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INHERITED STORIES OF THE *SALTO* – THE LEAP: THE CLANDESTINE JOURNEY OF PORTUGUESE MIGRANTS TO FRANCE IN THE 1960-1970S & JOSÉ VIEIRA'S *PEOPLE FROM THE SALTO*

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ABSTRACT:

In the 1960-1970s, approximately 900,000 Portuguese people migrated to France, fleeing poverty, colonial war, and dictatorship. Many were clandestine and had to illegally cross the borders between Portugal and Spain, and then between Spain and France, in a voyage known as the *salto* – the leap.

Stories of the *salto* are present in family circles of remembrance, as memories of migration are transferred to the second and third generations. In a context of postmemory, many descendants of the first generation of migrants inherit these stories imbued with trauma and are currently striving to give them visibility and recognition on a national level in Portugal. This task seeks to forge a collective memory by retrieving personal accounts and can be accomplished through cultural and aesthetic practices such as filmmaking. I consider the latter alternative archives that provide affective, intimate, and affiliative readings of the past countering national and official narratives. To illustrate this process, I analyze José Vieira's documentary DVD film collection and booklet, *People from the Salto*.

KEYWORDS: Portugal; Clandestine Migration; Memory; Postmemory; Family Memory; Alternative Archives; Family Pictures; José Vieira.

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1. Introduction

When I was a child, my father used to tell me stories about him growing up in this foreign country called Portugal and his arrival as a young migrant in France. I remember listening to these stories in French, the language of the country where we were living and where my sister and I were born. I later became acquainted with Portugal, first during the summer holidays, and more drastically when my parents decided to return. By then, my father had lived in France for 29 years. When we moved, Portugal became home to my family – for the second time to my parents, and for the first time to my sister and me. I kept the stories, though, and with time I gathered more.

The tale I will detail in this article is one that many children might have heard from their Portuguese family members about their clandestine journey to France in the 1960s and 1970s. As such, this story takes place during the dictatorship in Portugal known as *Estado Novo*. This authoritarian and conservative regime installed in 1933 endured for more than forty years, ending in 1974. Headed by António Salazar until 1968, the Portuguese dictatorship was "conservative, nationalist, anti-liberal and anti-democratic, integrating elements of totalitarian political regimes", such as a single party, a political police, political courts, political prisons, besides "a concentration camp (Tarrafal), official censorship, idolatry of the chief, state propaganda, a civil militia (the Legião Portuguesa), and official youth organizations" (Leal and Correl 2016, 129). In this highly structured and hierarchized society ruled by an elite class, most of the population was rural, poor, and illiterate[1] (Pereira 2007).

From 1957 to 1974, approximately 1,500,000 Portuguese citizens fled political persecution, compulsory military service in the colonial war, and extreme poverty (Pereira 2012). This number is considerable since it corresponds to 47% of the active population in 1970 and 17% of the total population (Pereira 2012). France was the main destination, having admitted more than 900,000 Portuguese migrants, only 350,000 of whom crossed borders legally (Pereira 2012). However, and as historian Victor Pereira notes, since most of the flux

[1] Victor Pereira notes that in 1960 30% of men and 40% of women were illiterate in Portugal; in addition, these percentages were likely to be greater in rural regions, from which the majority of migrants came.

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refers to clandestine migration, these numbers are only an approximate estimation.

The physical passage of borders was a difficult journey. The memory of that clandestine voyage is engraved in the memory of the protagonists who still live – the first migrants who opened up the way for other family members to join them in France. It is also alive in the memory of those who have heard it from them, and in the memory of those who have heard it from the latter, like me. Perhaps this story would be permanently kept in these small family circles of remembrance, were it not for the effort of some to make it public. Such efforts often come from people with kinship with the protagonists of this story, with the purpose of preserving a collective memory. Furthermore, it consists in a claim to be recognized and legitimized in the vaster national Portuguese identity, which still struggles with its colonial and dictatorial past.

I propose to tackle the Portuguese clandestine migration during the 1960s and 1970s, in particular the journey to France known as the *salto*, through personal and autobiographical cultural texts. Such practices engage with "political history as affective history", as put by Ann Cvetkovich in her seminal work on the archive of feelings and queer trauma (Cvetkovich 2003, 167). I also take inspiration on Gayatri Gopinath's notion of *queer visual aesthetic practices as archival practices*. Queer theory has been pivotal not only to counterhistories regarding sexuality and sexual desire, embodiment and difference, but also to any minor history outside hegemonic narratives. In Gopinath's optic, queerness is also a mode of reading the past in intimate terms, through "the micropolitical spaces of the body, the *family*, and the domestic", bringing to the fore archives drawn from the personal, the regional, the affective, and the everyday (Gopinath 2018, 8 [emphasis mine]). It follows that cultural and artistic representations of the Portuguese clandestine migration in the 1960s and the 1970s, as aesthetic practices that excavate the past, may provide fertile entry points to a traumatic – and perhaps still omitted – part of Portuguese history. In particular, film and filmmaking as 'cultural ongoing practices' facilitate ways of approaching such issues, namely by the protagonists of these stories (Andersson and Sundholm 2019).

