essential components of the Portuguese nation. In symbolical terms, the colonies legitimized a sense of national exceptionality via historical achievement, and, secondly, in material and strategic matters, the colonies represented extended political influence at the international level, as well as a means to (potential) economic development.

The “Constituição de 1933”, which is the set of acts that implemented the Estado Novo regime, was completely designed by the president António Oliveira Salazar, with the help of a small group of collaborators.¹ Among other key decisions, this legislative document implemented the “Acto Colonial”² (Colonial Act) where it was stated that:

¹ *Vd.* the official site of the Portuguese National Parliament (Assembleia da República): <https://www.parlamento.pt/Parlamento/Paginas/EstadoNovo.aspx>

² Act n.º 22: 465 – “Acto Colonial”, from the 11th of April, 1933. There is a previous version of this act, from 1930, but this is the final version. According to Fernando Rosas, in his contribution to the book *Mensagem* (Borges *et al.* 2015), only in the constitution of 1951 would the regime attempt a “cosmetic change” of its colonial ideology by changing the term “colony” (colónia) to overseas province (província ultramarina). But even then, colonial possessions remained of uttermost

(2nd Art.) It is essential to the functional existence of the Portuguese nation to fulfil her historical mission of possessing and colonising overseas territories, civilising the native populations that may inhabit them [...].³

As one can read in the quote above, Portugal reaffirmed colonialism as an essential part of its national project, whose mission was to civilise the ‘indígenas’ (natives). ‘Indígenas’ are then defined from articles 15 to 24 of the Colonial Act, establishing their right to a salary and freedom of worship. One can conclude from the nine articles on ‘indígenas’ that they are conceived as a work force, to be kept as menial labourers. Nevertheless, there was, in each of the colonised territories, a small local middle class (by ‘local’, I mean neither colonial administration, nor foreign citizens, but people from the colonised territories) that craved social mobility and the consolidation of their social standing. Investing in formal education for their children and encouraging the assimilation of Portuguese language and culture seemed the best way to improve one’s probabilities to thrive. Once high school studies were finished, some rich families could afford to send their children to Portugal, to pursue further studies. For these families, to see to their children’s graduation was a sure and fast means to ensure a career in local administration, and hence, social status and a certain professional success.

The first two colonies with a local middle class that could afford to do send their youth to college in Portugal were the catholic elites from Goa, and the children of the rich plantation owners from S. Tomé e Príncipe⁴, who started enrolling in Portuguese universities during the 19th century.

By the beginning of the 20th century, Portugal and her colonies lived under the impact of liberal ideas, which promoted universal rights and a politically aware ideal of citizenship. The change from monarchy to a republican regime, in 1910, together with the widespread proliferation of the press in the first decades of the 20th century, further encouraged associative activism and the public discussion of political reforms. However, this more democratic and progressive atmosphere radically changed in the 1930s, with the advent of Estado Novo, a fascist, dictatorial regime, with an aggressive colonial vision for the future of the territories that belonged to Portugal.

By the 1940s and 1950s, the few colonial citizens that could pursue higher education had to do so against the grain of an educational system designed to keep the great majority of the colonised population as ‘indígenas’, that is to say, as an illiterate

national importance for the Portuguese state, as conceived by Estado Novo. [N.N.] (1933). Acto colonial de 11 de Abril de 1933. Retrieved from:

https://www.parlamento.pt/Parlamento/Documents/acto_colonial.pdf

³ My translation. “(Art. 2º) É da essência orgânica da Nação Portuguesa desempenhar a função histórica de possuir e colonizar domínios ultramarinos e de civilizar as populações indígenas que neles se compreendam [...].”

⁴ The archipelago of Cape Verde had the first high school in Portuguese African colonies (seminário-liceu, island of S. Nicolau, 1866–1867, active until 1917). In 1911, a high school was created in Mozambique, at the capital city, Lourenço Marques, and, in 1919, the first ‘liceu’ was created in Luanda, Angola. Comparatively, in Goa, India, the first high school was the Liceu Central de Nova Goa (Pangim/Paniji), funded in 1854 (before the Cape Verdean one). Brazil was an independent country since 1822. The study of Brazil’s educational system is out of the scope of this paper.

work force. The last thing Estado Novo wanted to support was an educated local intelligentsia that could think politically and critically. Yet again, it was equally impossible to prevent well to do families from educating their children, and if Portugal did not provide for a higher education, neighbouring colonies would, an alternative that would be quite embarrassing for a regime eager to prove to the world its ability to be an effective coloniser. The solution devised by Estado Novo was to accept college students from the colonies, who would come to Portuguese universities in Lisbon, Coimbra and Oporto, where they were expected to assimilate allegiance to the metropolitan centre.

Once in Portugal, students from African territories felt lonely and isolated, so, they tended to look for the company of other students coming from the same place, and that is how students' houses were created in the three Portuguese cities mentioned above. As different houses appeared, the Portuguese government tried to gather all the students in the same place (which would be easier to control and survey), and The House for the Students from the Empire (CEI – *Casa dos Estudantes do Império*) was created in 1944/1945, in Lisbon, to receive students from all the colonies (two other minor houses were established in Coimbra and Oporto).

What happened at CEI was the reverse of what the regime expected. Gathering college students, the scholarly elite of several colonies, in a place where they could meet (or have a meal, practice sports and study) and spend evenings discussing socio-political issues – such as living conditions in the Portuguese society, the manifestations of racism they encountered or the subaltern status assigned to their own motherlands – certainly fostered political self-awareness among these young people. Thus, instead of developing allegiance to the metropolitan project, the young women and men who attended the CEI started thinking critically of the regime that made their own motherlands depend on Portugal, seeing no advantage for the local populations in the colonial system. The next logical step was the advent of some form of political organization, confronting the wrongs of the colonial system.

