



## THE PORTUGUESE COLONIAL PRESS AND THE *ESTADO NOVO*

### A IMPRENSA COLONIAL PORTUGUESA E O ESTADO NOVO

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#### ABSTRACT

This essay discusses the *Boletim Geral das Colónias* (*General Bulletin of the Colonies*), which was renamed and continued to appear as the *Boletim Geral do Ultramar* (*General Bulletin of the Overseas*), as an informative vehicle about the field of art and letters during the Portuguese Colonial Empire. Based on the monthly publication of the section ‘Arts and Letters,’ which began in February 1948, this study explores the sudden integration of a space dedicated to literary and cultural divulgation into such a publication. It furtherly discusses the form in which it was transmitted to the public; the advantages of this type of divulgation within the Portuguese colonial space; the dynamics between center and the peripheries; and, in a wider sense, how this space contributed to the construction of a cultural imaginary about the colonies and about the colonizer.

**KEYWORDS:** General Bulletin of the Colonies/Overseas; literary and cultural divulgation; Portuguese colonial project

#### RESUMO

Neste ensaio proponho discutir o Boletim Geral das Colónias e o Boletim Geral do Ultramar como veículos informativos sobre o campo da arte e das letras durante o Império Colonial Português. Tendo por base a publicação mensal neste Boletim, a partir de Abril de 1945, de uma secção de “Artes e Letras Coloniais,” pretendo averiguar e discutir a súbita integração de um espaço dedicado à divulgação literária e cultural; a forma como esta divulgação é transmitida ao público; as vantagens deste tipo de divulgação no espaço colonial português; a dinâmica entre o centro e as periferias; e, num sentido mais abrangente, como este espaço contribuiu para a construção de um imaginário cultural sobre as colónias e sobre Portugal colonizador.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Boletim Geral das Colónias/Ultramar; divulgação literária e cultural; projecto colonial português

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The presence of a colonial press in Portuguese has a long tradition, mainly since the last third of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, the periodic at stake here distinguishes itself from other colonial press publications since it was officially connected to the State power. In an effort to stimulate its colonial project, the Portuguese State created the *Boletim da Agência Geral das Colónias* (*Bulletin of the General Agency of the Colonies*), whose first issue came out in July 1925. The creation of the *Boletim* results—according to Armando Zuzarte Cortesão, General Agent of the Colonies and the director of the *Boletim*—in an evolution of the colonial idea that has ‘from twenty years until now, influenced in such a way the guidelines to be followed by the colonizers, that the orientation and mainly the processes that are used are today absolutely diverse from what they used to be’ (BOLETIM, July 1925, p. 4). A monthly publication, the *Boletim* acquires several designations throughout time: from 1925 to 1935 is called *Boletim da Agência Geral das Colónias* (*Bulletin of the General Agency of the Colonies*), from 1935 to 1951 *Boletim Geral das Colónias* (*General Bulletin of the Colonies*) and, from 1951 to 1974, *Boletim Geral do Ultramar* (*General Bulletin of the Overseas*). These changes of name reflect the systematic alterations in the colonial policy of the Portuguese State, also reflected in the establishment of the 28 May 1926 Revolution. The *Boletim* became the ‘official organ of Portuguese colonial activity [proposing] to make propaganda out of our colonial patrimony, contributing by all means for its aggrandizement, defence, study of its richness’s and demonstration of the aptitudes and colonizing capacity of the Portuguese people’ (BOLETIM, July 1926, s/p).

If we take into account the cultural, literary and artistic field, one of the first measures used to promote the ‘colonial idea’ in the spirit of the Portuguese was the creation of a Colonial Literary Contest, promoted and initiated by the General Agency of the Colonies, and divulged through its *Boletim*<sup>2</sup>. The use of literature — of a certain nature, it’s true, assured through the attribution of prizes — as a vehicle that conveys a specific colonialist ideology intended to be inculcated in the Portuguese population, was mainly accomplished through this annual contest created in 1926, having lasted until 1968. Nonetheless, the investment of the government didn’t stop there.

The Portuguese *Estado Novo* continues to invest in its colonial press, emphasizing more and more art and literature as a way to keep its colonial Empire untouched, at a moment when, after the Second World War, the process of decolonization began across other European Empires. Almost twenty years after the beginning of the Colonial Literary Contest, in April 1945 (issue 238), the *Boletim Geral das Colónias* starts publishing a space titled ‘Artes e Letras Coloniais’ (‘Colonial Arts and Letters’). The responsible for this section was Augusto da Costa, a writer and researcher of Portuguese literature and culture. According to Augusto da Costa, the introduction in the *Boletim* of a rubric dedicated to arts and letters was something to be praised.

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2 On the Colonial Literature Contest, see Noa 2002 and Sousa 2015.