To illustrate the role of affects and family memory in these stories of migration and to unpack their significance in the Portuguese national identity, I

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probe a so-called second-generation cinema that makes use of autobiographical, oral, and poetic narrative (Cardoso 2007). According to João Sousa Cardoso, this is "a first person-narrative cinema, whereby sons and daughters of Portuguese immigrants in France attempt to retrieve their parents' story and to find a cultural context for themselves"[2] (Cardoso 2007, 68). To this aim, I focus on the documentary oeuvre of José Vieira. More specifically, I concentrate my efforts on the bilingual DVD collection of seven documentary films and the DVD booklet *People from the Salto* (2005)[3].

I consider these films as alternative archives, and I propose to read these cultural objects as repositories of memory. I start by establishing a relation between the family circle of remembrance and the personal motivation of family members to delve into the topic of Portuguese clandestine migration – mirrored in my own motivation to write this article. I then reproduce personal stories of the physical crossing of borders from *People from the Salto* to contribute to the transmission of these past events from the point of view of migrants and thereby to consider them as actors instead of passive elements. Indeed, Victor Pereira argues that Portuguese migrants are still considered 'non-actors of history', a view that is ultimately complicit with that of the *Estado Novo* (Pereira, 2007). Moreover, these stories clarify the distress and trauma involved in the journey. I also consider the role of autobiographical narrative and of family pictures in the film *The Divided Photograph* as a counter approach to official archives. Finally, I draw concluding remarks regarding the relevance of this (his)story for the present time.

2. All in the Family

José Vieira's *People from the Salto* is a collection of films that showcase several accounts and explanations on the clandestine journey of Portuguese migrants to

[2] In the original: "un cinéma à la première personne, où les enfants d'immigrés portugais en France essaient de retracer l'histoire de leurs parents et cherchent à se localizer face à des repères culturels".

[3] The original bilingual title is *Gens du Salto: mémoires de Portugais qui ont fuis vers la France dans les années 60 / Gente do Salto: memórias de Portugueses que fugiram para a França nos anos 60.* The DVD collection include the following seven short documentary films: *La Photo Déchirée* / *A Fotografia Rasgada* [*The Divided Photograph*] (2001); *Les Chants du Déserteur* / *Os Cantos do Desertor* (2005); *Paris, Seixas, Londres* (2005), *La Traversée pour Paris* / *A Travessia para Paris* (2005); *Un Aller Simple* / *Uma Ida Simples* (2005); *Complices d'Évasions* / *Cúmplices de Evasão* (2005); *Passagers Clandestins* / *Passageiros Clandestinos* (2005).

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France in the 1960s and 1970s known as *o salto – the leap*. Another common expression was "crossing the borders *a salto*". The expression *a salto* points out the way an action is done, for instance doing or achieving something through leaping. Phonetically, *a salto* resembles another Portuguese word, *assalto*, which means *robbery*. Since during the Portuguese dictatorship crossing the borders was a liberty seldom granted, the citizens who wished to migrate would have to force their way out. These first generations of migrants had to take their passage without permission. They were clandestine. To achieve the physical passage between borders, the clandestine migrants had to rely on a smuggling network in which they would enter as contraband goods. On the one hand, Portugal was being robbed of bodies that, in particular male bodies, were supposed to grant the integrity of the empire and its African colonies. On the other hand, these unruly bodies were being robbed from acceptable living conditions by the authoritarian nation-state that sought to maintain its population in a submissive position.

As a child of Portuguese migrants who settled in France when he was seven years old, José Vieira believes that his personal and family story of migration not only influenced his career as a documentary filmmaker but ultimately build it[4] (Vieira and Viana 2017). There are many other examples of cultural objects created by family relatives of the first generation of Portuguese migrants, generally their children or grandchildren, on this subject. For instance, Carlos Alberto Gomes, whose grandfather had been a *passador* – a person who was paid to guide migrants across the borders[5] – directed the documentary series of five episodes *Au Revoir, Portugal!* (2009). Maria Pinto's *Explication des Salamandres* (2006) is a documentary about her parents, their reasons to flee Portugal, and the wounds of childhood and exile. Christophe Fonseca is directing the upcoming documentary project *Au Delà du Silence* focusing on the shantytown (*bidonville*) of Champigny, where a large part of his family lived upon their arrival in France.

[4] Vieira states in an interview: "My experience of migration did not just influenced my career as a filmmaker, it build it. I wanted to tell the stories of our struggles and this is the reason I became a film director" (Vieira and Viana 2017, n.p. [translation mine]). In the original: "Mon expérience d'immigration a plus qu'influencé mon activité de réalisateur, elle l'a créé. C'est parce que je voulais raconter par où nous étions passé que je suis devenu réalisateur".