The CEI itself provided two important conditions to stimulate political resistance: associative dynamics and the means to publish texts. The students soon realised they could write and disseminate texts that would raise resistant, anti-colonial awareness among the future elites of all the Portuguese colonies. And ideas started spreading. One can retrospectively acknowledge the importance of the social dynamics at the House for the Students of the Empire in the political training of the 1950s generation, delivering them the conditions for the gradual definition of a clear course of action, co-ordinated as a united front, encompassing representatives of all Portuguese African colonies. This co-ordination among the leaders of different independence movements was another positive outcome which must have been facilitated by CEI as a meeting point. It made the anti-colonial movement across the Portuguese colonies stronger, granting it greater international impact, which was no small thing in the search for allies and political support.

International support came first and foremost from the communist parties in Portugal and France, backed up by the Soviet Union. The CEI thus became a hub for political training, in contact with the underground work taking place in each Portuguese

colony. The tip of the iceberg were humble publications as the newsletter *Mensagem* or the publication of the African authors series.

Cláudia Castelo clearly relates the CEI's publishing policies to the raising of political awareness among young scholars:

The publishing section, under the responsibility of Carlos Ervedosa, Fernando Costa Andrade, José Ilídio Cruz, Fernando Mourão and Alfredo Margarido, published Angolan poets and prose writers (1959 and 1962; and 1960), as well as poets from Mozambique (1962) and S. Tomé and Príncipe (1963). The collection "Overseas Authors" published works by Viriato da Cruz, Agostinho Neto, António Jacinto, Luandino Vieira, Mário António and José Craverinha. Through the newsletter *Mensageiro*, directed by Tomás Medeiros and Ervedosa among others, (the CEI) brought to public attention several African authors, and disseminated anti-colonial texts. In this way, new, autonomous literatures emerged, and these were different from the Portuguese literary tradition, in both thematic and linguistic terms: they were the African literatures in Portuguese. And the CEI was determined to circulate them.⁵

But there is more to the Activities of CEI than cultural forms of activism. Cláudia Castelo also claims that the escape of several students as defectors, from Portugal to France and other western countries, in a joined escape plan (the so called 'A Fuga dos 100')⁶, in 1961, was planned within the ranks of CEI:

In spite of the surveyance by PIDE and the interference by the Administrative Commission, the CEI is the place where the escape of dozens of students from Portugal is prepared. Abroad, these students will join liberation movements. In (the Portuguese) newspapers, the escape is minimized or silenced, but a report by PIDE, from the 4th July 1961, sent to the Overseas Ministry, Ministry of National Defense, Internal Affairs, The Army, Foreign Ministry, Communications Office and The Aeronautics Secretary states the following: "The CEI, in Lisbon, was the main recruiting centre".⁷

⁵ My translation. "A secção editorial, sob o impulso de Carlos Ervedosa, Fernando Costa Andrade, José Ilídio Cruz, Fernando Mourão e Alfredo Margarido, publica antologias de poetas e contistas angolanos (1959 e 1962; e1960), de poetas de Moçambique (1962) e de São Tomé e Príncipe (1963). Obras de Viriato da Cruz, Agostinho Neto, António Jacinto, Luandino Vieira, Mário António, José Craverinha figuram na Colecção "Autores Ultramarinos". Através do seu boletim *Mensageiro*, dirigido entre outros por Tomás Medeiros e Ervedosa, revela muitos dos mais importantes escritores africanos e põe a circular textos anticolonistas. Começam a surgir literaturas novas e autónomas, que se distinguem da tradição literária portuguesa, ao nível temático e linguístico: as literaturas africanas de língua portuguesa. E a CEI aposta na sua divulgação." (Castelo 2015, p. 27)

⁶ Tomás Medeiros (activist from S. Tomé e Príncipe) and the Portuguese historian Cláudia Castelo also refer to this event in their articles included in the commemorative publication *Mensagem* (Borges *et al.* 2015).

⁷ My translation. "Apesar da vigilância da PIDE e da ingerência da comissão administrativa, a CEI é um dos lugares em que se prepara a saída de Portugal de várias dezenas de estudantes que irão juntar-se aos movimentos de libertação. Nos jornais a fuga é minimizada ou mesmo abafada, mas numa informação da PIDE, de 4 de Julho de 1961, enviada aos Ministérios do Ultramar, Defesa Nacional, Interior, Exército, Negócios Estrangeiros, Comunicações e ao Secretariado da Aeronáutica, podemos ler: 'A CEI funcionava, em Lisboa, como o principal centro recrutador' (...)." (Castelo 2015, p. 28)

In conflict with this *milieu* of activism, the surveyance practices of Estado Novo became more intransigent, leading to the imprisonment and torture of activists. In 1961, the independence war broke out in Angola, and later in Mozambique and Guiné-Bissau. These would be long wars (Angola 1961–1974; Mozambique 1964–1974; Guiné-Bissau 1963–1974), which left the countries destroyed, ruined and socially disrupted by violence. The two archipelagos of Cape Verde and S. Tomé e Príncipe did not experience war directly, but they joined the political activism against the Portuguese regime, and suffered terrible forms of repression, such as the Batepá Massacre (in S. Tomé Island, February 1953) or insidious state inertia when, in years of draught, there was starvation in Cape Verde.

Independence wars in countries formerly colonised by Portugal took place during the 1960s and 1970s, at a time when the rest of the world already deemed European decolonization as inevitable. After World War II (1939–1945) the tendency on global politics was clearly towards massive European decolonization, and the age of empires was replaced by Cold War politics. Hence the connection between the independence struggles and the support provided by the Soviet Union: the newly independent countries would become new allies, new areas of Soviet influence, away from the Western nations (including Portugal) that clearly closed ranks with the USA in the context of ‘post-World War II’ global dynamics.