The reason for this was evident:

more books are being published, both of fiction as of study, having as a picture or finality landscapes or customs, the policy or the economy of our overseas lands, and such works deserve to be mentioned, in higher or lower scale, in a publication which is intended to give a regular account of our colonial life. (BOLETIM, april 1945, p. 94)

During the several years that he wrote the ‘Crónica Colonial’ (‘Colonial Chronicle’), colonial culture was the theme which was given importance and which subsequently, according to Augusto da Costa, should not be forgotten by a country that considers its colonies to be a missionary vocation.

In fact, colonial culture was forgotten during the days after the 25th of April 1974 revolution, which brought with it the independence of the Portuguese colonies and the end of the colonial era. Examining the way in which artistic culture in general and literature in particular were instrumentalized by the colonial project during the *Estado Novo* thus becomes a necessity in the sense of understanding the mechanisms by means of which Portugal imposed its colonial domination in Africa. That interest transcends the purely historical and resonates in contemporary Portuguese society, for instance, in novels that express a longing for the colonial past. Examples of such resonance would be the case of novels such as Manuel Arouca’s *Deixei o meu Coração em África* (2005), Júlio de Magalhães’ *Os Retornados* (2008), Tiago Rebelo’s *O Último Ano em Luanda* (2008) and Manuel Acácio’s *A Balada do Ultramar* (2009), which focus on the colonial past and stage several aspects of lusotropicalism,<sup>3</sup> a doctrine adopted in the 1950s to support a regime increasingly fought against from within and questioned by international organisations. The use of artistic culture was indeed important in the sense of consolidating support in the political and economic domains during the colonization process. Today understanding how creative work was used in the service of the State offers a unique window not only into the historical colonial process but also into its variant neo- or postcolonial impacts in contemporary society.

An analysis of the section ‘Artes e Letras Coloniais’ allows us to discuss the importance of a space dedicated to the literary and cultural divulgation of the *Boletim Geral das Colónias (Ultramar)* in the overall colonial project and to evaluate the way in which this divulgation was conveyed to the public. It also facilitates an understanding of the advantages of this type of propagandistic dissemination in the Portuguese colonial space as well as of the dynamics between center and periphery. Lastly, and in a broader framework, we can develop a better sense of how this space contributed to the construction of a cultural imaginary about the colonies and colonizer in Portugal.

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on lusotropicalism see, for example, Castelo 1998, and, Anderson, Roque, Santos (eds.) 2019.

Turning to Augusto da Costa and his first comment about the insertion of the column ‘Artes e Letras Colonias’ in the *Boletim*, it’s worth noting the complaint about the general Portuguese tendency not only to copy foreign literature but also to buy it and consume it. This observation immediately reveals the utilitarian sense of literature as a form of construction of a national identity that has the colonizing mission as its central core. According to him, there is ‘a fever [in Portugal] of foreign literatures, in often malicious translations’ (BOLETIM, april 1945, p. 95). He does not, nonetheless, refer what he means by a ‘malicious translation.’ This being the case, ‘it should not be too much to ask the same audience to read Portuguese literature of colonial themes’ (BOLETIM, april 1945, p. 95). His critique continues, focusing on a presupposed complacent spirit of the Portuguese:

being technical works—politics, administration or economy—they should be introduced to the knowledge of the new generations, who in the superior schools search for the ways of their future, opening to them more shining perspectives—from the individual point of view, and more useful from the national point of view—than a simple job of officer in the secretariat of Terreiro do Paço, with hours to spare to spend at the Rossio coffee shops. (BOLETIM, april 1945, p. 95)

In any case, it is absolutely urgent and necessary that these works are not consigned to the shelves of forgotten books or are never read, since they ‘bring a valuable contribution to the formation of a Portuguese imperial mentality’ (BOLETIM, april 1945, p. 95). Augusto da Costa is thus concerned with what is defined as colonialist literature, i.e., “that which was specifically concerned with colonial expansion. (...) it was literature written by and for colonizing Europeans about non-Europeans lands dominated by them. It embodied the imperialist point of view” (BOEHMER, 1988, p. 16). It was also “informed by theories concerning the superiority of European culture and the rightness of the Empire. Its distinctive stereotyped language was geared to mediating the white man’s relationship with colonized peoples” (BOEHMER, 1988, p. 16). Augusto da Costa does not seem so attentive to colonial literature, or better said, the part of colonial literature written by creoles and indigenes, if by colonial literature we understand the literature that deals “with the colonial perceptions and experience, written mainly by metropolitans, but also by creoles and indigenes, during colonial times. Controversially perhaps, colonial literature therefore includes literature written in [Portugal] as well as in the rest of the Empire during the colonial period” (BOEHMER, 1988, p. 15).

