

## **ENTRE MEMÓRIAS SILENCIADAS BY UNGULANI BA KA KHOSA AND VIRGEM MARGARIDA BY LICINIO DE AZEVEDO: SPACES AND MEMORIES**

Teresa Manjate

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present article has as object to study two narratives: *Between Silent Memories* by Ungulani ba ka Khosa (novel) and *Virgin Margarida* de Licinio de Azevedo (fiction film). The approximation of the two works is suggested by the thematic exploration – the process of “re-education” of a fringe of society that is held by institutions of power as marginal or diverted from the ideals of the new nation in fields far from the cities. It is intended, in a comparative perspective, to reflect on the two narratives, from the analysis of spaces – topoanalysis – relating this category of narrative to memory: between individual and collective ones.

### **KEYWORDS**

Re-education camps; spaces; memories; imaginary

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## **ENTRE MEMÓRIAS SILENCIADAS DE UNGULANI BA KA KHOSA E VIRGEM MARGARIDA DE LICINIO DE AZEVEDO: ESPAÇOS E MEMÓRIAS**

### **RESUMO**

O presente artigo tem como objecto de estudo duas narrativas: *Entre memórias silenciadas* de Ungulani ba ka Khosa (romance) e *Virgem Margarida* de Licinio de Azevedo (filme de ficção). A aproximação das duas obras é sugerida pela exploração temática – o processo de “reeducação” de uma franja da sociedade que é tida pelas instituições de poder como marginal ou desviada dos ideais da nova nação, em campos afastados das cidades. Pretende-se, numa perspectiva comparada, reflectir sobre as duas narrativas, a partir da análise dos espaços – topoanálise – relacionando esta categoria da narrativa com a memória: entre a individual e a colectiva.

### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Campos de reeducação; espaços; imaginário, memórias

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This article aims at analysing two narratives: *Entre memórias silenciadas* by Ungulani ba ka Khosa (novel) and *Virgem Margarida* by Licinio de Azevedo (fiction film). The theme of the re-education of a social group, which is present in both oeuvres, allows us to look at them in a comparative manner. The process of “re-education”, in isolated

camps far from the country's cities, of a particular social group seen by the institutions of power as marginal or diverted from the ideals of the new nation is analysed in this paper. It is intended, from a comparative perspective, to reflect about the two narratives, using space analysis – topoanalysis – which links these types of narrative to memory: between individual and collective memories, processes of recognition and inscription of life experiences in Mozambique – forgotten or silenced – aiming to bring about a proposal for debate on social and cultural aspects widely represented in the oeuvres.

The oeuvres under study are independent texts, but in both cases it is possible to notice a deep connection with two antecedent texts. *Virgem Margarida* (2012) follows the documentary *A última prostituta* (1999), by the same cinematographer, Licínio de Azevedo, and *Entre memórias silenciadas* (2013) seems to be closely linked to *No reino dos abutres* (2002), by the same author, Ungulani ba ka Khosa.

Our comparison is based on the theme explored by both works, namely the process of citizens' re-education conducted by the post-independence institutions of power, because these citizens were a reflection of the decadent, colonial and capitalist society, who demonstrated behaviour that was incompatible with the ideals of the new Mozambican nation.

In 1974, *Tempo*, a nationwide magazine, one of the most emblematic and systematic periodicals of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s documents a dynamic discussion around the figure of the prostitute, calling for different visions between benevolent and protective: representing them as vulnerable and exploited women, as victims of the capitalist-colonial regime or incriminating them, showing them as alienated figures to be rejected, transformed or recovered for full integration in the society. For example, Albino Magaia signs a text entitled “Prostituição – tráfico de sexo mata fome” [Prostitution – sex trafficking kills hunger], adding that “more than 75.000 women sell their body in Lourenço Marques” (1974, p. 21). In this article, prostitutes are seen as victims of a system that gave them no survival alternatives. Other articles, however, present a condemnatory view, defending the idea that these women had no place in society. Their integration would depend on the possible level of transformation, through deep ideological work.

Samora Machel's *FRELIMO President's message*, written while he was still in the Transition Government, announces fundamental changes such as “combating alienation”. In his message Machel, who was later to become the first President of Mozambique, calls for the duty to launch

A battle without respite against the aftermath of colonialism, (...) decadent values, wrong ideas (...); On “women's liberation (...) one of the main fronts of battle for the authentic our people women freedom as a real women emancipation. Two weights crush the Mozambican women today: on the one hand, the reactionary traditions that deprive them from initiatives within society and reduce them to the simple men's instrument... We must, in particular, put a stop to this summarily degrading expression of the colonial-capitalist system that is prostitution, the sale of the body as if it were a store. (Machel, 1974, p. 12)