On the political role of the CEI in bringing about the end of Portuguese colonialism, Tomás de Medeiros, former activist from S. Tomé e Príncipe and the first president of CEI, acknowledges the role of the association in the famous ‘Fuga dos 100’, as well as in the organisation of MAC – the Anti-Colonial Movement (Medeiros 2015, p. 41), which was later replaced by different national parties. In terms of cultural intervention, Medeiros recalls the dissemination of self-assertive ideas concerning black cultures – for example, circulating the writings by *Négritude* poets – , as well as the publication of a wide set of African writers from countries that still were, at the time, Portuguese colonies. In fact, some of the first anthologies of African literature in Portuguese ever published in Portugal were published by the CEI, in the series “overseas authors” (autores ultramarinos).⁸ If, in the context of the liberation struggles, culture was a battlefield, as claimed by Amílcar Cabral⁹ – himself a former CEI student¹⁰ – , then the students at the House for the Students of the Empire certainly did their part. According to Inocência Mata (2015),

The set of publications organized by CEI clearly reveals the transnational aim of combining efforts to disseminate non-colonial references in order to undo the credibility of principles of subalternity opposing Africans to metropolitans.¹¹

⁸ Some of the writers published by CEI were: Luandino Vieira, Arnaldo Santos, António Cardoso, Manuel dos Santos Lima, Agostinho Neto, António Jacinto, Henrique Abranches and José Craveirinha. Critical essays by Alfredo Margarido and Onésimo Silveira were also published.

⁹ Probably the most established ideologue in the liberation processes concerning the African colonies held by Portugal (vd. Cabral 1995).

¹⁰ Amílcar Cabral studied Agronomy at the Technical University of Lisbon.

¹¹ My translation. “As publicações com a chancela da CEI ilustram bem esse desígnio tão transnacional de congregação de esforços de disseminação de imagens não coloniais que contrariassem as lógicas subalternizantes de africanos e metropolitanos.” (Mata 2015, p. 5)

One of the aims of this article is, precisely, to revisit some of these alternative African self-representations, following the life and works of a selected set of women writers who were related to the CEI *milieu*. The high-profile women writers published by CEI were Noémia de Sousa (1926–2002), Alda Lara (1930–1962) and Alda do Espírito Santo (1926–2010). This research will assess the role of these three women in the cultural front of the collective political awakening taking place during the 1950s, at the heart of Estado Novo. Besides, these three women were the first canonised women writers in their own national literary systems. As such, they are founding figures, and discussing their lives and works is to recover a genealogy of the contribution of women for the consolidation of several African literatures in Portuguese.

Usually, each of the women writers mentioned above is approached in relation to her own national literary system, as an individual author, or as a highlight in a feminine African canon. I am rather exploring the articulation, and the eventual dissonance, among their works, at a key moment in time: the 1950s, the decade when the independence of several African countries under Portuguese colonialism was set in motion (the 1960s, are already years of declared warfare). Part 4 of this article will relate the films by Sarah Maldoror to the activism of the CEI's *milieu*. The personality linking all these women is Mário Pinto de Andrade, for the purposes of this paper, a sort of 'CEI's agent' at the magazine *Présence Africaine* (1947–), in Paris (where he was editor in chief from 1955 to 1958).

Mário Pinto de Andrade was also a close friend to Noémia de Sousa and Alda do Espírito Santo, and both these women poets collaborated in his projects (Laban 1997). He met Alda Lara at CEI as well, and for a brief period they collaborated in the same cultural activities (then Alda Lara moved to Coimbra).

Mário Pinto de Andrade (1928–1990) – former MPLA leader¹², left the CEI to live in exile, in Paris, in 1954. He was in contact with the intelligentsia circles that had stayed behind, in Luanda and Lourenço Marques (Maputo), and he also exchanged letters with the group gathered at CEI, which is to say, that whatever was planned in Lisbon, had reverberations in the local activism in the colonies. Mário Pinto de Andrade mentions for example Viriato da Cruz and António Jacinto (both writers and activists) as two of his regular correspondents in Angola, while he was living in Lisbon, and later in Paris.

The CEI was closed in 1965. By then, something else had been finished as well: an important stage in the coming of age of a generation that would become the leaders of their own national independence struggles. The CEI also represents a moment of unity, of joined coordination, before each independence struggle followed its own individual course. Within its walls walked historical figures as Agostinho Neto (1922–1979), the first president of Angola, Amílcar Cabral (1924–1973), leader of PAIGC (the party that stood for the united independence struggle of Guiné-Bissau and Cape Verde), important figures in Mozambique's resistance as Marcelino dos Santos and Aquino de Bragança and the Goan writer Orlando da Costa.

¹² Mário Pinto de Andrade was the president of MPLA before Agostinho Neto, and he would be the future Minister of Culture in independent Guiné-Bissau.

2. Alda Lara

Alda Lara belongs to the first generation of students at CEI, having studied at the medical school of the University of Lisbon, and later, at Coimbra. She was actively engaged in the cultural activities of CEI, and not only did she publish texts in the newsletter *Mensagem* but she was also included in the two anthologies of Angolan poetry published by CEI in the collection “overseas authors” (autores ultramarinos). The first¹³ anthology was published in 1959, and the second one in 1962 (the year of her death). Having died young, Alda Lara had most of her work published posthumously by her husband. Still her place as a figure in the national literary canon of Angola is established, and, in part, her visibility is related to the publication of several of her poems in these anthologies which, humble as they might have been, represented the first, ground-breaking effort to establish, through literature, the cultural identity of each of the African territories under Portuguese rule. My argument is that these anthologies are always referred back to in later studies on Angolan literature, thus, they gave visibility to her name. In the 1959 anthology¹⁴, her poem is presented by Alfredo Margarido in these terms:

(...) Many Africans consider their stay in Portugal an act of physical and cultural violence, perpetrated by Portuguese colonialism. The poem that most pungently exposes this situation is the one by Alda Lara, where she proclaims her yearning for returning (to Angola), reclaiming her place in her homeland, with her things and her people (...) This was not Alda Lara’s idea, but the truth is that her poem exposes the unbearable violence of exile (...).¹⁵