In a phase that Augusto da Costa classifies as a “rebirth of letters and arts” in Portugal, it is important that the citizens of the country do not confuse values. The question that he poses is of essential importance for our study, in that it helps to understand the core of the issue and to evaluate the decision to insert a column dedicated to arts and letters in the *Boletim Geral das Colónias*: ‘to what extent does that rebirth of the arts and letters contribute to the formation of a truly national culture?’ (BOLETIM, april 1945, p. 95). The point here is to separate the wheat from the chaff in literary terms, or even better, to fill the bag with the same type of cereal.

Augusto da Costa's answer will help to clarify my last comment:

Books are not always *masterpieces*; and the masterpieces — even when they can be called that — do not always correspond to the needs of the national culture. Not for the individuals, not for the peoples, the culture constitutes an end in itself; it is a means to the service of an end, a subordinated element, therefore, a finality that surpasses it, which is the spiritual elevation of the individuals and, through it, the valorisation of the conscience of the peoples. It is up to writers to write works that increase the patrimony of the national culture; it is up to the critic to appreciate them; it is up to the press — journal or newspaper — to publicize them. (BOLETIM, april 1945, p. 95-96)

It is interesting to discover that the first work that Augusto da Costa chooses to speak about is a thesis (and not a novel or a book of poetry) and that the intention of this choice is indeed not innocent. We are at the aftermath of Second World War, and we can infer from da Costa's words that literature is only a means to reach other ends. The topic of the chosen thesis is the *Colonização Étnica da África Portuguesa (Ethnic Colonization of Portuguese Africa)*, presented at the II Congress of the National Union, in 1944, by Vicente Ferreira, engineer and colonialist. In the indicated thesis, the author argues that, due to world circumstances, it is of extreme necessity to relocate the surplus of the metropolitan population in Africa. At stake are not only economic and social interests but, mainly, political. Augusto da Costa seizes the opportunity to emphasize that what is at stake is not to know if the world of tomorrow will be more democratic or totalitarian, but 'the defence of some against the hegemony of other peoples, that defence takes the active form of attack or the passive form of resistance' (BOLETIM, april 1945, p. 97). It is obvious, that he does not want to see the end of Portuguese hegemony in the world. For da Costa what is important is to take away the claws of some hegemonic countries in order that Portugal does not lose its hegemony and power in its own African colonies. Please note Augusto da Costa's words:

In the scheme of principles, we desire that from the war the right of the peoples to dispose freely of their destinies become victorious, in collaboration yes but not with the subordination to the strongest or richest peoples; in the scheme of realities, we should caution each time better what belongs to us; and the best way, for a colonial people, of cautioning what belongs to them is to populate its territories and develop its economic potential to ensure, on one hand, the elevation of its level of life and, on the other hand, to not offer stimulus to the greed of others, under easy pretext of incapacity of auto-administrate itself. (BOLETIM, april 1945, p. 97)

There is an urgency of sending white families to Africa in order to solve one of the biggest problems of Portuguese colonization — and the one that is the cause of the lack of respect and almost contempt from other countries: namely, economic development. It is only in this way that Portugal will save itself from the attempts 'of appropriation by foreign elements' (BOLETIM, april 1945, p. 101). Succinctly put, in this first column on arts and letters, the author speaks about almost everything except art, going on for several pages in an enunciation

(or speculation) concerning the several ways and most favourable processes for an effective colonization by the Portuguese of their African territories.

The ‘Artes e Letras Coloniais’ article of June 1945 is interesting in the sense that it sheds some light on the cultural and literary dynamics between the metropolis and its colonies. Augusto da Costa mentions several books, all of them on a variety of subjects, from poetry to administration. Nevertheless, they are also all ‘oriented in the same imperial sense, animated by the same desire of bringing together the Portuguese people of their overseas empire’ (BOLETIM, june 1945, p. 306-307). Augusto da Costa decides to give priority to José Osório de Oliveira’s brochure on the poetry of Cape Verde titled *Poesia de Cabo Verde (Poetry of Cape Verde)*. Augusto da Costa justifies that decision with the fact that, while the people cannot live without administration, they also cannot live without the enchantment of poetry. He then asks if there is such a thing as a Cape-Verdean literature. Quoting Osório de Oliveira, there is in Cape Verde ‘a humanistic knowledge and a fondness for the fine arts that isolation was not able to erase; rather it seems to have stimulated them’ (BOLETIM, june 1945, p. 308).