[5] This role was not exclusively male, and women were also smugglers. The Portuguese newspaper *Público* published a detailed journalistic piece on this topic in 2014, accessible through this link: https://www.publico.pt/2014/04/13/portugal/noticia/passadoras-de-homens-e-outras-aventureiras-1631504.

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Fiction cinema has perhaps been less contemplated so far. Filmmaker Laurence Ferreira Barbosa, whose grandfather migrated at seventeen years old, believes that "the Portuguese community in France has no 'image' as such and very few 'fiction'"[6] (Barbosa [translation mine]). This is one of the reasons that motivated her to direct the film *Tous Les Rêves du Monde* [*All the Dreams of the World*] (2017) about a teenage girl in search of her identity between France and Portugal. Ruben Alves's comedy *La Cage Dorée* [*The Guilded Cage*] (2013) is another example of fiction film. A box-office success the year it was released, the film addresses the mixed feelings the first-generation migrants experience about returning to Portugal.

Not surprisingly, the projects mentioned result from an affective and close relation between their makers and the topic of Portuguese migration, due to family ties. Gomes states that "This is a story about Portugal, a story about the people my grandfather helped to reach France, this is his story and mine"[7] (Gomes [translation mine]). Fonseca explains in an interview: "I was born in [the shantytown of] Champigny, I grew up in Champigny, it feels like home. My grandfather, my parents, my uncles, all had a connection with Champigny"[8] (Fonseca and Pereira 2020 [translation mine]). Moreover, Fonseca describes the way this family story shaped his career: "This movie has been a lifelong dream of mine. Sometimes I wonder if I got involved in cinema only to make this movie"[9] (Fonseca and Pereira 2020 [translation mine]). And Alves dedicates his movie "to my parents and to all Portuguese who had no choice other to leave their country for a better life"[10] (Alves and Sousa 2013 [translation mine]).

Similarly, José Vieira's films feature an intimate and personal approach, which permeates his whole body of work on migration. For instance, the DVD booklet *People From the Salto* opens up with his following personal account: "I was six years old and my father forty-eight when he left for France. It was the

[6] In the original: "la communauté portugaise en France n'a pour ainsi dire pas « d'image » et très peu de « fiction »".

[7] In the original: "Esta é uma história sobre Portugal, uma história dos homens que o meu avó ajudou a levar para França, e é também a sua história e a minha".

[8] In the original: "Eu nasci em Champigny, cresci em Champigny, para mim é uma segunda casa. O meu avô, o meu pai, os meus tios, todos têm a ver com essa passagem por Champigny".

[9] In the original: "É um filme com o qual sonho desde há muitos anos. Às vezes penso que fiz cinema para fazer este filme".

[10] In the original: "Este filme é a minha homenagem aos meus pais e a todos os portugueses que se viram obrigados a deixar o próprio país em busca de uma vida melhor".

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winter of 1963 and I know that the journey became engraved in his mind as a painful memory"[11] (Vieira 2005a, 3 [translation mine]). However, for a long time, Vieira's father never told his son what happened during his clandestine passage from Portugal to France. Vieira only knew it was harrowing – by the look of his father's eyes, his sloped shoulders, and his long silence when asked about it (Vieira, 2005a). Later, Vieira's father finally broke his silence when he was eighty-four years old, and his tale is portrayed in his son's documentary film *Le Pays Où L'On Ne Reviens Jamais* (2005). Until then, Vieira respected his father's silence: "I could understand that he wished to forget that terrible journey followed by sixteen long years of exile"[12] (Vieira 2005a, 47 [translation mine]). His silence signaled the traumatic experience of clandestine migration.

The family unit often functions as a repository of individual stories, experiences, and narratives and, as such, as a vector of cultural memory (Hirsch and Smith 2002). Hirsch and Smith prefer the notion of cultural memory rather than collective memory, which is an umbrella term that first and foremost opposes individual memory and summons a sense of collectivity. Cultural memory refers here to the mediated transmission of memory, a process of remembering in the present "by which individuals and groups constitute their identities by recalling a shared past on the basis of common, and therefore often contested, norms, conventions, and practices" (Hirsch and Smith 2002, 5). These acts of transfer of cultural memory not only presuppose a transmitter, a teller, or a witness, but also a receiver, a listener, and a co-witness (Hirsch and Smith 2002). In this way, the individual story resonates through the membership of a group and implicates a sense of collectivity. As Hirsh and Smith argue, "cultural memory is most forcefully transmitted through the individual voice and body – through the testimony of a witness" (Hirsh and Smith 2002, 7).

However, and as illustrated by Vieira father's silence, illegal migration might be experienced as a traumatic event, thereby complicating or blurring the

[11] In the original "J'avais six ans quand mon père est parti pour la France. C'était en hiver 1963, l'année de ses quarante-huit ans. Je sais que ce voyage est planqué dans sa mémoire comme un mauvais souvenir. / Nesse Inverno de 1963, quando o meu pai partiu para França, eu tinha seis anos e ele, quarenta e oito. Sei que a viagem que fez então se escondeu na sua memória como uma má recordação".