I read in this comment the expression of acknowledgement and assent. Nevertheless, between 1959 and 1962 the independence war broke out in Angola. It was a time when writers were expected to write poetry supporting the independence struggle and the radical (Marxist) ideologies that encouraged it, galvanizing the scholarly *milieu* at CEI into activism. Beyond the CEI’s walls, cultural initiatives were conceived to reverberate as much as possible, hopefully echoing in Luanda, where there was a scholarly circle equally involved in the cultural front of the struggle. In this set of circumstances, under the rage to write *guerrilheiro* (freedom fighter) literature or Marxist slogans, Alda Lara’s poetry seems out of tune with its time. To begin with, her writing is marked by a strong pacifist ethos, possibly due to her deeply set Catholic

¹³ I am specifically referring to anthologies of Angolan poetry. However, the first anthology of overseas poetry published by CEI was an anthology of poetry from Mozambique (*Poesia de Moçambique*, 1951, edited by Vítor Evaristo and Orlando Albuquerque, being the latter, the future husband of Alda Lara).

¹⁴ Edited by Carlos Ervedosa.

¹⁵ My translation. “(...) são muitos os africanos que consideram a passagem por Portugal um acto de violência, física e cultural, cometido pelo colonialismo português. O poema que denuncia com mais veemência essa situação é certamente aquele em que Alda Lara anuncia a sua ânsia de voltar, recuperando o lugar que lhe cabe na relação com o território, com as coisas e os homens (...) Não era esse o projecto de Alda Lara, mas a verdade é que o seu poema acaba por denunciar a violência inaceitável do exílio (...).” (Margarido *in* Freudenthal *et al.* 1994/2014, p. 8)

frame of mind, and, secondly, her writing does not totally coincide with the glorification of an *exclusively* black African identity and heritage, when the political ideas of the time associated black/ poor/ oppressed/ revolutionary hero, in contrast to white/ capitalist/ oppressor/ coloniser.

Alda Lara's Africa has room for all the races, and she does not openly criticize the colonial regime. She defines herself as African, belonging to the future generation of graduated professionals that would return to their homelands to make a difference, through development and solidarity. However, in radical times, the reception of poets among their pairs may be determined by political urgency and historical circumstance, a point I have developed extensively elsewhere (Passos 2019). In what concerns the reception of Alda Lara's poetry throughout the 60s, it is evident that, at the time, there was a tendency to consider ideology above aesthetic quality and socio-philosophical content. In my view, when it comes to literary criticism, all of these elements are equally important, and they have to be considered in a balanced and contextualised manner, but, during periods of struggle, literary critics may fall under the influence of ideological bias, and I think that was the case with Alfredo Margarido, with regard to his comments on the 1962 anthology:

(...) (In this case, the refusal [by Alda Lara] of the conditions of exile, the deliberate exaggeration of references from her homeland amounts to a point of view which ignores the dialectic movement taking place in African societies. Contrary to Agostinho Neto, Alda Lara refuses to accept the undeterred force of denying the denial), but that is not the case of Agostinho Neto's poetry.¹⁶

I read in these lines frustrated expectations, as if Margarido wanted more than longing for Angola from Alda Lara's poetry. He would have her writing revolutionary poems, only... that is not the author's choice.

In my opinion, Alda Lara's representation of colonial social inequalities, together with her obvious longing for Angola, are aspects of her poetry that made her texts find its way to a canon she, ideologically, might not exactly coincide with. This thematic ambiguity explains her ambivalent reception in the 1950s/1960s, especially because of the importance awarded to ideological criteria for literary reception. Simultaneously, her work does not openly coincide with *Négritude* ideals either, although I have written about some affinities one can identify between works by *Négritude* poets and Alda Lara's poetry (Passos 2013). I have argued that she does write about Angolan realities, proudly proclaiming her love for her African homeland, even if she does not necessarily invest in a self-assertive revival of black cultures.

For nowadays' readers, the reception of her poetry is no longer dependent on the political circumstances mentioned above, but it still is important to situate her work and understand the high political stakes connected to the writing of Angolan poetry during the 1950s and 1960s. It is within this frame of circumstances that I understand the

¹⁶ My translation. "(...) Neste caso, a recusa das condições do exílio, a voluntária inflação dos valores da terra natal é uma manifestação que pretende ignorar o movimento dialético das sociedades africanas; ao contrário de Agostinho Neto, Alda Lara recusa-se a aceitar a força inelutável da negação da negação), mas não é esse o caso da poesia de Agostinho Neto." (Margarido 1962, pp. 102–103)

comment by Alfredo Margarido in the introduction to the 1962 anthology of Angolan poetry.

Curiously, and in spite of her critics¹⁷, instead of the single text published in 1959, the second anthology includes five poems by Alda Lara: “Prelúdio”, “Regresso”, “Presença”, “Rumo”, “Testamento” (Margarido 1962, pp. 191–199). Moreover, several poets that were present in the previous collection were excluded from this second one, a publication more focused on consolidating a clearer sense of Angolan culture and literature, to the extent that it publishes poems in Bantu languages, followed by its translation to Portuguese. I can only conclude that despite the creation of a more individualistic poetic project, Alda Lara’s place in the consolidating Angolan literary Canon was not questionable after all.

Alda Lara is also frequently remembered for her talent in declaiming poetry in social evenings at CEI. Unfortunately, there is no sound or video record of her performances. The only evidence we have are the comments by her colleagues who saw her in live performances. She is always remembered with words of praise. Mário Pinto de Andrade still recalls, in an interview that takes place decades later (Laban 1997), that Alda Lara and Mário Barradas said poems aloud, in a joined performance, as a complement to his own lecture on “African Literature” (no exact date is mentioned, but it was Mário P. de Andrade’s first conference at CEI, so, possibly 1951 or 1952).