However, the core question remains the following: ‘Do we know, in the Metropolis, the literature of Cape Verde?’ (BOLETIM, june 1945, p. 308). Apparently, and according to the lament of Augusto da Costa, the answer is no. In the critic’s words, this ‘is a very Portuguese flaw — mainly the modern Portuguese, who by force of wanting to belong to their time, forgets that which belongs, before anything else to his Motherland — it is a very generalized flaw between us knowing more what’s foreign than what is national’ (BOLETIM, june 1945, p. 308). Regarding the Portuguese insensibility for what is ‘national of the colonies,’ he provides the example of ‘morna,’ which besides dominating ‘by music and lyrics, all the other artistic popular manifestations of the creole people is less known in Portugal than the Brazilian samba or the American *swing*’ (BOLETIM, june 1945, p. 308). The problem of this Portuguese ‘ignorance’ is what creates this gap, or even a void, in the relations between the Portuguese and the supposedly ‘also Portuguese’ inhabitants of the colonies. If one intends an effective colonization that justifies the grandeur of the Empire and keeps it away from foreign claws, a cultural exchange is required that makes all the citizens spread across the different colonies feel as part of the same national unity. Quoting Osório de Oliveira, ‘the Cape Verdeans need to feel that in the country to which they belong, or better: in the nation that they are part of, that they love and serve, even or mainly when they do poetry, there are hearts capable of understanding their nostalgic sobs and their shouting of anxiety’ (BOLETIM, june 1945, p. 308).

Changing colony, this time to the notes of General Henrique de Carvalho about Guinea, Augusto da Costa is once again peremptory in relation to the attitude of the Portuguese. He mentions that ‘the Portuguese resident of Lisbon knows very well that he possesses overseas territories, but barely knows where they are located and how much they are worth it. It would not be so bad, therefore, that he peruses books like this one, infinitely more beneficial for his culture and patriotism than the brochures of foreign propaganda and the coffee-shop conversations’

(BOLETIM, june 1945, p. 309). These types of books, therefore, can provide the Portuguese citizen a feeling of admiration for everything that his heroic ancestors did throughout that ‘world that the Portuguese created<sup>4</sup>’ (BOLETIM, june 1945, p. 309), and at the same time urge upon him the necessity of not losing the overseas patrimony.

Augusto da Costa ends his column, once more, speaking more about politics than books, or maybe better, about the politics of the books. And once more he criticizes the Portuguese people. According to him, there exist today a *plan*, a *course* and a *command* in Portuguese colonial policy. These are ‘in the conscience and in the intelligence of the governors; are they also in the intelligence and conscience of the governed?’, he asks. The answer is that

we would lie if we said that the Nation, as a whole, doesn’t vibrate in face of the offenses made by third parties to our historic rights: but, in this case, sensibility intervenes more than reason (without, evidently, incompatibility between both); now, we need to dislocate the question from the level of sensibility to the level of intelligence, completing the instinctive reasons of one by the rationalized reasons of the other. It is not enough to react against the offenses made to our rights; it is necessary that we have a clear conscience of those rights and the intelligence of the necessary means to its preservation. In other words: a retrospective patrimony is not enough, we need rather a *prospective* patrimony, one that sees our overseas domains more at the level of the future than at the level of the past. (BOLETIM, june 1945, p. 311-312)

In February 1948 in issue 272, Augusto da Costa performs a critical recension — that he calls ‘notation’ — of Gastão de Sousa Dias’ book, *Como Serpa Pinto Atravessou a África*. The reasoning behind the choice of this book comes not only from the fact that the editor had sent him a copy, but ‘because all the pretexts should be availed to praise the publication of books like this one, live lessons of patriotism, faithful mirrors of the Portuguese heroism at the service of the Motherland’ (BOLETIM, february 1948, p. 52). It is noteworthy that Augusto da Costa confesses to worrying much more about the substance of the works than with the style of the authors. He points out: ‘I mean: taking into account to the main objective of the works, the possible slips that the authors reveal in their style is of little importance, so much more because the purpose of the authors is not to write pieces of art, but only to divulge some of the most glorious pages of our colonial eposée’ (BOLETIM, february 1948, p. 53). Regarding style he states that it is clear, simple and direct, ‘as it is convenient to the nature of the narrative and the public to whom its destined’ (BOLETIM, february 1948, p. 53). Costa does not spend much time on any kind of analysis of Gastão de Sousa Dias’ book; his main concern is essentially one of a literary propagandist whose mission is to change the mentality and the reading and writing habits in colonial Portugal. He follows with a lament: ‘How many books could be written for

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<sup>4</sup> Note here the influence of Gilberto Freyre who published two of his works considered “foundational” of lusotropicalism before the 1950’s: *Casa Grande & Senzala* in 1933 and *O mundo que o português criou (aspectos das relações sociais e de cultura do Brasil com Portugal e as colónias portuguesas)* in 1940.

the youth of the schools, who deceive their necessities with despicable detective stories, if we searched the adventurous and romantic depth in our colonial history, so rich and so beautiful' (BOLETIM, february 1948, p. 54). After all, Portuguese colonial history is a bottomless pit of 'themes capable of dazzling the imagination of our boys and of channelling their interest to colonial life' (BOLETIM, february 1948, p. 54). From the scientific exploration of Brazil to the bellicose feats in which Mouzinho 'features as an invincible semi-god' (BOLETIM, february 1948, p. 54), Portuguese writers seem to have more fabric than sleeves in this Portugal that intends to reign in Africa. Augusto da Costa proceeds with the complaint:

It is a pity, actually, to verify that a country that possesses an unequalled colonial history, and that needs by all means to channel its excessive population to its overseas domains, is not able to create a literature that knows how to take advantage of that gold lode, in which the marvellous offers itself so spontaneously to the vibrant hands that want and know how to mould it. (BOLETIM, february 1948, p. 54)

The intention, therefore, is once more, as with the Colonial Literature Contest, to encourage the Portuguese people to immigrate to Africa and to embrace with their bodies and souls the Portuguese colonial project.

The already much debated problem, which apparently lacks a solution, has to do with the disinterest for that kind of book that, according to Costa, 'should be in the hands of all the boys' (BOLETIM, February 1948, p. 55). Obviously, the girls are not mentioned, but they are arguably included in the designation 'new generations', to whom it should be explained 'who were the heroes of our past, both distant and immediate', so that in the future complete ignorance will not prevail, since 'the colonial culture elevates itself on a daily basis, enriching the cultural patrimony of the Nation' (BOLETIM, february 1948, p. 55).

It is worth observing that Augusto Costa refers, with comparative intentions, to what is happening in Guinea. Alluding to Commandant Sarmiento Rodrigues, Guinea's governor, he states that in this colonial space, suddenly there was a concern with "the things of the spirit" and that they have started to study its environment. The *Boletim Cultural (Cultural Bulletin)* produced in Guinea, 'having started by being a magazine of colonial culture, [...] matches with the best that is edited around the world' (BOLETIM, february 1948, p. 56). Augusto da Costa asks: 'why don't they do as much, why don't our other colonies and overseas provinces follow the example of Guinea?' (BOLETIM, february 1948, p. 56).

The answer is perhaps the emptiness, the silence, and Costa's struggle continues. His column of 'Artes e Letras Coloniais' is every month oriented in the same imperial sense, animated by the same desire of bringing Portuguese citizens closer to the overseas Empire to which they belong and to which they seem oblivious.

In the year of 1951, 'a revision of the Constitution substituted the imperial idea typical

from the period between the two World Wars, stated in the Colonial Act, by an assimilationist conception, where the colonies transformed themselves in ‘overseas provinces’, forming with the metropolis a united nation’ (ALEXANDRE, 2000, p. 195). In August of that same year, in the issue 314, the *Boletim* changes its name once again to *Boletim Geral do Ultramar* (*General Bulletin of the Overseas*). At the same time, the column ‘Artes e Letras Coloniais’ is newly designated ‘Artes e Letras do Ultramar’ (‘Overseas Arts and Letters’). In 1950, in the issue 305, this column starts to be signed by António Alberto de Andrade, an historian and university professor. Two aspects deserve to be highlighted in relation to his debut. First of all, the first book that António Alberto Andrade chooses to review is the *Documentação para a História das Missões do Padroado Português do Oriente*, collected and annotated by António da Silva Rego. The choice of this type of works does not undergo a change other than the change of the name of who is now in charge of this mission. Given his career as an historian, this choice does not come as a surprise. Moreover, the choice of vocabulary in the appreciation of this book remains biased in the sense of preserving the importance of the Empire. Words such as ‘patriotic’, ‘motherland glories’, ‘epopee’ (BOLETIM, november 1950, p. 43) have the flavour of the centuries of the Discoveries. Secondly, it is worth mentioning that António Alberto de Andrade ends this column with praise for the benefits that result from the publications of scientific studies – even though this space is titled ‘arts and letters’ — and evokes one in particular. According to him, the work entitled *Medições de inteligência de algumas tribos indígenas da Zambézia e do Niassa (Moçambique)* ‘is one of those that should be divulged, at least at the universities, national and foreign, that study psychology. It inserts a curious observation about the reaction to several tests, of individuals of black race, which will contribute a lot to the most complete knowledge of the African psyche’ (BOLETIM, november 1950, p. 48).

In the first ‘Artes e Letras Coloniais’ column, António Alberto de Andrade decides to speak about poetry and music. If the reaction to what is produced in foreign countries had already been notorious in Augusto da Costa’s reviews, here the route continues the same. Despite proclaiming that ‘the cultural life in several of our overseas possessions is a tangible reality’, although modest, the author emphasizes that this ‘modesty of its achievements stands out when we compare it, for example, with the intellectual activity of the Belgian Congo’ (BOLETIM, august 1951, p. 99). And he proceeds by praising the work done by the African Union of Arts and Letters, founded in 1946 in Elisabethville. According to António de Andrade, this Union

is able to be the coordinator of the letters and arts of the Belgian Congo, providing to the white people, the spiritual and artistic environment to which they were accustomed to in the white continent, at the same time that it creates a richer sensibility amongst the blacks, making them appreciate better and develop harmonically their art, with new acquisitions provided by the white art. (BOLETIM, august 1951, p. 100)

The exchange here, if we can call it that, has only one direction, and it presupposes the superiority of white art.

