



MEMOIRS - FILHOS DE IMPÉRIO E PÓS-MEMÓRIAS EUROPEIAS | **MEMOIRS** - CHILDREN OF EMPIRES AND EUROPEAN POSTMEMORIES
MAPS - PÓS-MEMÓRIAS EUROPEIAS: UMA CARTOGRAFIA PÓS-COLONIAL | **MAPS** - EUROPEAN POSTMEMORIES: A POSTCOLONIAL CARTOGRAPHY

Saturday, 8 January 2022

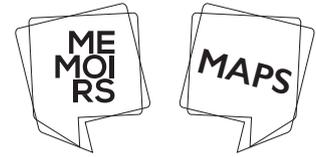


Museum of the world (Extract), "entre autre chose", triptych 1/3, Collège des Bernardins, Paris | 2014 | Djamel kokene-Dorléans (courtesy of the artist)

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António Pinto Ribeiro

In the context of research in Social Sciences and Arts the term memory should be accepted as an analogy or a metaphor whose origin refers to the multiple neurological capacities of the brain and the complex and infinite functions and operations that cannot be compared to the current use of the word memory. The lack of clarification of this substantial difference leads us to incur a poor and reductive conception of the concepts of memory and post-memory and even the caricature of them [1].

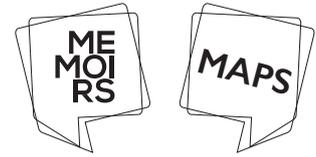


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In this regard, the words of Roberto Vecchi are quite clear. In one of the first *newsletters* of the *MEMOIRS*, he stated: “There is a redundancy of metaphors to express memory or its opposite, forgetting. But as Harald Weinrich has pointed out, representations of memory in Western histories of ideas tend to appeal simply to one of two essential archetypes. First, the warehouse, connected to rhetoric and memory. Second, the slate, originally a Platonic idea, linked to remembering. That memory is often articulated metaphorically points to a basic truth: that we always get stuck when we try to delimit any definition of memory too strictly. Memory is always mediated. Mediators, in Aleida Assman’s terminology, give a concrete form to the fluidity, complexity and slipperiness of memory and remembering; through mediators, memory becomes material, both physical and metaphysical.” [2]

Avoiding these pitfalls, the research project *MEMOIRS, Sons of Empire and European Postmemory* started from a relatively simple concept, but with quite effective operativity in a postcolonial context. This is the concept of postmemory by Marianne Hirsch, presented in *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (1997), and which started from the author’s own personal experience as a daughter of Jews who survived World War II by going into exile in America. The concept referred mainly to the memorial relationship between the children of the survivors of the Holocaust and the memories of their parents. It was disseminated and applied to other fields of study, and was not exempt from some controversy, revision and enlargement, especially by Beatriz Sarlo, who criticizes what she calls “theoretical inflation” (*Tiempo Pasado*, 2005) and calls for greater legitimacy of the subjectivity of the heir who reconstructs the traumatic past [3]. Like this theoretical contribution by Beatriz Sarlo, the concepts of “multidirectional memory” and “implied subject” by Michael Rothberg were also important. As a whole, they were fundamental contributions to the opening up of the possibility of understanding and theorizing the field of postmemory applied to the artistic practices of those who are heirs of former European empires, be they the children of the military involved in the wars of independence, of ex-colonized, ex-colonizers and all those who, having no biographical experience associated with the colonies, have a cultural memory of the colonization transmitted by the experience of the group or due to their interest in the theme.

The dynamic process that led to this investigation, problematization and production of knowledge did not exclude problematizing and unraveling the borders and differences between public memory so present and so often subliminal in our daily and historical memory - from museography to school books - as narratives produced in certain contexts by power agents and accepted at a given historical moment, but necessarily reviewed over time. This is an important fact in that the productions in the condition of the



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postmemory deal with these ideological devices that all too often inhibit the expression or even repress it.

This broadening of the initial concept of postmemory allowed the review of other less 'typical' biographical experiences and a shift from the theme of biography to artistic production. One of the benefits of this broadening, of its reformulation and extension to a third generation, in particular of artists and writers, was to enable the understanding, without devaluing, of memories inherited but already more diffuse than those of the previous generation, a greater artistic investment focused on the production of memories for the future of which are examples the works of artists and writers such as Joséfa Ntjam, Sara Sadik, Otobong Nkanga, Antonio Dikele Distefano, Binta Diaw.

Thus, we come to the works in the condition of postmemory, which allows the understanding and clarification of the whole process, by exhibiting the construction of other narratives that rescue historical processes of subalternity and promote the opening to other worlds. But in itself the condition of postmemory is not an aesthetic category, nor an artistic value. The process that is at the basis of the production of these works is based on a hybrid process of various experiences and artistic formations, and consequently it is from this hybridity that research should proceed, in order to find and produce the vocabulary and categories of artistic reception for this immense and diverse set of works on the horizon of contemporaneity.

With this *MEMOIRS* project Newsletter, N° 147, we conclude a journey started on May 5, 2018. To the group of researchers of the project, to the dozens of external collaborators, to all the artists who contributed with their images, to the producers and designers, the deep gratitude of the editors, who are certain of two things: to have contributed to the sharing of a common good, knowledge, and to have done so in the spirit of public service.

We will continue to be present in the public space:

- through the exhibition *Europa Oxalá*, curated by António Pinto Ribeiro, Katia Kameli and Aimé Mpane and resulting from a partnership between the project *MEMOIRS*/ Centro de Estudos Sociais, Universidade de Coimbra, MUCEM (Marseille), Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Paris delegation, Africa Museum-Royal Museum of Central Africa (Tervuren, Belgium).
- through the publication of books authored by the *MEMOIRS* research team and some collaborating researchers.

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[1] On this topic, see Pedro Cabral, *O Paradoxo do Cérebro - Memória, Autismo, Identidade*, Temas e Debates, 2021.

[2] Roberto Vecchi, "Mitologia e Memória", *MEMOIRS NEWSLETTER* #26, November 10th 2018.

[3] The film *Los Rubios de Albertina Carri* (2003) is considered a practical example of Beatriz Sarlo's thesis in the context of Southern-American postmemory. In this film, the very notion of direct remembrance is put into question.

Translated by António Sousa Ribeiro

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