

Lino, V. L. (2024). *Haunted ties: queering the memory of violence in Yara Nakahanda Monteiro's Essa Dama Bate Bué*. Abstract from Memory Studies Association 8th Annual Conference: Memories in Transit, Lima, Peru.

Published in 2018, Yara Nakahanda Monteiro's first novel *Essa Dama Bate Bué* (translated into English as *Loose Ties* in 2021) explores the complex ongoing effects of Portuguese colonialism and succeeding wars (first of liberation and then civil) in Angola. In this paper I explore how socio-political and historical dimensions of the memory of colonial violence and armed conflicts moves between the collective and personal and is mapped on the life of the female protagonist of Monteiro's novel, Vitória Queiroz da Fonseca. *Essa Dama Bate Bué* follows Vitória from Portugal to Angola on her quest to find her mother, who left her as a baby to be raised by her grandparents. Having no own memory of her, Vitória only knows that her mother abandoned her family and joined the armed fight for independence before she was born. While her mother stayed in Angola, Vitória was brought to Portugal with her grandparents, to be raised in a village within a traditional catholic setting. A few days before she is supposed to get married to the brother of her secret female lover, Vitória runs away to Angola to find her mother. The search leads her not from Portugal to Angola and from Luanda to Huambo, without finding what she had hoped for. In this paper I propose use 'queerness as a conceptual — ontological and epistemic — tool of analysis' (Phiri 2022, 5) for the articulation of trauma and the mode of working through violent histories in Monteiro's novel. I argue that in *Essa Dama Bate Bué* 'queerness' functions as a way to address the complex entanglements between private and public memories and histories in view of various layers of traumatic gendered and racialized violence. By focusing on female charterers and the figure of the mother, Monteiro articulates not only complex modes of implication (Rothberg 2019) that trouble any clear definition of innocence and guilt, but also emphasizes how the gendered, heteronormative 'colonial project' continues to reverberate in the present. Through the traumatic history of the mother daughter relation, Monteiro seeks to write beyond masculinist narratives that circumscribe women to "mothers and mates needed to create male heirs" (Wright 2004, 138). Foregrounding instead female agency and violence, Monteiro does not only work through the echoes of Portuguese imperial propaganda and the marginalized memory of women during the Angolan process of independence and following civil wars, but also through the 'gendered hierarchies and asymmetries that pervade blackness and black diaspora studies' (Phiri 2022, 4). While the traumatic (gendered and racialized) violence continues to haunt the protagonist, I argue that in Monteiro's novel, losing all the ties of memory may also enable the protagonist not to redeem the past but to begin anew despite all.