An article signed by Calane da Silva documents that, even during the Transition Government, the first raids on prostitutes started, aimed at getting them off the urban streets and bringing them to “re-education” camps: “the raid carried out at the beginning of the year is the first attempt to integrate the alienated women from Araújo street into society” (Calane da Silva, 1975, p. 36)

The story of *Margarida* is named after the young woman who might have been part of those women targeted in the raids. The movie *Virgem Margarida* is inspired by and filmed in memory of a group of women whose life story was linked to the re-education camps – former prostitutes and leaders statements interviewed in *A última prostituta*. In this documentary film, women share their memories and often mention the story of a virgin girl, Margarida, who was taken with them to a re-education camp, for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Bride of a young miner working in South Africa, she had travelled from Gaza province to Maputo city in the company of an aunt in view of purchasing layettes for her wedding. During the raid, she was arrested and taken to a re-education camp, mainly for not having identity documents and not having been able to convince the soldiers of her “innocence”. As a very young girl from the rural areas, she did not understand urban life and experiences, particularly the language and the big city attitudes from the other women with whom she had shared the journey and would later on share the re-education process.

This young woman deserves her prominent place in *Virgem Margarida*. Throughout the story, Margarida gains, bit by bit, the confidence and the sympathy of her companions and, in the end, she is one of the strongest motivators for the rebellion, the film’s cathartic moment.

In the documentary *A última prostituta*, images and speeches constitute the background of the whole scene: the euphoria of the split – the end of an era – of the colonial period – and the start of a new life, in 1974, when the end of the National Liberation Struggle is announced and the Transition Government is installed. This film begins with Ricardo Rangel, a renowned photographer, showing and commenting on a series of photographs. The photos and images captured are significant. One of them shows a prostitute flanked by two young soldiers whom the photographer called *A última prostituta*, which became the name of the documentary.

In the film *Virgem Margarida*, the revolution motto is present throughout the film. The official and popular rhetoric are very present: a new life, the formation of the new (wo)man, which starts from a new society without prostitution, without bandits, outlaws, “deviations”, in accordance with the discourse and vision brought about by independence. The film begins with a moving truck, decorated with leaflets with slogans, with particular emphasis on The Struggle Continues, written in bold letters. The women in the truck are singing a revolutionary anthem in Xichangana:

A hiyene a masinwuniya povo  
A hiyene a masinwuniya povo  
hi ta gwala a tintsmba ta hina...

[Let's go to the people's farm / Let's go to the people's farm /  
to sow our wealth...]

Then the movie shows raids<sup>1</sup> into bars, brothels and on the streets, where women are coercively taken and put into trucks. In bus and trucks caravans, they are escorted by military jeeps to enclosed areas. Later, they start the trip to the north of Mozambique – Niassa province – where they are to be re-educated. The most well-known re-education camps were in that province, but they were not the only ones. For example, in Inhassume – Inhambane province – there was also a re-education camp.

The outlaws in the Mozambican cities deserved a very special attention from the Government of Transition. In Inhassume, for example, there is a re-education camp. The camp has been running since December last year. (...) 160 outlaws ... In Inhassume there are no more marginal ones, there are Comrades. (Machel, 1975, p. 47)

This re-education camp is also mentioned by musician Sulemane Mohamed (Simeão Mazuze) in a song entitled “Bilibiza”; he invites his listeners to visit it: “a hiyene hi ya vona: [Let's see, let's visit (a terrible place!), let's see!].

In the film *Virgem Margarida*, along the trip, the caravan finds women from other cities, who enlarge the group and are also taken for re-education to the north of the country. It is in this camp where the events multiply. The film ends with a rebellion, rather, a negotiated uprising between trainers (commanders) and trainees, after they become aware that all of them were victims of systemic corruption, in this case male. Both system and corruption are represented by a commander who buys sexual favours in exchange for basic goods like soap and ends up raping Margarida to make sure she really is a virgin.

*Entre memórias silenciadas* (2013), a kind of re-writing of Ungulani's *No reino dos abutres* (2002), is divided into acts of the marimba orchestra and focuses on representative and significant spatial environments. First there is the countryside (rural area), in one of the opening chapters “Mutsitso – 3<sup>rd</sup> ‘Orchestral Introduction’”: “slightly impatient, the old woman was following the wind in her wandering through the nostalgic times of youth” (ba ka Khosa, 2013, p. 17). It is the place from which Lotasse, from the lineage of the Chibindzi, departs to the city, fleeing, after his parents have sacrificed Mpepo, his favorite ox, for a family ritual. It is also, in the “Mutsitso – Orchestral Final”, the place where the story ends, with the arrival of Pedro, Lotasse's son, at his father's native village, where the “Great Mothers”, Jonasse and Feniassse, were waiting. The second space is the city presented with the complexity characteristic of Mozambique, with central neighbourhoods of cement and peripheral ones with reed and zinc. Each of these spaces with their dynamics, reflecting the social structure of the then Lourenço Marques, which is still reflected in Maputo today. The third space mentioned in the novel is the re-education camp that seems to be an open and simultaneously closed space, as we will discuss later. This