[12] In the original: "Je comprenais qu'il ait envie d'oublier ce drôle de voyage, suivi de seize longues années d'exil / Comprrendia que ele tivessse vontade de esquecer essa estranha viagem seguida e dezasseis longos anos de exílio".

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linear transmission of stories and narratives. In such contexts, "the sons and daughters in the chain of familial and thus also of cultural memory attempt to bear witness to the fragmented, interrupted, and mostly traumatic stories they have inherited through verbal, visual, and bodily acts of *postmemory*" (Hirsch and Smith 2002, 10 [emphasis mine]). Postmemory is a concept developed within the legacy of the Holocaust that describes the complex transfer of traumatic memories to a second generation. Postmemory consists in a received memory "distinct from the recall of contemporary witnesses and participants" since it is composed through inherited stories and images, a memory that nevertheless implicates and shapes the generation of postmemory (Hirsh 2012, 3). This second generation may feel compelled to the retelling of the parents' stories as an act of 'ventriloquism' (Lefkovitz 1997).

Perhaps it was because of his father's long-lasting silence, or perhaps it was because his father finally spoke up, but Vieira searched for other migrant stories of the *salto*. To this aim, Vieira went to Seixas, a small Portuguese village in the north to interview people who migrated illegally to France. There, only a river separates Portugal from Spain, a small distance away, and the village quickly emptied during the Portuguese massive exile to France in the 1960s and 1970s. At the beginning of the film *The Divided Photograph* (La *Photo Déchirée* / *A Fotografia Rasgada*] the voice narration confides: "I [José Vieira] have come as a man chasing after his childhood memories, imagining that by searching for the story of our past in that of others, we may find *a collective memory*"[13] (Vieira 2001, 3:35-3:43 [emphasis mine]).

Indeed, Vieira's search for mirroring experiences and stories of migration is an attempt to find or to constitute a collective memory. This shared past remembrance is currently located within the span of two or three generations: the first generation of migrants that directly transmitted their experiences to their children, and their grandchildren. In this context, it is not surprising that a second and third generation of Portuguese migrants strives, through filmmaking, to forge a collective memory by exploring family stories. According to Cardoso, "[t]he second generation [cinema] is currently seeking to make sense of their bond with

[13] *The Divided Photograph* is the only film in the DVD collection that has English subtitles that I transcript in this article. For quotes from the other films of the collection and the booklet, the translations are mine.

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Portugal (and the Portuguese culture) by untangling the most intimate family relations"[14] (Cardoso 2007, 65 [translation mine]). Furthermore, this filmic revision of the past that first seeks to address "an absence of images or of representation"[15] constitutes a way to question the gaps and inaccuracies of the official history regarding the Portuguese migration of that period (Cardoso 2007, 64). Since the past is a construction built in the present, what is remembered, as well as what is forgotten, has political relevance and implications to historical transmission. Indeed, according to Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith:

> What we know about the past, and thus our understanding of the present, is shaped by the voices that speak to us out of history; relative degrees of power and powerlessness, privilege and disenfranchisement, determine the spaces where witnesses and testimony may be heard or ignored. (Hirsch and Smith 2002, 12)

For this reason, the point of view of the disenfranchised is particularly present in 'alternative archives' that differ from canonical archives – official, administrative, and institutional archives. The latter convey the point of view of the ruling class, which has the political power to make the law. According to Jacques Derrida, these official archives "in effect state the law: they recall the law and call on or impose the law" (Derrida 1995, 10). Such ascendance over the official archives is particularly evident in the context of an authoritarian regime such as the Portuguese *Estado Novo* ruled by an elite. In contrast, alternative archives encompass a wide range of practices such as "visual images, music, ritual and performance, material and popular culture, oral history, and silence" (Hirsch and Smith 2002, 12). In addition, alternative archives engage with the politically charged past in affective terms, living "not just in museums, libraries, and other institutions but in more personal and intimate spaces, and significantly, also within cultural genres" (Cvetkovich 2003, 244). In this vein, visual aesthetic practices may function as archival practices that delve into the past in alternative paths and illuminate non-dominant histories (Gopinath 2018). Since "[t]he contribution of migrants is undermined in historiography and Portuguese public

[14] In the original: "La deuxième génération essaie maintenant d'éclaircir sa relation avec le Portugal (et la culture portugaise) en clarifiant les relations familiales les plus intimes".
[15] In the original: "qui commence par une image absente ou un vide representative".

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discourses"[16], and "the Portuguese migration is still a phenomenon that Portuguese elites prefer to keep silent"[17] (Pereira 2012, 429 [translation mine]), I thus turn to an alternative archive made of filmic and aesthetic practices produced by José Vieira, a son of migrants. In the next section, the story of the Portuguese migration to France a *salto* is told in the first person, from interviews gathered mainly from the film *The Divided Photograph*, but also the short films *Paris, Seixas, Londres*, *Passagers Clandestins* / *Passageiros Clandestinos*, and *Complices d'Évasions* / *Cúmplices de Evasão*. I consider these interviews as an alternative archive of a past that lacks consistent representation within the Portuguese national context. For this reason, I opt to describe the journey of the *salto* from the point of view of the personal narratives of Vieira's films.