In an article from 2015, Tomás de Medeiros quoted Alda Lara – the poem “Quadras da minha solidão” (stanzas to my loneliness) – as the most achieved expression of the feelings experienced by the African student living in Lisbon (Medeiros 2015, p. 36). Finally, her life-long friend, the writer António Jacinto, wrote her a pungent poem on hearing of her passing – “Alda Lara/ Irmã/ que se frustrou a vida/ de breve interrompida – where he states that her “testament” (the poem “Testamento”¹⁸, synecdoche for her legacy as a poet) was acknowledged by her companions (Jacinto 2011).

Contrary to Alfredo Margarido’s ideas revisited above, which do not seem to hold Alda Lara’s poetry in great esteem, on the 11th November 1975 (the Independence-day) the newspaper *Jornal de Angola* issued a page devoted to literature. Four poets are published: Agostinho Neto, who was beginning his presidential term that very day, António Jacinto, Viriato da Cruz and Alda Lara (the chosen poem was “Rumo”). In my opinion, it is significant that her poem about unity, gathering black and white people in a single purpose, is selected to celebrate the birth of the new country. Alda Lara was indeed a voice of unity, promoting Angola as a country of development and peace. If her voice was not so relevant in revolutionary times, she was recuperated as an emblematic Angolan poet in times of unity and fulfilment, as it was hoped at the Independence-day.

¹⁷ Another critic that shares Alfredo Margarido’s opinion is Ana Maria Mão de Ferro Martinho (*vd.* Martinho 2015) who regrets the fact that Alda Lara does not problematize colonialism itself, as if the return of a well-educated generation would be enough to settle the problems affecting the African colonies. The suggested expectations in Alda Lara’s poems are towards development, along European models of modernity.

¹⁸ Lara (1984, p. 25).

3. Alda do Espírito Santo

In her contribution to the commemorative issue of *Mensagem* (Borges *et al.* 2015), Alda do Espírito Santo (1926–2010), makes a moving declaration. She still kept her old student card as a CEI member. The text is signed 1996 (pp. 89–91), so, she was writing those words approximately forty years later. Alda do Espírito Santo also recalls the importance of the Centre for African Studies, a sort of cultural *salon* at the home of the Espírito Santo family (Rua Actor Vale, nº 37, 1º esq.) in Lisbon. She was one of the founders of the centre, in 1951. The meetings took place on Sundays, to avoid suspicion of political activism by the secret police, as it was current practice in Portugal to have Sunday family gatherings, with a few, invited guests. As Mário Pinto de Andrade declares in his interview to Michel Laban, the Centre for African Studies was an extension of CEI’s activities, and it has to be understood as another cell for the 1950s activism by African students in Lisbon. In order to understand the importance of Alda do Espírito Santo in the cultural and political *milieu* of CEI, one has to consider this other dimension of the students’ activities, at the Espírito Santo family home.

Alda do Espírito Santo came from a prominent family in S. Tomé, and she studied to become a primary school teacher. As she pursued her studies in Lisbon, she met all the personalities I have mentioned so far, and the meetings at the Espírito Santo family home were attended by Noémia de Sousa, Francisco José Tenreiro, Amílcar Cabral, Agostinho Neto, and Mário Pinto de Andrade, among others.

Recently, I found an interesting photo at “Casa Comum”¹⁹, the online platform which exhibits documents held by Fundação Mário Soares:



Figure 1: Alda do Espírito Santo, on the left, and Mário Pinto de Andrade behind her, in the second row, on the left (wearing a light coat). In the first row you can see, on the right Aristides Pereira, the first president of Cape Verde, next to Leopold Senghor, one of the ideologues of *Négritude*, and the first president of Senegal. (no date)

This photo shows the importance of approaching the work and the activism of the students gathered at CEI as a generation that was fighting a common cause: liberation from colonialism, in opposition to the colonial policies of the Estado Novo dictatorship. The photo hints at the network of international collaboration that this generation built

¹⁹ Available at < <http://casacomum.org/cc/arquivos>>, accessed on 14th of January, 2020.

for themselves, and, finally, it shows acknowledgement of the role played by Alda do Espírito Santo, standing there, next to two presidents and her friend Mário Pinto de Andrade, always a background figure, as if to disguise his importance as strategist.

In 1953, Alda do Espírito Santo returned to S. Tomé, where she was a teacher, while she carried undercover activities to support the liberation movement. There is a letter, held by Fundação Mário Soares²⁰, where Alda do Espírito Santo denounces the Batepá Massacre to Mário Pinto de Andrade. This letter was very important to prevent Estado Novo from silencing the massacre, as the information ‘got out’ of the island, and, through Pinto de Andrade, the news of the massacre in S. Tomé were published at the cultural magazine *Présence Africaine*, in 1955, in an article signed by Mário Pinto de Andrade under the pseudonym Buanga Fele (vd. Laban 1997). I will just quote two sentences, one about the massacre itself, and another one, concerning strategies to fool the Portuguese state police:

Forty-seven people were kept in a small room, without enough air to allow all those people to breathe normally. There was only a small window, which did not provide enough air. The men shout, ask for water, beg, but around thirty of them suffocate. Reports by survivors coincide, and they also coincide in the names of those who died. The men from Vila Trindade died in that room, they were buried in a collective grave, and their names are not mentioned in the official death records [of the island].
(...) Do not write unless you have a messenger you can rely on. When writing me through regular mail services do not write of anything else but the weather or health... (Alda Lara, letter from February 1953)²¹

The letter I have quoted here testifies to Alda do Espírito Santo’s commitment to the cause, and it stands as a clear example of the importance of the initial collaboration between activist cells in all of the territories Portugal held at the time. Beyond this political dynamic in the background, it was a fortunate coincidence that this same generation encompassed talented and prolific as writers. Obviously, the 1950s literary heritage we are dealing with here has to be understood in relation to political activism, but it is equally important to highlight that beyond that instrumental use of literature, this was the foundational moment for several modern, written literatures, when the five African literatures in Portuguese consolidated as a literary system, instead of the isolated cases one could find in previous epochs.

