

From banality to boldness

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This project takes a seemingly banal theme – the tourism film between 1910 and 1980 – and makes it something new and strikingly bold. Can such a cinema be interesting or revelatory? The answer is a resounding ‘yes.’

The Arquivo Nacional das Imagens em Movimento, Sofia Sampaio, Cyril Isnart, Nuno Domingos, Marcos Cardão, Sérgio Bordalo e Sá, and Gonçalo Mota undertook a daunting task: identifying, viewing, contextualizing, and interpreting a vast body of work. They show us that this material matters beyond its intrinsic antiquarian fascination – the cosmic other-worldliness that documentaries of the past can convey –, as they show us things in front of the camera and ways of seeing them that seem utterly strange for all the world, like the moment when you encounter anti-Semitism in an otherwise beloved novel of the 1930s, or sexism in a valued philosophical tract from the eighteenth century that could otherwise have been written yesterday.

We are fortunate that this research team has drawn on a multitude of methods and discourses, from textual questions, such as the films’ form, style, and narration, to the issues of social mobility and postcolonial history that underpin their vision of the world.

The years from 1910 to 1980 of course saw a conservative clerical, military, and state Portuguese culture and society

confront domestic political transitions between and within the Republic (1910–26), the military dictatorship (1926–33), the *Estado Novo* (1933–74), and the *Revolução dos Cravos* (1974) and its immediate aftermath. That period also produced economic transformations, from primary to secondary to tertiary industry; and constitutional ones, from being a major imperial power to a minor postcolonial one. For although Portugal is catalogued alongside Europe’s grand imperial projects, it is often relegated to a lower order of symbolic importance, to a subaltern status among the great powers of its day, one whose faith in its

long-lasting empire outlasted material reality.¹

Lusophone migration over that period was characterized by a flow of people from Portugal to its empire, rather than the other way round, or between the countries it governed.² Part of this project’s value can be seen in Patrícia Ferraz de Matos’ account of Portuguese documentaries’ commensurately lopsided perspective:

Some deal with the creation of structures that would allow the education and evangelization of the African people, while others try to portray its “uses and customs”. Others show evidence of the African people’s work strength in the construction of a promising future. That work is always guided by the “white”, that is, the technical knowledge of the “white” is added to the strength of the African.³

The imbalance of power in general between tourists and their hosts is well known and increasing. World tourism expanded massively over the twentieth century, from the pastime of a privileged few to a sophisticated industry shimmying across social classes, from package deals for workers to poverty tourism for ghoulish sophisticates to luxury getaways for the super-rich.⁴ It has latterly spawned a grow-

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See Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-Identity”, *Luso-Brazilian Review* 39, n° 2 (2002), 9–43; Jeanne M. Penvenne, “Settling Against the Tide: The Layered Contradictions of Twentieth-Century Portuguese Settlement in Mozambique”, in *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen (New York: Routledge, 2005), 79–94; and Vanessa Amaro, “Linguistic Practice, Power and Imagined Worlds: The Case of the Portuguese in Postcolonial Macau”, *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 37, n° 1 (2016), 33–50.

2

Maria I. Baganha, “The Lusophone Migratory System: Patterns and Trends”, *International Migration* 47, n° 3 (2009), 5–20.

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Patrícia Ferraz de Matos, “Images of Africa? Portuguese Films and Documentaries Related to the Former Colonies in Africa (First Half of the 20th Century)”, *Comunicação e Sociedade* 29 (2016), 175–96.

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See Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) and Bianca Freire-Medeiros, *Touring Poverty* (Oxford: Routledge, 2013).

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Examples can be found in such journals as *Tourism Management*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Travel Research*, and *Análisis Turístico*.

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Sofia Sampaio, "Estudar o turismo hoje: Para uma revisão crítica dos estudos de turismo", *Etnográfica* 17, nº 1 (2013), 179.

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See Mário Matos, "Tourism as Networking for a Pan-Fascist Mobilization Before the Second World War", in *Nazi Germany and Southern Europe, 1933-45: Science, Culture and Politics*, ed. Fernando Clara and Cláudia Ninhos (Berlin: Springer, 2016), 38-51.

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See Álvaro Ferreira da Silva, Luciano Amaral, and Pedro Neves, "Business Groups in Portugal in the Estado Novo Period (1930-1974): Family, Power and Structural Change", *Business History* 58, no. 1 (2016), 49-68.

ing discipline of tourism studies, dominated by pro-business, instrumental calculation⁵ and occasionally leavened by a more interesting progressive critique:

O turismo tende a fomentar grandes discussões especulativas – desde polémicas de cariz político (que o veem ou como libertador dos povos e promotor da harmonia universal, ou, no extremo oposto, como destruidor de culturas e criador de desigualdades) até considerações de ordem filosófica ou estética (que tomam o turismo e o turista como metáforas de uma condição humana universalizante). Num e noutro caso é reciclada toda uma retórica que, sob diversas formas (discursos oficiais de promoção turística, publicidade, literatura, cinema), irriga o quotidiano e a

própria academia.⁶

The industry's history encapsulates many of Portuguese society's broader changes. In the run-up to the Second World War, it was part of a pan-fascist transnational plan for tourism to be coordinated across those delightful powers.⁷ The *Estado Novo* was characterized by domestic oligopolies. Their diverse interests incorporated extensive tourism investments at home and abroad, dating from the 1940s.⁸ And as part of the post-War shift to tertiary industries, Timor-Leste, for example, was subject to a Lisbon experiment:

For the first time the Portuguese government made explicit funding allocations for the development of tourism and tourism infrastructure in the Third Development Plan (1968-1973)... During the last years of Portuguese rule tourism started appearing in Timor-Leste, with around 5,000 international visitors in 1972.⁹

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Denis Tolkach, "History and Future of Tourism Development in Timor-Leste", in *Proceedings of the Understanding Timor-Leste 2013 Conference, Liceu Campus, National University of Timor-Lorosa'e (UNTL), Avenida Cidade de Lisboa, Dili, Timor-Leste, July 2013*, ed. Hannah Loney, Antero B. da Silva, Nuno Canas Mendes, Alarico da Costa Ximenes, and Clinton Fernandes (Melbourne: Timor-Leste Studies Association/Swinburne Press, 2014), 49.

While no one would attribute the horrors that followed under Indonesian control to this development, the relative silence of these documentaries about the struggles of Nicolau dos Reis Lobato in Asia, Amílcar Cabral in Africa, and other theorists and revolutionaries engaging the Portuguese empire is in tune with the problem/limitation of industrial documentaries more generally – the kind that celebrate mining, sports, or tourism: they abjure complexity and contradiction.

Luckily, such films occasionally index such tensions; and the topics on which they loudly fall silent can be highlighted by skilled analysts, of the very kind assembled for this project. As we consider the selection they have made of a vast corpus, and the way they have read as well as curated it, we can only be astounded by such able forensic work and theoretical endeavor.

At a time when imperial projects are being undertaken in new ways, and the ugly traces of old imperialism continue to scar daily life, projects like this one give us a trans-historical view of the colonial gaze. They enrich our understanding of how it functioned and what it wrought. Their lessons are of enormous and continued relevance.