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## Identity and Memory in Lusophone Cinema

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## IDENTITY AND MEMORY IN LUSOPHONE CINEMA

The electronic journal *P: Portuguese Cultural Studies* is proud to launch its third issue on Identity and memory in Lusophone cinema, setting forth the debates on Portuguese and Lusophone cultural aspects already begun in its previous issues.

Ever since its beginning, cinema has revealed itself not only as a new artistic form through which new aesthetic levels and perceptions of reality have been reached. It has also contributed to the representation and revision of the historical, political, social, cultural, and individual aspects of that same reality. Furthermore, it has been the space for a reflection upon the subject and his or her position in that reality and therefore individual and collective identity.

As Duncan Petrie correctly affirms in his “Introduction” to *Screening Europe*:

The creation of images is a complex process of making visible, of forcing an audience to look, to question and to reassess the nature of the world around them. (...) Cinema can help us to recognise the complexities of identity, including processes of transformation and change.

(...) It can also interrogate the more subjective and inaccessible realms of identity, such as questions of desire (and the negative and destructive consequences of repressed desire) and fantasy.<sup>1</sup>

Certainly true when taken in a general sense, the role played by cinema as an instrument for the reflection, representation and questioning of reality and identity, becomes even more imperative in the case of countries that have felt the hideous burden of political and social oppression. This is certainly the case of Lusophone countries, different as they are in their particular experiences concerning colonization and political dictatorship.

In their political and historical context of independence and democratisation, Portugal, Brazil and other Lusophone countries such as Angola, Mozambique or Cabo Verde, just to name a few, have been seeking new cinematographic forms through which they come to terms with their past of repression, while revising and questioning it. Frequently sustained by the recollection of individual and collective memories, these forms also contribute to the creation and reinvention of present and future realities.

As it will be clear, the majority of the essays included in this issue address Portuguese cinema in its heterogeneity, showing therefore the increasing interest of critics and scholars in the subject.

While taking a close look at the diversity of periods, styles and productions occurred in Portuguese cinema in the last 40 years, Tiago Baptista addresses the very definition of a Portuguese cinema in “Nationally correct: the invention of Portuguese cinema”. In “A implosão do cinema português: duas faces de uma mesma moeda”, Maria do Rosário Lupi Bello examines the development of

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<sup>1</sup> Duncan Petrie, “Introduction”, *Screening Europe. Image and Identity in Contemporary European Cinema*. Duncan Petrie (ed.). London: BFI Publishing, 1992. p. 1-8.

Portuguese cinema, from the popular cinema of the forties en fifties on up until now, and its undeniable search for new ways of expression, new aesthetics, and new aims. Fausto Cruchinho regards Pedro Costa's films as representative of a deprived (and diasporic) side of Portuguese contemporary society, with its immigrants, drug addicts, and poverty in "Pedro Costa: relações de sangue". In "Decadência, Regeneração e Utopia em João César Monteiro", Paulo Cunha demonstrates how Monteiro's films, and particularly his satirical "pentalogia", are a fundamental middle to reflect not only on Portuguese present reality but also on contemporary society in general. Paulo Rocha's *Os Verdes Anos* is to Paulo Granja not only a milestone in the history of Portuguese Cinema. In "Paulo Rocha's *Os Verdes Anos* (1963) and the origins of the New Portuguese Cinema", Granja defends that *Os Verdes Anos* marked the beginning of the New Portuguese Cinema, being also a good example of the movement's complex relationship with audiences. Building on the premise that cinema is a plastic and rhetorical construction of the image, Isabel Nogueira reflects on the cinematographic image in João César Monteiro's films, in "A imagem cinematográfica em João César Monteiro". In "Estado Novo no plateau: luzes, câmara, acção!" Anabela Oliveira addresses the representation of the Estado Novo in the films and documentaries of some of the most representative filmmakers of the last thirty years of Portuguese cinema. Manuela Ribeiro Sanches offers us a comparative study of the homonymous work *Maison Tropicale* by Manthia Diawara and by Ângela Ferreira. In Ângela Ferreira's and Manthia's Diawara's *Maison Tropicales*, she regards both works as offering "two distinct, albeit complementary ways of excavating into layers of diverse temporalities, narratives, and voices". With "O Riso desdramatizador" Luís Trindade approaches the subversive role of laughter and comedies in the Portuguese films of the 40s and in the ideology of Salazar's repressive regime. Finally, in "O Império como Fetiche no Estado Novo: Feitiço do Império e o Sortilégio Colonial", Patrícia Vieira analyses the ideological construction of the relations between metropolitan Portugal and its overseas territories through the cinematic and political practices of the Estado Novo.

These essays testify beyond any doubt the important place film studies have been acquiring in the intellectual debate of the last decades. Their authors have unquestionably contributed to enhance the theoretical reflection on issues that are essential to the understanding of cinema in our contemporary world, such as the close relation between cinema and (historical, political, social, and cultural) reality and (individual and collective) identity.

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