<sup>1</sup> In *Tempo* magazine, n° 216, 17 November 1974, Calane da Silva signs an article entitled “Prostitution: first and decisive blows”. In *Tempo* magazine, n° 238, 10 April 1975, p. 36, signs of new raids in the cities are beginning to emerge.

is where voices and conflicting visions stand out, where spatial and temporal links are established, inscribing the dynamics of story or History and that of individual and collective memories. In the plot, we perceive a dynamic in which the spaces are defined according to the social conditions and the colour of the protagonists' skin. From other sources, we perceive this same reality. For example, Samora Machel's states in his speech: "as we walk from the West to the East in Lourenço Marques, skin colour bleaches..." (Machel, 1976). This statement reflects a reality that consisted in the configuration of the city according to its socioeconomic structure: cement for the richest, mostly white, and reed for the poorest, mostly black. According to Manuel Araújo (1999, p. 1177),

in the popular language, and according to the formulation it is crystallised until it became common use in the most varied texts, the city of Maputo, as is the case with all Mozambican cities, is formed by the "city of cement" and the "city of reed (cidade de caniço)". (...) The "city of cement" corresponds to the space of the urban area, while the "reed" constitutes what are considered the suburban neighbourhoods and, more recently, the peri-urban ones.

The oeuvres under study have in common aspects that we consider important. The first one is that they explore the universe and the dynamics of the re-education camps<sup>2</sup> in a not only spatial perspective, but also in its complex dimensions between the social, the psychological and the ideological, proposing types of reading that interrogate, among others, the memory dimensions and a possible dialogue between literature and cinema, and between both and History. The second aspect is the epoch, the historical period that is represented. Both focus on the period between 1974 and 1988, the period of the Transition Government<sup>3</sup> in the earliest years of the country's 1975 independence. In a way these works are "complementary" as *Virgem Margarida* explores an essentially female world, while *Entre memórias silenciadas* examines the male one in more detail. This approach suggests a construction that is enriched by virtue of being narratives that are based on different semiotic systems, since each communicating vehicle – a novel and a cinematographic narrative – works with different signs.

There are also other aspects that could be summoned for this reflection in a deeper way: the possibility of both texts being characterized as historical, taking into account that, according to Weinhardt (1995, p. 51),

to the historical novel it is not necessary to repeat the account of the great events, but to resurrect poetically the human beings who lived this experience. It must make the reader understand the social and human reasons that made men of that time and space think, feel, and act the way they

<sup>2</sup> Historically, there is little information on the subject. Having failed to find an academic definition, I would define re-education camp as the place where the "outlaws" were taken to correct themselves through manual labour [this definition results from field research]. It is important to say that these camps have raised many questions concerning their legality and legitimacy, and even logistic, hygienic physical and mental conditions).

<sup>3</sup> The Transition Government, led by Joaquim Chissano as Prime Minister, took office on 20 September 1974 and ceased its operations on 25 June 1975, after the proclamation of national independence.

did. It is a rule of literary figuration, apparently paradoxical, in which this apprehension is achieved by focusing on the details of daily life that seem insignificant. (...) tensioned by the revolution, can reveal forces, appearing naturally the heroes that for History are incognito.

Licínio de Azevedo states, incidentally, as a note in his presentation of the film that it was inspired by real facts and characters.

#### FROM FOUNDATIONAL RHETORIC, THE BACKGROUND: PERSPECTIVES

The understanding of Mozambique's socio-political context, represented in the oeuvres, involves a reflection on the nation's ideals spread through all possible means, in rallies, in schools, in revolutionary hymns, through radio and other means of communication, including cinema (Manjate, 2017). The euphoria of victory against Portuguese colonialism, the exaltation of the National Liberation Struggle triumph, the independence, its heroes and anti-heroes as material and ideological support are part of the explicit and implicit rhetoric present in both narratives. In addition, it is worth remembering the figure of the "Xiconhoca, enemy of the people" present in the media, schools, neighbourhood meetings, reflecting an ideological work that sought to transform society from unacceptable behavioural models to positive ones through simple language. "Xiconhoca" symbolized the "old man", to be disciplined, transformed or even fought against. This concept was allied to the policies of eradication of those social figures defined by the government as remnants of colonialism and capitalism. It referred to prostitutes, drug users, the unemployed, among others, who were considered unproductive and harmful to the new independent nation. These images have as background a triumphalist and transformative universe, with, as its basic philosophy, the formation of the "Homem Novo" [New Man]. According to Basílio (2011)