3. The *Salto* in the First Person

In the film *The Divided Photograph*, our first protagonist, Carolina Malheiro, is a woman who crossed the liquid frontier of the river between Portugal and Spain with her infant daughter and other companions at night. As a woman, Malheiro represents a minority of the Portuguese migrants of that period, since the heteropatriarchal nation-state was less tolerant regarding female exile (Pereira 2012). Women were not able to legally migrate without the permission of their husbands, or their parents if single, putting them in a similar category as children (Pereira 2012). The majority of migrants were men from 18 to 45 years old eager to make a living for themselves and their family (Pereira 2012). By restricting migration to clandestinity, the Portuguese regime discouraged the migration of women and children, since departure implied a risky and physically challenging journey (Pereira 2012). In turn, the fact that migrants were predominantly male, either clandestine or not, contributed to their financial investment back in Portugal, their imminent return to reunite with their family, and prudent behavior abroad (Pereira 2012).

Regardless, there were Portuguese women migrants, as the case of Carolina Malheiro illustrates. She is filmed telling her story on the very river banks she

[16] In the original: "A contribuição dos migrantes é negligenciada na historiografia e nos discursos públicos portugueses".

[17] In the original: "a emigração continua a ser até aos nossos dias um fenómeno que as elites preferem calar".

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had to illegally traverse *a salto* decades before as if the site could capture the memory of the journey and perform as a witness. In the beginning, her son is also present, at times nodding his head during the narrative – he does not speak in this film but shares his experience as a child of Portuguese immigrants in France in the film *Passagers Clandestins / Passageiros Clandestinos*. For Carolina Malheiros, part of the journey was made by boat, in which they all laid down and hid. Afraid, their smuggler, the *passador*, left them in the middle of a strand and the group walked the rest in the river, sometimes half-deep in the water. They all were terrified, not only of being caught by the Spanish authorities but also of their violent retaliation, which often included shooting.

Why risk your life by drowning or being shot by the authorities? According to Fernando Barreiro, the second protagonist also filmed by the river, "[w]e were under the yoke of the Salazar regime. We couldn't get a passport to leave legally. We had to do it illegally. Salazar wouldn't let anyone leave the country. *He preferred to see us starve rather than let us leave*" (Vieira 2001, 11:03- 11:23 [emphasis mine]). Besides misery, poverty, and hunger in the metropolitan land, the colonial war was raging in Africa since 1961. Angola, Guinea Bissau, and Mozambique, once colonies of the Portuguese empires, were now seeking and fighting for the freedom and independence that was denied by the Portuguese regime. As a result, the Portuguese male youth was drafted into the military forces to resolve the conflict overseas. Many preferred to risk their lives to cross the European borders rather than to go to war in Africa. From 1961 to 1972, the number of deserters grew from approximately 11.6% to 20.3% and Victor Pereira notes that in 1965, in three villages near the border, 90% of boys failed to attend the compulsory recruit inspection (Pereira 2012). From 1969 onward, the Portuguese state became more tolerant towards clandestine migration, except in situations of desertion. Indeed, illegal migrants were no longer punished with prison sentences and only had to pay fines, while desertion was always criminalized until the end of the regime (Pereira 2012).

However, this did not dissuade young boys to leave, such as the case of our third protagonist, António Henriques, whose mother told it was better to flee abroad than to join the army in the colonial war. Perhaps mothers were more sympathetic than fathers, whose role in the household mimicked that of Salazar in the motherland – a theme explored in Vieira's film *Les Chants du Déserteur* / *Os*

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Cantos do Desertor. In that film, several men explain they did not want to die or to return crippled from the war overseas like so many others. Their mothers had preferred to watch them leave. However, migrating *a salto* meant to be considered a traitor to the nation. The shame was passed on to the family of the deserter, especially on the father, who, arguably like the head of the nation, had not been able to rule his household. Some fathers cut out their sons from the family. Relations and communications were severed.

These are the three protagonists of the film *The Divided Photograph*, the only ones that are named (through subtitles) and filmed narrating their stories at their own pace in quiet sites. But there are other unnamed contributions, filmed in lively and informal settings of the village of Seixas, such as the local supermarket (frequented mostly by women) or the local coffee/pub (only men). There, talks on the topic of illegal migration flow in a way that is more scattered and more spontaneous: some have migrated *a salto* and want to share their thoughts, others have not, but still want to participate. For instance, a woman jumps into the conversation in the local shop, and she tells her story. At sixteen years old, she started out by car, then continued by boat, then walked, then took a bus to Vigo in Spain, then a train to San Sebastian, then more walking, then in Hendaye – the city border between Spain and France – she finally took a train to Paris. During all this time, she carried her belongings in a small plastic bag. She jokes that, at least, Linda de Souza had a suitcase (Suza was a singer and icon of Portuguese migrants) (Vieira 2001). Others wore several layers of clothes, dispensing any bags or suitcases, to avoid the authorities' attention.