Alda do Espírito Santo is also one of the poets selected for the anthology of Poets from S. Tomé and Príncipe, in the collection “Overseas Authors”, published by CEI in

²⁰ “S. Tomé – Fevereiro 1953”, Fundação Mário Soares / Arquivo Mário Pinto de Andrade, available at: http://hdl.handle.net/11002/fms_dc_83656 (2020-1-16)

²¹ My translation. “Quarenta e sete indivíduos são metidos numa sala cuja cubagem não permite a respiração normal desses homens, tendo apenas uma janelita insuficiente para se poder respirar eficientemente.

Os homens gritam, pedem água, imploram, mas perto de 30 morrem asfixiados. Os sobreviventes são unânimes ao referir-se ao facto, e nomes deles (das vítimas) surgem.

Os homens de Vila Trindade morrem então nessa câmara de asfixia e são enterrados em vala comum, não contado suas mortes, nos registos de óbito.

(...) Só me escrevam quando houver portador de confiança. Pelo correio só a falar no tempo, na saúde, e nada mais...” (carta de Alda Lara, fevereiro de 1953)

1963.²² The poems included in this anthology are: “Lá no Água Grande”; “Em torno de minha baía”; “Onde estão os homens caçados neste vento de loucura” (on the ‘Batepá Massacre’); “Angolares”; “Para lá da Praia”, “Descendo o meu bairro”; “Avò Mariana” and “No mesmo lado da canoa”. Her poems address everyday life in S. Tomé, the harshness of daily tasks, the wrongs done to the community of black people, and her hope that the future will hold a more humane society. Another strong thematic guideline, reappearing in all the poems of this set, is the dissemination of a collective sense of identity, promoting internal cohesion and solidarity among the black people of the archipelago.

Alda do Espírito Santo’s choice of themes did answer the challenges of her time, when the archipelago of S. Tomé was struggling for its independence from colonialism. At the same time, these subjects confer an epic, foundational dimension to her words.²³

Alda do Espírito Santo was once arrested by PIDE for a few months, in 1965. In the Portuguese National Archive there is a copy of her prison file, entry number 22352 of the General Record of Prisoners of the Secret Police – PIDE (*Registo Geral dos Presos da Polícia Internacional e Defesa do Estado*), where it is stated that Alda do Espírito Santo was arrested by “activism against the security of the state” (atividades contra a segurança do estado) from the 4th December 1965 to the 21st February 1966. Above, I have just presented an example of such activities, when she managed to expose the ‘Batepá Massacre’. After the independence of S. Tomé (1975), she became Minister of Education, president of the National Assembly and she also founded the Writer’s Association of S. Tomé e Príncipe. In 2012, an anthology of her collected works was published under the title *Alda do Espírito Santo – Escritos*.

4. Noémia de Sousa

Carolina Noémia Abranches de Sousa (1926–2002) wasn’t the only woman publishing texts in Mozambique. The Portuguese Glória de Sant’ana, who had been living in Pemba for 23 years, had already published several collections of poetry. But Noémia de Sousa was the first Mozambican woman to do so.

The poetry Noémia de Sousa is famous for was written in Mozambique, between 1948 and 1950, before she came to Lisbon. At that time, her poems were published in the newspaper *O Brado Africano*, in close collaboration with local cultural activism. However, the impact of her poems would only be adequately grasped later on, during the 1950s, on the wake of a growing political awareness that would lead to the struggle for independence. In Maputo (then Lourenço Marques), Noémia de Sousa attended a club called *Associação Africana*, where she met other African scholars and artists. She was a life-long friend of José Craveirinha, and she met Rui Guerra, Rui Knofli and Virgílio de Lemos. The newspaper *O Brado Africano* was connected to the *Associação*

²² Poets from S. Tomé and Príncipe included in the anthology are: Caetano Costa Alegre, Francisco José Tenreiro, Alda do Espírito Santo, Tomás Medeiros, Maria Manuela Margarido and Marcelo da Veiga. The anthology also includes excerpts of poems in Creole language by Francisco Stockler, with translation to Portuguese.

²³ In fact, the lyrics of the national anthem of S. Tomé e Príncipe were written by Alda do Espírito Santo. The title is *Independência Total* (complete independence).

Africana, so, naturally, Noémia de Sousa published her poems in that newspaper, as she was involved in the activities of the African Association.

While in Mozambique, Noémia de Sousa was acknowledged by other writers and artists. For example, according to Alda Costa, an established Mozambican art historian, in 1961, the painter Bertina Lopes organised an exhibition in Maputo with twenty-three paintings inspired by poems from José Craveirinha and Noémia de Sousa.²⁴ This event confirms the impact of Noémia de Sousa among other Mozambican artists and scholars that were active at the time. In terms of academic debate, Noémia de Sousa has also received wide critical attention, probably more than any other woman writer connected to CEI. Her collected works were published in 2016, under the title *Black Blood* (*Sangue Negro*), an anthology that includes all her poems, mostly written between 1948 and 1951 (Sousa 2016).

Noémia de Sousa kept a low profile as a writer when she came to Portugal in 1951. In an interview to Michel Laban, she commented: “I came to Portugal in 51 because my life was closely controlled by PIDE, the police”.²⁵ One can conclude from these words that she was uncomfortably aware that she was under surveillance, and this pressure seems to have silenced her writing. However, once in Lisbon, Noémia de Sousa was in contact with the group of students at CEI, and she even published texts in their newsletter *Mensagem*, namely, “Samba”, in 1959, and “Se me quiseses conhecer”, in 1962. As for her easy integration in Lisbon, Mário Pinto de Andrade even called her the “diva” of the scholarly *milieu* at the House for the Students of the Empire. Evidence of her connection to CEI is that many years later, when the literary anthologies published by CEI were reprinted, in 1994, Noémia de Sousa still collaborated with this initiative contributing to the glossary of words²⁶ from African languages.