"Homem Novo" [New Man] is an imaginary political and ideological figure representing the principle of a new national identity, a new political power and a new state. This category has guided the formation of a unitary, centralized state and provider of universal citizens' rights. The socialist-oriented states retained a revolutionary tradition characterizing the attitudes of a new way of conceiving the world, denominated "Homem Novo" [New Man]. (...) In Mozambican politics defended by Samora Machel, "Homem Novo" [New Man] as category meant a new identity, a *Mozambicanity*, fruit of the struggle for recognition, an identity born from the union of differentiated groups aiming at the establishment of one cohesive people, nation and state. "Homem Novo" [New Man] referred to a new independent and sovereign State made up of citizens: peasants, workers, intellectuals and politicians, honest citizens, workers and revolutionary citizens who live and build harmonious relationships.

According to Cabaço (2007, p. 412), it was in the early days of the National Liberation Armed Struggle, when military preparation was complemented by ideological effort providing new values for construction of a “just, solidary, cohesive, socially disciplined, with an economic vision founded on the principle of self-sufficiency and essentially dependent on own forces and the men creative imagination”. This widespread view was part of the mobilising and engaging rhetoric and is depicted in *A última prostituta* through the initial discourse of a group of photographs presented and commented by R. Rangel: “when the soldiers entered Maputo, we all acclaimed them (...) even the prostitutes. This photograph was taken week(s) before the government decreed the end of prostitution, that is, the ban on prostitution” (one of Rangel’s assertions in *A última prostituta*).

The captured moment suggests a fissure or even rupture between two universes represented in the images: the before and after the end of the colonial era.

In *Virgem Margarida*, this rhetoric is immanent in the pamphlets, revolutionary songs, official speeches of the trainers-commanders, in the concern for the politico-ideological formation and later on in the text of the women under re-education written and read by themselves at Commander Felisberto’s reception as a demonstration of effect or reflection in change of mentality and, consequently, in their behaviour. Between the usual “Vivas” and “Abaixos”<sup>4</sup>, in comparison with the period of the National Liberation Armed Struggle and with the space-model liberated zones<sup>5</sup>, the rhetoric of regeneration and construction of a new world was reiterated .

Two key moments are to be distinguished: prosecution of prostitution and the so-called “Production Operation”, which began in 1983 and ended in 1988. The fight against prostitution began during the Transition Government in 1974, as witnessed by Calane da Silva’s article entitled “Prostitution: the first and decisive blows” (Calane da Silva, 1974). The “Production Operation” also ideally targeted people with other profiles.

Operation Production (OP) was a programme initiated by the Mozambican Government in mid-1983, shortly after the IV Congress of the FRELIMO party, to expel (coercively) the unemployed from large cities to send them to remote rural areas where, at least theoretically, they would cultivate the fields. (Darch, 2017, p. 9)

In *Entre memórias silenciadas* (2013) this rhetoric is presented through symbolic images, evidenced by the narrator in acts and visions of Great Mother, as Pedro, Lotasse’s son, calls her.

And with the lightness of the unseen spirits she passed her body over the tabletop, stretched out his hand to the chairs without feet and arms, threw

<sup>4</sup> Political speeches in official meetings or rallies usually began with expressions that demanded the response of the present audience: “Viva XXXX” answer “VIVA!”; “Abaixo XXX”. Answer: “Abaixo!”

<sup>5</sup> “As the national liberation struggle advanced, the colonial regime abandoned the regions, concentrating its administration on urban areas. The zones abandoned and taken by the guerrillas began to be designated liberated zones. The first Liberated Zones appeared in Cabo Delgado and Niassa and later in the provinces of Manica and Sofala”. Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:RecentChangesLinked>

her eyes without the irises to the old frets in agony, brushed her tongue against the bare mat, littered the glasses and the dishes broken in times of abundancy, displaced from the walls of adobe calendars pictures of common and leap years, frightened the cockroaches excited, expelled the air gagged in the room from the times of voices addicted to fear of self-criticism – a rebuke that consisted of public confession, among other evils, of the extramarital modalities before the laughter and the greed of the leaders in uniform with the unique *balalaica* of the unique party. (ba ka Khosa, 2013, p. 17)

Behind them were the pillars of carriages led by uniformed and not uniformed militaries, sustaining an exhausting, ideological and cultural war (...) Behind them were the voices and whispered speeches of friends bewildered by the present time in bars and coffee bars and streets and alleys, always looking restlessly, peering at invisible tellers; behind were the nationalized houses changing the geography of classes and layers (...); behind were the endless gates of the ghettos of the peoples' chiefs. (ba ka Khosa, 2013, p. 217)

It is clear that, between idealisation and euphoric and utopian discourses, other lines of thought – seeing, thinking and feeling – are dissonant, dysphoric and dystopic. As Darch (2017, p. 9) states,

Production Operation was by no means an unusual response by the government, facing a problem of destabilizing insufficiency of the “lumpenproletariat”, that is, an urban subclass outside the normal structures of control. It was undoubtedly an extreme response that resulted in large-scale social disruption.