Despite lamenting that in the overseas provinces there's 'no similar institution which develops such intense activity', he comments on the existence of 'a series of good-will nuclei' (BOLETIM, august 1951, p. 100). This explains the success of, and the award of the prize 'Cidade de Paris' ('City of Paris') to, the Mozambican pianist (or better, Portuguese, born in Mozambique), Sequeira Costa, in the International Contest Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud.

Regarding the poetry of the overseas provinces, he affirms that 'without reaching a common characteristic, not even within each one of them, they do manifest the shared generic trait of being small lyric poems, that the literary journals or the small volumes bring to us once in a while' (BOLETIM, august 1951, p. 100-101). In his perspective, the poetry of the overseas provinces is still in the crib of childhood, not touching 'the vigorous conscience of adulthood, the perfection of rhythm, the rapture of forms or the poetic perfume of the compositions by Camões, João de Deus, Augusto Gil, António Nobre, Florbela Espanca, Fernando Pessoa' (BOLETIM, august 1951, p. 101). He also refers to the poetry of Fonseca do Amaral, Manuel Aranda, Rui de Noronha, Noémia de Sousa and Tomás Vieira da Cruz. The appreciation of these 'overseas' names is done in a perceptive way: on the one hand, valuing it; on the other, devaluing it, not without a tone of irony. In António Alberto de Andrade's words:

The scenery is exuberant, the life of the jungle or of the African city has dramatic expression and awakens such strong sensations as European, Asian or American life. The environment, while it is not impregnated with artistic effluvia that usually are an important part in the poetic elaboration, is what can prevent the blooming of the true poets. In the felicitous phrase of Rabindranath Tagore, it keeps carelessly paying with bracelets, instead of filling the ewer and returning home.... (BOLETIM, august 1951, p. 101)

He ends in an abrupt way, stating that there is hope, and then switching to another completely different subject (one that makes total sense in a column of arts and letters...): the history of overseas medicine, the importance of which, needless to say, is great and implicitly superior to the topic of humanities.

The following month, António Alberto de Andrade dedicates himself to making a list of the publications of the General Agency of the Overseas Provinces, emphasizing the monthly publication of the *Boletim* which 'is already, and it will be mainly in the future, with the passing of years, the best repository of the most varied subjects of interest to the Overseas, either under the form of studies or the facet of short news' (BOLETIM, september-october 1951, p. 112).

Jumping ahead a few years, we find praise for a Mozambican painter, António Manuel Calçada Bastos Aires, on his early death at age twenty-two. António Alberto de Andrade states that 'Mozambique can be proud of António Aires, who knew how to leave a valuable contribution for the artistic aggrandizement of his beautiful land' (BOLETIM, august 1953, p. 60).

This is a fascinating chronicle in the sense that Andrade dedicates several pages

to a ‘small booklet’ on the subject of colonial literature that Rodrigues Júnior, arguably the most prolific colonial writer who lived in Mozambique, sent him. Andrade asserts that to Rodrigues Júnior it is basic — and nobody will contest it — that ‘one can only produce colonial literature knowing well the black man’s soul and the conditions in which he lives’ (BOLETIM, august 1953, p. 61). Andrade admits that the knowledge of *visu* is essential to write this type of literature, which is certainly a difficult task, but one, which nonetheless should not prevent those who have never set foot in Africa from writing. He claims: ‘also from far away we will be able to attain a more or less perfect knowledge of the idiosyncrasy of the non-white’ (BOLETIM, august 1953, p. 60). He tries mainly to salvage the role of the literary critic who, according to his view, ‘maybe is the one, nevertheless, who resents less the lack of direct knowledge, when he doesn’t want to dive into details of harder reach’ (BOLETIM, august 1953, p. 61). Andrade proceeds, ‘Africa is not as hermetic today that we don’t know about the psychology of its people, its folklore, that we ignore his conditions of life. There’s much yet to be revealed. But the general features are defined’ (BOLETIM, august 1953, p. 61).