For those who successfully crossed the Portuguese-Spanish border, there was still a long way to go. A common scheme was to travel in the Spanish territory in trucks of livestock covered with tarp. This would mean a several hours journey to reach the Spanish mountains bordering the French frontier. The truck ride was harrowing: "It was suffocating, we were crowded together, all standing up. We rode for hours like that, holding onto each other, tightly packed. […] We were all on our feet, just like cattle!" (Vieira 2001, 25:27-25-51). Henriques is not sure of the number of people in that truck ride, maybe a hundred, maybe more. Closely huddled for hours with no possibility to even urinate properly, some could not take it, and were sick or fainted. Some died. In the film *Seixas, Paris,*

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Londres, there is an interviewee who says she was the only woman[18] in her passage *a salto*. Accompanied by her cousins, there were two casualties in her journey by truck (Vieira 2005b). Nobody noticed during the ride, only when they did not get up at the end (Vieira 2005b). For Mário Teixeira, the truck ride was the most difficult moment of his life: "I wished I were dead, the suffering was such that I hoped that the truck crashed or fell into a ravine, I just wanted the suffering to stop"[19] (Vieira 2005c, 01:46-01:57 [translation mine]).

In the Pyrenees mountains, the journey was even more difficult: it was made on foot in a treacherous mountain walk guided by the smugglers. Those who were not able to keep up were left behind, never to be seen again. In addition, migrants would often be persecuted by the Spanish police. For António Henriques, his companions and himself had to run away from the police three or four times. But for him, "the worst part was the thirst. I'll never forget how thirsty we were, all the time, always looking for something to drink. It was winter, but we were thirsty. I don't know if it was due to all the walking in the mountains, or to fear, but we were always thirsty" (Vieira 2001, 27:51-27:58). When his group finally arrived at a big farm in the mountains, they were 200 people, an average daily number of migrants at that stop.

The woman who traveled with her cousins says that they walked for so long that "we lost our minds, we were completely disoriented"[20] (Vieira 2005b, 08:00-08:05). Others tell that the sole of their shoes did not resist so much walking, and they continued barefoot. Manuel Dias and José Maria Pereira, in the short film *Complices d'Évasions* / *Cúmplices de Evasão*, confide that "the journey took so long, it was so dreadful, we thought we would never see the end of it. At some point, we would have surrendered to the police, had we seen any. I just wanted to give up, it was unbearable"[21] (Vieira 2005d, 00:47-01:03 translation, mine]).

A typical journey from Portugal to France in these conditions took approximately 20 to 25 days, during which people had no idea of their location

[18] In this film, none of the interviewees are identified, they are only credited at the end. Since there are other women in the film, I was not able to identify the name of this witness.

[19] In the original: "J'ai voulu mourir, j'ai voulu que le camion, tellement que je soufrais, que le camion s'estompe, que le camion tombe dans un ravin, je ne voulais plus souffrir comme ça".

[20] In the original: "Nous avions perdu la raison, nos sens se brouillaient".

[21] In the original: "Le voyage a été tellement long et insupportable, qu'on en voyait jamais la fin. Moi je pense qu'à un moment donné, il y aurait eu des flics, on se serait rendu aux flics, moi j'ai eu envie de me rendre, j'ai eu envie d'abandonner, tellement c'était insupportable".

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and trajectory. Blindly following their *passador*, they were at his mercy, completely vulnerable. Manuel Dias recalls a moment of respite when, after countless days of walking, they reached a farm where they ate a warm meal served by kind women: "Until that moment, we had been outside life. We lived like sheep in the mountains, and we walked like zombies at night"[22] (Vieira 2005d, 12:06-12.17 [translation mine]). Dias also describes his feelings of disorientation as soon as he left the last Portuguese landmark (the village Aranhas) as losing "sense of space or time. We lost track of time because we lived outside time. I know the place from where I departed, I know I arrived in Lyon [France], but between these places, it was a no man´s land".[23] (Vieira 2005d, 09:54-10:24 [translation mine]).

His companion José Maria Pereira says they have forgotten most of the *salto* nowadays, but that it would have made an incredible film had it been possible to record it at the time (Vieira 2005d). Rather, the illegal border crossing of the Portuguese migration exists and is accessed through the stories told by the clandestine protagonists. To be sure, individual and collective narratives are not "'transparent' records of histories of struggle" but they do "connect subjects to social relations" (Lowe 1996, 156). This means that these narratives open up the possibility to acknowledge social, political, national, and transnational frameworks from the subjective, affective, and lived migration experience of individuals and groups (Cvetkovitch 2003). In the next section, I discuss another important medium conveying memory in personal terms, which is relevant for *People from the Salto*: photographs and, in particular, family pictures.