The two narratives deconstruct the idealised, even idyllic, visions that the official discourses proclaimed and instituted. The narratives, thus, are inscribed in critical voices and visions on practices of new and installed regime. They can be assumed as representing an unofficial and especially critical discourse of the speeches and statements widely diffused by governmental instances. Revealing diverse social exchanges, they resort to multiple cross-views and each inscribes, in its own way, the call for a reflection on memories apparently brought to silence.

## SPACES AND MEMORIES

According to Aguiar e Silva (1988, p. 598), all narrative texts, regardless of the semi-otic system(s) that enable its structuring, are specific because there is an enunciating instance that reports the real or fictitious events that occur in time. By representing events, which constitute the passage from one state to another, narrative texts also necessarily represent states, originated or suffered by anthropomorphic agents or not, individual or collective, and situated in the space of the empirical world or of a possible world.



From the set of categories presented, space is one of the most important categories, not only because of the functional articulations that it establishes with the other categories – time, agent, action – but also by the semantic incidences that characterise it (Reis & Lopes, 2002, p. 129).

As a narrative category, space holds undeniable potentialities of semantic representation; it can be understood as an ideological sign when inscribing the explicit or implicit presence of attributes of a social, economic and historical nature, articulating with other signs according to the ideological system that the narratives predominantly present. As a category, space can act as a reference for the analysis of fictional works, in the sense that it derives segments that can gather multiple perspectives or dimensions: rural and ancestral space, urban with its contrasts, space of memory and with intersubjectivities, and the immanence of deterritorialisation. These cut-outs do not deplete the dimensions that the texts offer. From them reflect views on the literary space, the space occupied by narrators who can be measured by their ethical and aesthetic positions in relation to the narrated matter and the narrative voices that are privileged.

The narrative spaces, seemingly autonomous elements, rural and urban, susceptible of variably detailed descriptions, gain social, economic, psychological, even politico-ideological contours, without, however, ceasing to be framework contexts for events and behaviours.

In the analysed texts, space imposes itself as an intense focus of semantic irradiation, confers values and shapes subjects and times. The spatial link, in this case, draws attention to this narrative category, to the complexity and the symbolic charge that each projects and inscribes.

The notion of space, associated with that of time, prevails the sense in which previous memories provide strong values related to places and regions. Through the narratives, one lives a present and simultaneously a past, by the memory remnants and the representations based, in part, on the repetition of experiences of past actions.

In *Entre memórias silenciadas*, the first space, the village, is, at the same time as it provides protection, also a space of evasion, that is, of escape and reunion, where the traditions are alive. It is represented by the figure of the centennial woman, cattle and marula, sacred tree, landmarks of Bantu religion. It is from where Lotasse flees and is also the space where Pedro, her descendant, goes after insistent nightmares, on the advice of a healer, in close connection with premonitory signs present at the beginning and end of the text, in prolepsis. “The war, the devastation, was for the others. For the old woman, Jonasse, Feniassa, cattle and dogs, war was another: heat” (ba ka Khosa, 2013, p. 20).

Pedro saw a familiar village that wanted to be whole and happy. As he approached, in a careless step, a strange wind whipped his body, as if waking him to an unknown reality. In the center, rising above the other trees, was the great cannon of the ancestors, the sacred tree, central point of the traditional ceremonies of evocation of the spirits of all the lineage ... (ba ka Khosa, 2013, p. 220)

Gaston Bachelard in *A poética do espaço* [The poetics of space] takes the house as the essential shelter, shelter first, the womb, where “being reigns in a sort of earthly paradise of matter, dissolved in the comforts of an adequate matter” (1978, p. 201). It is the space of reception and recollection. The house symbolizes the space of election, where protection is materialised, the reunion with the roots, where they revisit the family ties, in this case, the past.

The village, Lotasse’s home is the starting point, but remains nevertheless never forgotten. It is also the point of arrival of Pedro, his son. It is the symbol of the maternal womb, from where one is born, where one has protection. It is a sacred space. It is a place of memories and reunion with a distant and unknown past for Pedro, Lotasse’s son. Here time interferes with the notion of space in the sense in which previous memories provide strong values and feelings to spaces. In this process, and retroactively, space, place and landscape play a crucial role in the shaping of individual memory, and thus also collective memory (Martins, 2015).