De Sousa was equally involved in the *Centro de Estudos Africanos*, being a frequent visitor at the home of the Espírito Santo family. These activities must have attracted the fearful attention of PIDE, and, again, Noémia de Sousa felt the need to move, this time to Paris, where she was in contact with Mário Pinto de Andrade. She left Lisbon in 1964 to join her husband Gonçalo Soares, and they lived there, with their daughter, Virgínia Soares, until 1975. During this period, Noémia de Sousa managed to get a Portuguese passport, and her circulation between Paris and Lisbon became less problematic. She returned to Portugal in 1975, where she lived the rest of her life. During that period in exile, Noémia de Sousa only came to Portugal on holidays. She recalls her impression of one of these visits to Michel Laban: “(...) I was deeply disturbed when I visited this country (Portugal), which was at war, with her young sons

²⁴ Manuscript kindly shared by Alda Costa, who wrote the speech for a tribute to the painter Bertina Lopes, at the time of her passing away: “Bertina ou a arte de Bertina: Mudar e permanecer”.

²⁵ My translation. “Eu vim para Portugal em 51 porque estava a ter uma vida muito fechada pela PIDE, pela polícia.” (Laban 1998, p. 275)

²⁶ Cf. acknowledgement by the organisers to the collaborators involved in the glossary for local, African, terms included in the anthologies of poetry being reprinted: “Na sua elaboração contamos com o imprescindível apoio de Arnaldo Santos, Fernando Antoniotti, Inocência Mata, Luandino Vieira, Maria José Albarra, Noémia de Sousa, Olga Neves e Tomaz Medeiros, a quem agradecemos reconhecidamente.” (Freudenthal *et al.* 1994/2014, p. 3)

dying in combat, and the beaches where filled with happy people, eating snacks (...).”²⁷ The ethical accusation to the Portuguese society in this remark is still impressive today. Just like her poems, this interview is a strong statement on the contradictions and conflicts of that period.

Noémia de Sousa was an achieved translator as well. I would like to highlight here her translation from the French to Portuguese of the essay *Discours sur le Colonialisme* by the *Négritude* poet, Aimé Césaire (1955). I take her translation work as evidence of a later form of activism, when she no longer wrote poetry. This particular text by Césaire, is, in my opinion, one of the strongest and most impressive texts against colonialism. Césaire deconstructs the idea of colonization as civilization, exposing colonialism as a system of theft and violence on the scale of genocide. On the other hand, he represents the European civilisation, which perpetrated these acts, as a sick, decadent society, and, what is more important, a beatable enemy. Bearing Césaire’s ideas in mind, one can say it is no small thing to translate this particular text, making it available to all the people that could read Portuguese, especially the African people that had just endured long independence wars. Through this translation, Noémia de Sousa (1978) was, once more, disseminating the necessary words to interpret the epoch people were living through, only this time she deferred to the voice of another powerful writer.

As for Noémia de Sousa’s own writing as a poet, it is worth to compare the set of poems by Noémia de Sousa and Alda do Espírito Santo published in the *Anthology of Black Poetry in Portuguese (Caderno de Poesia Negra de Expressão Portuguesa)*, organised by Mário Pinto de Andrade and Francisco José Tenreiro (1953). It is a thin book, published as a sort of newspaper or leaflet. Alda do Espírito Santo publishes a single poem, “Lá no água grande”, which represents the plantation (“roça”) as a fearful place the playful girls washing clothes in the river do not want to return to. While they can sing and laugh by the river, they are quiet and silent on their way back to the plantation. As for Noémia de Sousa, the only other woman in this publication, she contributes with two poems. The first is “Magaíça”, about the naïve and uninformed departure of a Mozambican young man to work in the mines in South Africa, where he does make some money, only to return years later, old and unhealthy, to an empty, lonely life. In terms of message and impact “Lá no água grande” (by Alda Espírito Santo) and “Magaíça” (by Noémia de Sousa) are similar. Both the poems represent hardship, exploitation and sadness in the life of common black people, either working in plantations or in mines. The representation of these depressing life stories as the everyday destiny of black people is intended to stop political alienation, by making people realise how unfair these destinies are. Consequently, these poems are not victimization discourses. On the contrary, these poems encourage liberation ideals and commitment to political struggle.

The second poem by Noémia de Sousa is different in form, although the aims are the same. “Deixa passar o meu povo”, recalls examples of black activism and achievement – the Harlem Renaissance movement, the singer and actor Paul Roberson,

²⁷ My translation. (...) fazia-me impressão vir para um país que está em guerra, que tem os seus filhos jovens na guerra e ver as praias cheias de gente, satisfeita, a comer (...).” (Laban 1998, p. 341)

the diva Marian Robeson – as the role models black people should emulate. Through these examples, Noémia de Sousa encourages collective rebellion and liberation, in order to transcend the limits imposed to the dreams of black people. The affiliation of these poems to *Négritude* ideals is equally obvious: they contribute to establish a positive and assertive black identity, and they nurture collective bonding, uniting all the black people in the world in order to recover their own self-respect, their rights and their dreams.

5. Sarah Maldoror and her Angolan connections

I have connected the three poets mentioned above to the *milieu* of the CEI as the place where they developed (or continued) their political activism, and where they established contacts with other activists and liberation movements. I have also followed the coordination between scholars and graduating professionals in Lisbon and the African/Caribbean *milieu* in Paris, gathered around the French Communist Party and the magazine and publishing house *Présence Africaine*. Following up this Lisbon/ Paris connection, I would like to go back to Mário Pinto de Andrade as the liaison agent²⁸ between Angola's liberation struggle and the famous films by Sarah Maldoror (1938–2020): the short *Monagambé* (1968), and the film *Sambizanga* (1972).