4. Family Pictures as Repository of Memory

The Divided Photograph begins with a close-up sequence of hands tearing in two a portrait of a man – likely to be Vieira´s father, given the resemblance of his pictures in the booklet – and giving one of the halves away. This gesture is a *mise-en-scène* of the film's title. It constituted a strategic communication between the clandestine migrant and the family that stayed in Portugal. At the moment of

[22] In the original: "Jusqu'à présent, on avait été en dehors de la vie. On avait vécu comme des moutons dans la montagne, en marchant la nuit comme des zombies"

[23] In the original: "sans aucun repère en terme de temps ni en terme d'espace. Nous avions perdu la notion du temps, parce que nous vivions hors du temps. Je sais d'où je suis parti, je sais que je suis arrivé à Lyon, entre ces deux repères il y a un 'no man's land'".

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departure, the migrant would give one of the halves to family members and would keep the other. Upon safe arrival, the migrant would send the other half of the picture to the family, who could attest to the veracity of the message by reuniting the halves of the picture. Thereby reassured, the family would finally pay the *passador*. Receiving the second half would certainly be a relief, having in mind that some migrants were deceived by the *passadores*, caught by the authorities, injured or deceased during the way, especially in the mountains Pyrénee between France and Spain. The divided photograph is also a powerful symbol of the rupture and uprooting caused by the process of migration.

The longest of the seven films featured in the collection *People from the Salto*, *The Divided Photograph* (52 minutes) is also an autobiographical account of Vieira family's exile to France in the 1960s. In both the film and the DVD booklet, the narration is presented by an 'I' [I, José Vieira] or a 'We' [We, Vieira's family]. Both the voice narration and the written first-person account narrate the migratory phenomena from the point of view of Vieira's family and this subjective retelling summons at times explanations on the socio-political context that fueled the enormous flow of the Portuguese illegal immigration. The latter are illustrated with archival images from the period of 1960-1970s: an impressive archive gathered from news reports, newspapers, films, propaganda, and official and administrative documents. In this way, both the film and the booklet intertwine archival and testimonial materials in which the autobiographical narrative anchors itself. They both eloquently evince the interwoven aspects of personal and family history and of official and institutional accounts.

Furthermore, in the film *The Divided Photograph*, the official archive is always presented in black and white, as if encrusted in the past. In contrast, the interviewees are filmed in colors. Much older than they were when they illegally crossed the border *a salto*, they exercise a process of remembrance for the camera in the present. They evoke a past in a 'now'. But there are also other images, which are filmed in black and white and/or Super 8 that illustrate past memories and invoke an emotional landscape (Cardoso 2007). In this sense, music also plays an important role in the film, ranging from ethnographic Portuguese music from the north that paints the rural atmosphere from where many migrants came from, to famous protest music from that period (namely by Adriano Correia de

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Oliveira, José Mário Branco, and José Afonso). In addition, there are many static shots of old black and white photographs, mostly family pictures. The DVD booklet also gathers several pictures of Vieira's family, three of which divide the booklet into three sections: the first picture depicts Vieira's family in 1956 before the migration in the section titled "The Year my Father Departed for France"[24]; the second was taken in France in 1966 at the church steps at the beginning of the section "The Builders Lived in *Barracas*"[25]; and the third is a Sunday reunion in 1968 nearby the shantytown of Champigny in the section "They Came for the Visa"[26] (Vieira 2005a, 2-3; 24-25; 38-39 [translation mine]).

Photographs have a crucial role in the ensemble of the seven films of the collection *People from the Salto*. Many participants recall past events by showing personal photographs and other documents such as a train ticket, poems, and other things. However, there is something distinct in the film *The Divided Photograph* and the DVD booklet. Indeed, in both the documentary film *The Divided Photograph* and the booklet, the photographs are family pictures from the director himself, suggesting a shared experience with those of his interviewees. Photographs are perhaps the only medium that was able to record a certain memory of the Portuguese migration of that period (Cardoso 2007). This certainly relates to the indexical nature of photography or what Roland Barthes calls the 'That-has-been' of photography: photographs often function as evidence, as proof that something has been there (Barthes 2000).

However, photography is more than just recording and documenting. Photographs, and in particular family photographs, "'move us'. They move us to affect and to be affected", as put by Tina Campt in her sensible research on family albums as archives of the African diaspora in Europe (Campt 2012, 16). The fact that photography also reclaims the importance of affects and emotions makes it a potential tool to "critique conventional archives and documentary, specifically their relation to modes of power and domination. As an archival object, the photograph's power derives as much from its affective magic as from

[24] In the original: "L'année oú mon père est parti pour la France / O ano em que o meu pai partiu para a França".

[25] In the original: "Les maçons habitaient dans des barraques / Os pedreiros moravam em barracas".

[26] In the original: "Les hommes qui venaient pour les papiers / Os homens que vinham por causa dos documentos".