The distant field, cattle in teenage betting bouts, mother’s stories around mythical bonfires, unsuspecting interjections, onomatopoeias on occasion, were memories of growing disintegration in the mind in delirium with magic ribbons that rolled hours of dream in the expectant audience of whites. (...) Lotasse lived his years of imaginative world, if paradise built from images that passed on the screen. He dreamed. (ba ka Khosa, 2013, p. 27)

Rahinovich (1997), in an article entitled “A casa como símbolo: a relação mãe-criança”, takes the house as a symbol, in the first place because it replaces the uterus, in its protective functions, being an extension and reflex of motherhood. The village, in *Entre memórias silenciadas*, the Chibindzi’s “home”, remains a kind of original symbol: it denotes the origin-uterus-earth, and connotes relational life. The place remained untouched by contacts with the new realities that “affected” the cities.

In reference to the individuals’ operative cosmology, Pedro leaves the ghosts of the city after repeated nightmares with cockroaches having sex and mutilating themselves. The dream would be a sign interpreted by a healer as a call to the origins, and which “merely indicated the path of unknown ancestry, grandmothers of whom he had no memory, to the land of strange and obliterated fields” (ba ka Khosa, 2013, p. 218). Here, many symbolic elements configure that home and come into harmony: the sacred trees, the “strange and obliterated graves by the revolution” (ba ka Khosa, 2013, p. 219). All sets of elements that reconstruct an imaginary that urges to be rebuilt.

Leaving behind “cement, uniforms, speeches, cafes, nationalized houses, controlling groups, political committees”, Pedro “returns” to the village, without ever having left it. The village is the land of the Chibindzi family, a sacred place that had long awaited him. Under the guidance of Jonasse, he chooses an ox, to whom he gives his own name, and thus inscribes the line of continuity interrupted by his father, Lotasse.

The home/village is the place where Margarida, *Virgem Margarida*’s main character, does not want to return because she feels impure and improper to inhabit it. The house

from which she had departed, this rural universe does not welcome the profane or the desecrated. In some societies, virginity symbolizes purity. After being *desvirginada*, victim of sexual aggression, by Commander Felisberto, Margarida feels that she cannot return to the village, to the house, sacred space, from where she left immaculate, because she considers herself impure, desacralised by a man of the new order. The house, in this case, is a sanctuary that, in her opinion, does not deserve to receive a member touched and marked by degrading events. Metonymically, the act, although involuntary, taints the subject as well. According to Mondlane and Clerck, in *Chitlango, filho de chefe* (1990), in Bantu culture, insane acts of a member can adversely affect the whole community.

The poisonous fruit that Margarida reaps at the end represents the possibility of an escape through death, an escape to nowhere: she does not stay in the re-education camp because it was dismantled but she also does not return to the village, the uterine universe. It is a state of total rupture that eliminates any space such as affront and incrimination or even demonisation of a system that has robbed the purity and dreams of an “aborted” youth.

Death here looks like an escape, a flight to a non-space, nowhere, as opposed to the physical spaces that Margarida rejects. In this case, it is understood as the refusal or impossibility of the character to integrate in a specific space – re-education camp, field (village of origin) or city (space of passage). The previous spaces – the city, did not welcome her and the re-education camp desecrated her. In the city, she was coercively taken for not having the right documents and in the re-education camp, at the same time that contributed to an unpredictable socialization and solidarity within the group, the camp was not chosen as space of affection or effective accomplishment. At first Margarida was questioned and judged by her colleagues in the camp and the commanders, but in the end Margarida managed to awaken a sense of strong solidarity that culminated in the uprising. The two spaces, the city and the re-education camp, are inscribed here as spaces of denial, infertile in terms of the character’s construction as a symbol.

In an interview with Marta Lança, published in the newspaper *Público*, Licínio de Azevedo states:

the real revolutionary shout comes from the women commanders when they say, “Son of a bitch, you’re on the side of the enemy” [Commander Maria João] revolted, use the language of prostitutes, stand against men, since the military, after all, is a reactionary male symbol. The women give continuity to the revolution, after realising that they are being judged, indecently, by the male chauvinist side of the revolution. Commander Maria João becomes the true judge of the revolution. (Lança, 2012, s.p.)

In *Entre memórias silenciadas*, death as a non-space, is also very present.

Old Thomas is by my side. He is my destiny companion. His hair and beard have become so white that everyone recognizes him from afar. He is the oldest man in the camp. The commander had long since reformed Thomas

from activities in the camp. And to occupy his time, he is painting crosses, in the huts of the dead, different sizes and colours. The number of dead is so high that the crosses overlap in geometric configurations as abstract as the paintings of our painter Bertina Lopes. (ba ka Khosa, 2013, p. 50)

It became fundamental, for Thomas, to draw crosses and planting maize in the place of the tombs “to eternalise” a space definitively lost for the dead and maintain, in a symbolic way, continuity or fighting the oblivion process, that is, to maintain a space through memory.