Mário Pinto de Andrade was Sarah Maldoror's husband. They shared the same commitment to promote African self-representation, thus enabling African cultures to show themselves to the world in their own terms, and not through the representations that others, namely Europeans, produced. This aesthetic, self-assertive program had obvious political implications and determined the choice of themes and subjects addressed by the French film director. Sarah Maldoror (born in Guadalupe, The Caribbean) studied film making in Moscow, at the same time as Ousmane Sembéne, the 'father' of African cinema. This reference to a formative period in Moscow is important because I think it is possible to see the importance of social realism in her films. Both are focused on a working-class hero, the martyr in the hands of imperialist powers. Secondly, a lot of attention is paid to the everyday life of working-class people, the solidarity that binds them and the dignity of their simple lives.

Although Sarah Maldoror was not part of the *milieu* at the House for the Students of the Empire, she made two films after texts written by the Angolan writer Luandino Vieira (1935–), another famous member of the 1950s generation, who also published texts in the newsletter of the CEI, *Mensagem*, both under pseudonym and under his own name, as José Graça.²⁹ The film script for *Sambizanga* was adapted from the novella *A vida verdadeira de Domingos Xavier*, a text from November 1961. According to Francisco Topa (2014) the manuscript of the novella was first published in Angola, in that same year. Later, in 1971, it was translated to French by Mário Pinto de Andrade (with Chantel Tiberghien), and it was published, in Paris, by *Présence Africaine*, where

²⁸ Mário Pinto de Andrade arrived in Paris in 1954.

²⁹ José Vieira Mateus da Graça

Mário de Andrade worked. In the following year, Sarah Maldoror made the film *Sambizanga* (1972).

In the case of the short film *Monagambé* (1968), Sarah Maldoror adapted to cinema a short story first published in 1962, in the collection *Vidas Novas*. This volume won the 1962 João Dias Prize, which was awarded by the House for the Students from the Empire (Topa 2014, p. 160). The title of the original short story was “O fato completo de Lucas Matesso”, and it was published in Portugal much later, in 1975. Likewise, the novella *A vida verdadeira de Domingos Xavier* was first published in Portugal in 1974, by Edições 70. This time gap between the first editions of the texts and their first publication in Portugal should not be surprising, as these were censored texts under the dictatorship. Only after 1972, when Luandino Vieira was released from Tarrafal prison, did he start organizing his publications in Portugal. However, the author acknowledges that many clandestine editions of his works were circulating while he was in prison.³⁰ In a recent interview³¹, Luandino Vieira claims Sarah Maldoror could have known the Angolan edition from 1961, or she might have had access to the text through any clandestine edition received by Mário de Andrade.

My interest in Sarah Maldoror’s films does not primarily follow the celebration of Angolan resistance and its struggle against colonialism, which is one of the obvious guidelines to receive her work. I am interested in the fact that in spite of all the press control and the tight censorship of Estado Novo, and against all the propaganda campaigns to hide the violence of the Portuguese fascist regime, Sarah Maldoror managed to expose these practices internationally, denouncing the enemy the Angolan resistance was fighting against. In other words, I am saying that the film has an obvious national dimension – it is a film to celebrate Angolan freedom fighters and the Angolan independence struggle – but, at the same time, it is a public international exposition of the Portuguese regime.

Since *Sambizanga* was shot in Congo-Brazzaville (The Republic of the Congo) and *Monagambé*³² was shot in Algeria, by Sarah Maldoror, a French citizen, there was nothing the Portuguese censorship mechanisms could do to prevent these films from being screened. *Sambizanga* won an award at the 1972 Carthage Film Festival. In 1973, it won a second award at the Berlin Film Festival, and it is still shown in international film festivals all over Europe.

The backbone of Angola’s liberation struggle was endured by common workers who had to take guns on their hands to fight a war. That is, in a nutshell, the background to *Sambizanga*. The plot of the film takes place before the beginning of the war, showing the underground network that enabled the organisation of the independence struggle. Domingos, one of the main characters, works at a quarry, where he spreads political ideas among his colleagues until one of them exposes him to the secret police. Domingos is then arrested and tortured to death. The film was made to expose the

³⁰ Cf. for example the notes at the end of the 1988 edition (Vieira 1988, p. 98).

³¹ Forthcoming online publication at the site of project WOMANART: (<http://ceh.ilch.uminho.pt/womanart/?p=1270>)

³² *Monagambé* means cheap labourer, indentured labourer. It is also the title of a poem by António Jacinto and the poem then became the lyrics of a song by famous Angolan artist Rui Mingas.

murderous repression of political dissidents by the Portuguese police, while, at the same time, it encourages collective organization and a collective commitment to the independence fight (following the example set by Domingos' sacrifice). On the other hand, this is a film about Maria, his wife, and all the families that were destroyed because of the practices of state repression. In the end, Domingos and Maria are not soldiers, but they are martyrs, freedom fighters who either gave up their lives or their families for a greater collective cause.

Extensive research on Sarah Maldoror and the film production of Portuguese speaking African countries has been carried out by Maria do Carmo Piçarra (2017). Piçarra's work is important to understand the films by Sarah Maldoror against a more general background of African film produced by countries formerly colonised by Portugal. In part, what is special about Sarah Maldoror's films is that her project implicitly reveals the international network (involving at least France, the Soviet Union and Congo) behind cultural activism committed to fight Portuguese colonialism.

6. Conclusion

In this mapping of women's cultural contribution to the liberation cause, in the context of the colonies Portugal held in Africa until 1975, I have related the films by Sarah Maldoror to the poetic legacy of women like Alda Lara, Alda do Espírito Santo and Noémia de Sousa. All these women, three poets and one filmmaker, are connected on account of their artistic intervention for the same causes, as well as for their personal relations to the same socio-cultural *milieu*, which at the time was a centre for political activism, connecting Lisbon, Paris, and the independence struggles in the territories colonised by Portugal.

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