And if he excuses, on one hand, the role of the literary critic, he attacks, on the other, the role of every Portuguese who, ‘in the present moment, has the obligation of knowing the overseas provinces as he knows the metropolitan provinces. If he cannot visit them, he should look to inform himself with those who have walked all over with seeing eyes, and only then he can speak, write or criticize’ (BOLETIM, august 1953, p. 61). There is hope that the day ‘will come in which direct observation will be possible for the totality of those who need to speak or write about the Overseas’ (BOLETIM, august 1953, p. 61). This is one of the great objectives of the present policy. It is noticeable by the literary topics chosen by Augusto da Costa and Alberto de Andrade that a change in perspective has occurred, linked nevertheless to the *Estado Novo*’s new approach towards its colonies. The notion of colonial literature appears to have expanded with Andrade to include the colonial perceptions and experience, written mainly by metropolitans, but also by creoles and indigenes.

Alberto de Andrade further states that, despite being censured, the money that the Overseas minister, Sarmiento Rodrigues, has been spending on cultural exchange has been a blessing. This money has facilitated ‘personal trips in both directions — journalists, — men of science, art technicians, university professors, boys and girls of the Portuguese Youth’ (BOLETIM, august 1953, p. 62). According to Andrade, ‘only in this way could a conscience of national unity generalize itself, one which will end racial differences, even though the rivalries that in the Metropolis also happen could persist, from Province to Province’ (BOLETIM, august 1953, p. 62). This is a Rodrigues Júnior who, projecting an ideal government, tries to use all possible means to justify the Portuguese presence in Africa. Availing himself of historian Yves Léonard’s words, ‘it was, besides anything else, to establish the tone of feelings of unity and fraternity that should bring together all Portuguese from different components of the Empire’

(LÉONARD, 1999, p. 34). For such a purpose, the General Agency of the Overseas Provinces had as criteria the ‘search in the Metropole for those who could write about colonial problems, editing their books’ (BOLETIM, august 1953, p. 62). The Agency should publish books of overseas writers, ‘meaning, by that, writers that live or have lived the Overseas’ (BOLETIM, august 1953, p. 63). Complying with a desire apparently formulated by Rodrigues Júnior, the Agency has been ‘stimulating writers with literary prizes’ which, however, ‘will never be considered a reward of their work, nor even a direct allowance to support the expenses of the edition’ (BOLETIM, august 1953, p. 63-64). In a third section of this long column, António Alberto de Andrade reflects on the *negritude* movement, a new movement, he tells us, that ‘goes around the world, [...], of a coming to consciousness, an awakening’ (BOLETIM, august 1953, p. 64). After stating the obvious differences between blacks and whites, such as the inherent psychology of the first, he affirms that ‘the inferiority of the blacks, as men specifically, never found an auspicious environment in our ideas of colonization’ (BOLETIM, august 1953, p. 65). As such, the literary movement to which Andrade refers would not embody an intention to react against the Portuguese way of colonizing. Saying the opposite, would be to go against the new colonial policies. He mentions the notebook *Poesia negra de expressão portuguesa* and ends with a vain hope:

We hope that the movement proceeds with its program, setting aside the ‘political factions and patriotisms of the ‘mal du poète’, but without forgetting that the black person of Portuguese Africa is truly the new Portuguese, and that circumstance will bring him new particular features that will distinguish him from the foreigners, allowing the pride of being Portuguese to emerge. (BOLETIM, august 1953, p. 66)

We now come to 1953, the year in which the Organic Law of the Overseas is enacted. This law imposes unity between the metropolis and the overseas provinces. The Status of the Indigenous People, ‘who in practice took on Portuguese citizenship among the majority of the African population’ (ALEXANDRE, 2000, p. 195), is eliminated in São Tomé e Príncipe and Timor, but continues ruling in Angola, Guinea and Mozambique. According to Valentim Alexandre, ‘from that situation only the “assimilated” escaped — those to whom integration in the forms of lives and values of European civilization were expressly recognized — ones who were no more than an infamous minority (0,8% in 1961, when the Status was finally abolished)’ (ALEXANDRE, 2000, p. 195). In 1954, a new Statute of the Indigenous of the Provinces of Guinea, Angola and Mozambique is enacted. According to Yves Léonard, ‘theoretically, this had as an ultimate goal to favour, by stages, the total assimilation and the achievement of Portuguese citizenship’ (LÉONARD, 1999, p. 37). The historian states further that in the second article of this Statute the indigenous were defined as ‘those individuals of black race, or their descendants, who, having been born and lived habitually in Guinea, Angola, or Mozambique, still did not possess the education and the personal and social habits considered necessary to the integral application of the public and private rights of Portuguese citizens’ (LÉONARD, 1999, p. 37).

In 1961, the artistic situation still does seem to have changed in relation to the inaugural column of 'Artes e Letras Coloniais/Ultramarinas.' António Alberto de Andrade laments that 'Africa, land of life and colour, still [hasn't seduced] enough poets, in a way to inspire in them the great poem that it deserves' (BOLETIM, january-february 1961, p. 283). He praises, nonetheless, the poet António Sousa Freita who collected a small volume of some poems inspired by the theme of Africa. The fact, more than probable, that the poet had never set foot in Africa stands out. But, precisely because of that fact, the critic declares, the poet's effort 'is laudable, by trying to feel the strong life that throbs in that portion of Portuguese land' (BOLETIM, january-february 1961, p. 284). Maybe it is obvious that the critic considers the best poems of the above-mentioned poet to be those of historic features that sing the deeds of Infant Dom Henrique, Bartolomeu Dias, Vasco da Gama, Honório Barreto, and so forth.