In *Virgem Margarida*, the city is seen very quickly, nevertheless registering an intense and diverse dynamic life. In the space of cement there is labour and intense night-life: prostitutes, artists, bohemians, a frantic city. The suburb is the source from which the prostitutes, the artists come, and where they return at the end of each night. In the suburbs there is family life; mothers and children are waiting. It is where poverty and the problems of everyday life live. The city of cement is the expectation of money, the promise of solutions to all problems.

In *Entre memórias silenciadas*, the city involves many universes, well-defined social structures, shaping the life of the subjects. Between the yard, where Lotasse first worked, as a domestic servant, and then the city, as assistant to the Gil Vicente Cinema, these spaces determine social categories. The city of cement and the city of reed, the suburbs “Lourenço Marques was visibly growing” (ba ka Khosa, 2013, p. 27). “Now, in his thirties, he realised that he lived on the other side of the Alto Maé area, a place not counted in the mathematics of economic growth because it lacked basic infrastructure in the public expenditure plans” (ba ka Khosa, 2013, p. 33).

It is in the re-education camps represented in the narratives that see the largest part of events. It is the place where the conflicts between order and chaos are revealed and the attempt to reordering and transformation. It is an open space – there were no walls or fences, but it is simultaneously closed: people cannot move freely, they cannot abandon it. It is a prison. “Everyone knew from experience that there was little use to run away from the camp, because we would be easy prey to lions and leopards, not to mention crocodiles with unsatisfied jaws, infesting the riverbed” (ba ka Khosa, 2013, p. 56).

In *Virgem Margarida*, women, all of them - the trainees and trainers – are prisoners. In Rosa’s words, a rebel character in the movie, they are all prisoners and, above all, all of them are slaves: “we are slaves without an owner. But you (the commanders) are too”.

Women cannot say what they think. When they do, they are punished. But commanders also have no choice: they do not want to be there either. They also have dreams that are marginalised and postponed. In the background, there are also factors to maintain certain values linked to tradition, making use of resources accumulated in the past. Indeed, in the face of a broad movement that sought to instil profound transformations in social relations, traditional practices did not seem to have undergone fundamental changes or dissipated, simply moved into clandestine life to circumvent the discouragement contained in political discourse (Andrade, Osório & Trindade, 2000).

The revival of cultural expression in a context in which tradition adjusted to new realities (as re-education camps) results in a process of worsening women's subaltern position, as certain aspects of it are subject to filtering and stem from the manipulation skills of those who transmit it (Loforte, 2003).

The omnipresent fear and closeness of death, the punishments, the close presence of ferocious animals, hunger and thirst, kept the trainees and trainers in an ambivalent environment between hostility and solidarity.

Expressions such as "discipline", "indiscipline" and "punishment" are part of the re-education camp, a space of coercion and protection. Commander Maria João, bastion of order and power, punishes, with the intention of rehabilitating the women. The conviviality, the sharing of feelings and experiences, some traumatic event, in the end ensure such profound transformations that they ultimately make it possible to recognise and share feelings. United and unbelieving, they then banished the flag that led them into that space. All of them cry for freedom.

The film is about the antagonisms of release. It refers to the emancipation of African women in different situations: literate or not, the colonized woman and the revolutionary woman, who perceive the discipline imposed by man. Re-education works in many ways, all of which "purify" in a certain dualism: prostitutes are purified because they learn things such as the importance of freedom and work, the military free themselves from the higher hierarchies. The adolescent virgin becomes a sort of saint: they all want to protect her or to be protected by her, a profound connoisseur of the forest, unlike urban women who cannot relate to the rural world. The re-education of prostitutes, military and peasants was after all a process of mutual knowledge, which leads them to unite in order to free themselves. (*Virgem Margarida*, 2012)

In *Entre memórias silenciadas* the scenario is not different. The conversations are murky, between memories and the distant and unknown future. After the re-education camp, the departure to Unango, city of the future, and the escape through the female bodies, the flight of fear, the uncertainties of the unknown, expectations begin to take shape. The contours of new discourses and new concepts catapult the imagination of the prisoners into fear and desperation. The redefinitions of existences with both discursive and structurally more practical constraints dictate new conjunctures, despite being in a closed environment. Although the re-education camp has been closed, apparently free women and men cannot return home. They have to stay to materialise a dream of founding a new city, the city of the future: Unango.

In both narratives, it is observed that space is treated not only as an identifiable category, but as an interpretive system, a reading model. Each of the spaces impresses a dynamic, visions, shaping personalities and behaviours of the agents. On a deeper level, each space is an existential place of unrest or conflict.