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its realist claims" (Cvetkovitch 2014, 276). Therefore, the use of family pictures inscribes the migration experience into personal, affective, and affiliative circles. This explains the reason why family pictures are so prevalent in artistic and cultural representations of migration by the postgeneration (Hirsch 2012). In sum, and as Jo Spence and Patricia Holland have suggested, family pictures "can operate at this junction between personal memory and social history, between public myth and personal unconscious. *Our memory is never fully 'ours*', nor are the pictures ever unmediated representations of our past" (Spence and Holland, *apud* Hirsch 1997, 13-14 [emphasis mine]).

José Vieira's films portray his personal and family story of migration because this part of Portuguese history is also his own (Vieira and Viana, 2017). Moreover, this part of Portuguese history also concerns many others who share the same experience and this is why Vieira speaks of collective memory. However, this collectivity and these past events are yet to be duly inscribed into the national Portuguese narrative of the past. The archival practices of documentary film and others contribute to this aim. As Vieira states: "I felt the urgent need to speak to dismantle a hegemonic discourse that constructs oblivion, in an attempt to build a collective memory and history of those who had to flee Portugal in the 1960s and of all other migrants, regardless of their origin"[27] (Vieira and Viana 2017, [translation mine]).

4. Final Considerations: The Past We Live In

Besides stories of the journey, *People from the Salto* gives an account of what happened after the arrival of the Portuguese migrants in France. The challenges, the obstacles, the difficulties, did not end with the journey, with the *salto*. Many Portuguese migrants lived in shantytowns, and most were exploited by their *employers* since they were *sans-papiers*. Only with the advent of the military coup on April 25, 1974, which ended the dictatorial regime, interrupted the massive flow of Portuguese migration. The harrowing experience of being clandestine silenced many Portuguese migrants for a long time, and still does. For

[27] In the original: "J'ai senti le besoin vital qu'on prenne la parole pour déconstruire un discours dominant qui fabriquait l'oubli, pour tenter d'esquisser une mémoire collective et une histoire commune à ceux qui ont fui le Portugal dans les années 60 et à tous les immigrés d'où qu'ils viennent".

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Vieira's father, there were simply no words, even when he finally tried to break the silence at more than eighty years old:

> Now that he wanted to speak, his memory was faulting. While he could not remember the year of his departure, he kept an exact memory of the stories of the people who came to our house seeking help to fill the documents. He remembered them, the voice thick with emotion. So many dead clandestine, so much humiliation and suffering. He stopped in the middle of a sentence and tears started flowing[28] (Vieira 2005a, 47 [translation mine]).

The retrieval of memories can be painful at times, and sometimes even seem impossible to trace back. In 2016, Vieira´s daughter, Lola Vieira, pursued a similar task as her father before her: the retrieving of memories in the form of visual aesthetic practices. She directed a documentary film titled *Mémoire Bleue* [*Blue Memory*], on the activist movement Convergence 84, in which her father was involved. In 1984, young migrants from different origins – Portuguese, Black, Asian, and Arab, the latter three related with former French colonies from Africa, the Caribbean, Indochina, and the Maghreb – had departed on a month-long journey on moped across France that would join in Paris, organizing along the way debates and demonstrations on equality. Thirty years later, the people Lola interviews have difficulties in remembering. Her father, whose voice we hear while he is off-camera, looks at pictures of the event, trying and failing to reconstitute past events, to recognize people, and retrieve the past. And in this emotional process, José Vieira, just like his father, also feels the voice breaking and the tears coming.

As poetically expressed by Lori Hope Lefkovitz: "The memories in my hope chest are sepia-tinted, washed in red, and then painted over in white. […] Inherited memories are my animating ghosts" (Lefkovitz 1997, 43). Perhaps the retrieving of memories is sometimes an inherited task, as a duty to bear witness for the memories of our forebears; memories that may be important for the

[28] In the original: "Maintenant qu'il voulait parler, la mémoire commençait à lui faire défaut. Il ne se rappelait plus l'année de son départ, mais gardait un souvenir précis des histoires que racontaient les hommes qui venaient à la maison pour remplir les papiers. Il les évoquait avec émotion, la voix étranglée. Tant de morts clandestines, tant d'humiliations et de souffrances. Il s'est interrompu au milieu d´une phrase et des larmes ont coulé. / Mas agora que queria falar, a memória começava a faltar. Não se lembrava do ano em que partira, mas guardava uma recordação precisa das histórias que contavam os homens que vinham à nossa barraca para preencherem os documentos. Evocava-os com emoção, com a voz estrangulada. Tantas mortes clandestinas, tantas humiliações e tanto sofrimento. No meio de uma frase parou e as lágrimas começaram a correr."

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coming generations. Vieira explains in the DVD booklet and in the film *The Divided Photograph* he realized that he wanted to tell (t)his story when he came across the news of the death of 58 illegal Chinese migrants in a truck on their way to England (Vieira 2005; Vieira 2005a). It was on June 19, 2000, a Monday, and since then Vieira also focused on other communities of migrants, such as Romani people. We hear such news daily, has anything changed?

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