

**Literary Connections
Between South
Africa and the
Lusophone World**

Literary Connections Between South Africa and the Lusophone World

Edited by Anita de Melo,
Ludmylla Lima, and
John T. Maddox IV

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*For Jacira M. Lima (1951–2020)
and in memory of those who lost their lives to COVID-19*

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Introduction

SOUTHERN CONNECTIONS

This book is about “southern connectivity”¹—literary connections between South Africa and Portuguese-speaking countries. It maps out some of the influences South Africa has had in the Lusophone world and reciprocally the Lusophone world on South Africa and how these influences surface in literature. In doing so, it outlines some possible theoretical and methodological starting points for a comparativism framework that targets, transnationally, literatures from the South. In this sense, this volume is an additional step to renew the critical potentialities of comparative literary studies (Spivak 2009) as well as of humanistic criticism itself (Said 2004) as South Africa and the Lusophone world (except Portugal) are outside the spatial and cultural dimension usually defined as European/North American. In this sense and due to the evident geographical and socio-historical links between these spaces, critical scholarship on these literary connections can potentially contribute to unprecedented perspectives of representational practices within a broader contextual dimension; thus, providing the emergence of what Boaventura de Sousa Santos called “epistemologies of the South” (Santos 2016) since it considers cultural exchanges in the space of so-called “overlapping territories” and “intertwined histories” (Said 1993). My choice of predicate, “unprecedented perspectives,” is justified since this volume brings into play a critical comparative framework that, although is in line with recent studies on the Indian Ocean (Hofmeyr 2007), targets connections within a geographical area yet unmapped. This volume also speaks to the fact that world literature has recently re-emerged and become central to thinking about the discipline of comparative literature. In *Thinking World Literature from Lusophone Perspectives* (2021), Krista Brune and Thayse Lima, referring to research carried out by both Brazilian and Portuguese literary critics, state that the works of these scholars have been offering “original approaches to world literature that differ significantly from its theorization in Anglo-American,

Francophone, and Germanic contexts,” and that it is imperative to contribute to critical conversations that examine “Luso-Afro-Brazilian literary studies and world literature from distinct geographic, historical, and theoretical perspectives” (Brune and Lima 2021, 2). Furthermore, Maria Paula Meneses (2008) points out that diverse postcolonial spaces have developed in different ways, and that the twenty-first century requires a “more complex ethnography that makes emerging epistemic alternatives visible. One of the most critical elements of this ethnography is the disciplinary structure of modern knowledge” (Meneses 2008, 6). Like the diversity of postcolonial approaches, the chapters of this volume testify to the richness of subjects when these comparisons are brought together as each chapter considers cultural exchanges and employs frameworks that investigate literary texts across linguistic and cultural boundaries. It should be noted that Lusophone African countries have multilingual populations who share strong cultural and linguistic ties with other African nations and that the production of knowledge in these spaces, including literature, refers to intercontinental connections. Noticeably, and since Mozambique shares a border with South Africa, Mozambican literature abundantly refers to its “Anglophone” neighbor. My choice of placing quotes on the word “Anglophone” also underscores a caveat of our approach, which is that in the specific context of Africa and to a much lesser extent in Brazil, the examination of literary works written in autochthonous languages is yet to be carried out. At present, we are able to examine only literary texts written in Portuguese and in English. Conspicuously, a future postcolonial approach must contest the predominance of Europhone languages as the only instruments of production and spread of knowledge, particularly in Africa.