If we take into account the efforts of the General Agency of the Colonies/Overseas in functioning as an encouraging medium of the literary, cultural and artistic field in Portugal — both through the launching of the Contest of Colonial Literature in 1926 and the launching of a section of "Artes e Letras Coloniais/Ultramarinas" in 1945 — we can say that those efforts, in a restricted sense, were not in vain. Proof of that is the quantity of books about colonial themes printed and sponsored by the Agency. As Francisco Noa states,

The number of editions and reeditions of works of an author such as Eduardo Paixão, for example, proves that, in particular in the ex-colony, in that fringe of much less than 10% of literates which included Portuguese settled and assimilated and schooled Mozambicans (few), colonial literature, in particular, the colonial novel, had an enormous circulation. (NOA, 2002, p. 20)

It is also necessary to hold in consideration that this type of initiative did not limit itself to Portugal; it is included in an ampler system of European colonization of African territories<sup>5</sup>. Ideas and strategies were shared, borrowed, and circulated among the different Empires during their phase of intense Imperial expansion. In reality, Portugal was on the tail of the other colonial empires in relation to its cultural project.

If we take into account the extensive period from the 1920s to the '60s, the support of the public seems to fall short of desired expectations. This space of literary and artistic criticism, which intended to emphasize, reinforce and invigorate legitimizing discourses of the Portuguese presence in Africa, ends up being a space essentially of the voicing of frustrations. This is obvious when one observes the usually disappointed tone of the critics writing the monthly column, a tone expressing their ill-fated attempt to 'open the eyes' of the Portuguese audience to the national works that seem to excite much less interest than the foreign ones. The admonishing tone, together with the tone of national glorification and coloniality, are characteristic of the way in which this column is written and transmitted to the readers of the *Boletim*. In that sense, the

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<sup>5</sup> On other imperial literatures and their application on the colonial context see, for instance, Boehmer 1998; Beekman 1988; Warmbold 1989.

reaction of the public does not correspond to the committed effort of the authors of the column ‘Artes e Letras Coloniais/Ultramarinas.’ That patriotic stimulus, both from the State and its loyal followers, fails when confronted with a population whose majority is alienated from the African colonial question and, consequently, more interested in the European cultural perspective.

Even though there had been an attempt to promote a literary and cultural exchange between the Metropolis and its colonies by some of the *Estado Novo* ideologists, this turned out to be a frustrated one. Obviously, the supposedly cultural superiority of the center could not be called into question, and perhaps, a larger exchange was impaired by that reason. The cultural dynamic could never be satisfactory if there was a discourse that legitimized the hegemonic presence of the Portuguese. Francisco Noa’s words help us to understand other justifications such as illiteracy that the critic attributes to Mozambicans – and here we can extend that to the colonial population in general. Illiteracy, of course, was also equally pernicious among the Portuguese, but more so was the general ignorance and rejection of art in Portugal:

If in relation to the Mozambicans, the ignorance can be explained by the fact that, in the period that this literature was mostly produced and circulated (1930-1974), the population was illiterate, on what concerns the Portuguese [...] the main recipient of this literature, [...] it becomes revealing both the ignorance and the process of rejection that persisted. (NOA, 2002, p. 20)

The works that are published — the books which are mentioned and valued, a large number of which cannot even be classified as ‘literature’ — are usually books that engage in propaganda for the Empire and not in its critique. Thus it is not surprising that the signs of such efforts are still visible in the Portuguese cultural imaginary today: the glory of the Discoveries, the idea of the differentiation between the black population of Portuguese Africa and those of other regions, and, as a consequence, the difference between Portuguese colonization and the other European Empires. All of these ideologemes are part of today’s Portugal that titles itself as ‘post-colonial.’ Although the commitment of the agents of the State in promoting reading, circulation and transmission of art and culture might have resulted in something positive — as it would have been in the case of respect and appreciation of the *other’s* culture — in reality the imperial ideology of this type of works is antithetical to literary and cultural equality. When we read the section ‘Colonial/Overseas Arts and Letters,’ we verify that the colonial discourse inlaid within it is overlaid with several specific political goals: culturally unifying the population; winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of the colonized populations; and implementing a cultural norm to be followed. The articles of Augusto Costa and António Alberto de Andrade show the instrumentalization by the State of the cultural institutions and apparatuses of the artistic community both in the metropolis and in the colonies.

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