The re-education camps, for example, in an intense way, converge and simultaneously

summon many points of view, ranging from political causes to the philosophy of the “Homem Novo” [New Man]; the re-education camps fight against urban vices of such as prostitution, bohemian life, nouns and expressions so prevalent in the official rhetoric of the post-independence years. The complexity of recording events like painting crosses on the doors of the huts of the dead, old Thomas’s ritual, call memory exercises that re-invent themselves in moments of uncertainty and despair. Conversations that ultimately bridge the gap between a known past and the distant and uncertain present of each are shown as an inscription of memories that need to be redeemed constantly and call for a remembrance of new and old events and realities. They were, after all, a form of survival in the creation of bonds and memories.

Memory, *a priori*, seems to be an individual phenomenon, something relatively intimate, characteristic of the person, which is shared or not. But it must also be understood as a collective and social phenomenon, that is, as a phenomenon constructed collectively and subject to possible fluctuations, transformations and changes. If the trainees, the trainers and the commanders in the re-education camps could be understood like closed islands, in the end they can be understood as a solid group with its own characteristics, like a group that cannot be forgotten. In both narratives is inscribed a conflict between historical discourse or official History and other points of view that needs to be used for a better understand of Mozambican culture, in a holistic way.

Thinking about memory is not simply going into the past and finding events, facts, people, places where you lived at some point in time. It is much more complex. In fact, memory here refers to collective memory, that is, the memory of a group that lived and retained as its heritage certain events in common, as, indeed, the group that shared the re-education camp experiences.

Pollak, in “Memória e identidade social” (1992, p. 10), states three elements that directly or indirectly construct memories, both individual and collective ones, namely events, characters and places. Here the spaces, the subject of Bachelard’s topoanalysis, through the sequential flow, help in reading that takes into account the simultaneities, the mappings that allow us to enter the narrative at almost any point, without losing sight of the general objective: to create modes more critically revealing and examining the combination of space and time, history and geography, period and region, succession and simultaneity. In both narratives, at one and the same time, society lives a present but also a past, by the memory remnants of the past, and partly by the repetition of experiences of past actions. According to Martins (2015), recalling events occurred in a given space, memory that prevails, in most cases, is governed by mental time, rather than temporal chronological perception. Thus, an approach to memory as a complex phenomenon is important to understand how societies and communities nurture and develop their perceptions through a sense of projected and represented spaces and places.

In order to make memories last, it is not enough that people share testimonies; it is necessary that it has not stopped to come to an alignment with the memories of the group and that creates enough points of contact between one and another, so that the memories can be rebuilt on common ground. It refers to the need for harmonisation

between different group members so that memory can be reconstructed.

From this brief reflection that involves the themes of spatiality and memory, one question remains; the reason for the two oeuvres having been published almost simultaneously. In addition, *Virgem Margarida* has a clear inscription saying that it was inspired by real events and real people. *Entre memórias silenciadas* is a title, which in itself, through the use of the adjective “silenced” calls for a reflection: should silence be understood as marginalisation or erasure?

## CONCLUSION

One of the emerging trends inscribes a close relationship between cultural studies and literature – a motive that transcends the interest of contextualising literature in historical and cultural perspectives. It arises not only from the increasing inclusion of fictional and literary texts in studies of culture but the interest in representative forms and their relations with the constitution of cultural identities.

*Virgem Margarida* by Licínio de Azevedo and *Entre memórias silenciadas* by Ungulani ba ka Khosa have several aspects in common. In addition to exploring aspects of life philosophies in Mozambique, from gender and power relations to socio-geographical disposition, among others, they explore the experiences lived in re-education camps in the Niassa province. They also explore rural-urban (im)migration, urban and suburban life of women and men who were collected from the cities and sent to Niassa for re-education. In these narratives, space transcends the merely geographical; space includes a set of social, economic and ideological factors that involve and transform the characters. They are spaces of dramatic concentration, at the same time as places of escape, memory, realisation and non-realisation. They are places of encounter and disagreement, insofar as they explore the construction of ideals and, at the same time, question them. They are places of rupture and deconstruction, because readers are invited to reflect on aspects of national life which are not discussed in the official History textbooks.

Spatial relations constitute, therefore, a fundamental means for the perception of the represented dynamics. From the conceptions and constructions present in the works, the spaces call for reflections that seem to be forgotten in society.

Translation: Karen Ferreira-Meyers

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### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Teresa Manjate holds a PhD in Oral and Traditional Literature from the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. She is currently a researcher at the Centro de Estudos Africanos, and a Senior Lecturer (Assistant Professor) at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo and a part-time lecturer at the University of Eswatini. She taught at Africa University (Zimbabwe) and at the Polytechnic University (Maputo). She is a member of the Institute for Literature and Tradition Studies (IELT) and the International Association of Paremiology (AIP)

Email: [manjatet@gmail.com](mailto:manjatet@gmail.com); [teresa\\_manjate@hotmail.com](mailto:teresa_manjate@hotmail.com)

Address: Universidade Politécnica, 1011 Avenida Paulo Samuel Kankhomba, Maputo, Moçambique

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