Although there are a few fundamental research studies that investigate the connections between South Africa and Portuguese-speaking African countries (Chapman 2003; Helgesson 2009; Fasselt 2014, 2016) and African comparative studies with a focus on Lusophone Africa (Brugioni 2019), this volume expands this timely approach to incorporate Portugal and Brazil, a key factor in the direction of a Global South literary criticism field (Junior 2012). Emulating these previous studies, this volume challenges the notions of Lusophony and Anglophony as it works with the existence of cross-linguistic spaces of contact that resist categorization and homogenization, reiterating that literary production, irrespective of its context, vocalizes with other contexts “numa geografia menos habitual” (a less usual geography) (Schurmans 2016, 5). It is a truism that cross-cultural interactions and border literature take place between South Africa and Mozambique, and, to some extent, between South Africa and Angola, like what D. Emily Hicks wrote in the context of the U.S. and Mexico border writing (1991). Writing about these connections, Rebecca Fasselt has stressed that although recently comparative studies dedicated to South-South connections in the African continent

are on the rise, these studies tend to center particularly on the Indian Ocean world; and that studies on the relationship between South African literature and other African literatures in general “appears to be taking a good deal to forge” (Fasselt 2015, 24).

The chapters collected for this volume cover a wide range of topics, coherent with each other in revealing the connections between these aforementioned spaces. They contribute to reinforcing the critical and ongoing conversations on comparative and world literature from the South, thus proposing clues to other further research. The first section of this volume, “The Presence of the Portuguese in South Africa,” depicts the Portuguese, who encountered the inhabitants of the Cape of Good Hope, and whose long-lasting colonial relationship with Africa continues to have repercussions today. Contributing to contemporary critical discourse on colonial and postcolonial literary approaches, in chapter 1, “Revisiting the Adamastor myth in Fernando Pessoa’s ‘O Mostrengo’ and André Brink’s *The First Life of Adamastor*,” Paulo Ferreira argues that Pessoa’s take on Adamastor “epitomizes fearlessness by portraying the nation’s heroism”; in this sense, the poem is “Pessoa’s modernist ode for a resurgence in national pride.” Ferreira contends that Brink’s novella can be read “as an allegory to colonialism”; i.e., it challenges conventional history in order to offer an alternate representation of the past. By doing this, Brink, insists Ferreira, “recreates an origin-story version which emphasizes its refashioning from a twentieth-century perspective which speaks to its contemporaneity and revision of South Africa’s historiography.” The poet is also the focus of chapter 2, “A Thread of Gold: Fernando Pessoa, Hubert Jennings, and Classical Education in Durban.” Jeffrey Murray investigates Pessoa’s classical education in the colonial city of Durban, South Africa, through the examination of select works by both Pessoa and his first South African biographer Hubert Jennings. Murray argues that Pessoa’s classical education in Durban not only “directly contributed much to his literary output, particularly his early, English-language works, such as *Antinous* (1918) and *Inscriptions* (1921), but also his early Portuguese-language works, such as several texts on the Roman emperor Julian,” it remains possible to investigate this period of the greatest Portuguese modernist poet’s life. Hence, Murray reports minutely and distinctly on the classical education offered in Durban during the distinctive periods Pessoa and Jennings lived, which will interest not only scholars of Pessoa, but also classicists in general interested in contemporary (including early twentieth century) reception of the classics. The last chapter of this section, “Van der Post’s Postcolonial Melancholia and Zimler’s Reparational Mourning in Novels on the San,” compares the treatment of the San people in fictional works by South African Laurens van der Post and U.S. expatriate in Portugal Richard Zimler. Employing a framework based on Gilroy’s notion of “postcolonial melancholy” and Butler’s

“melancholia,” John T. Maddox IV argues that Van der Post’s text endorses “colonial ideologies” while Zimler’s text is crafted in a such way that it conveys sadness for the fate of the San people while it also connects “the struggles of diverse marginalized groups.” Maddox concludes that Zimler’s novel on the enslavement of a Cape San is a form of postcolonial mourning that (re)humanizes the enslaved. Maddox cautions that, although Zimler’s novel “challenges readers to ask how the enslaved can be indemnified for their suffering today,” and in this sense it presents the point of view of the oppressed, it is imperative that San writers, who are “representing their living culture,” be read as well.

The second section of this volume, “Postcolonial Writings in Southern Africa,” starts with chapter 4, “Ruy Duarte de Carvalho’s Border Literature in *As paisagens propícias*.” In this chapter, Alice Giroto examines Carvalho’s novel in view of the author’s own interpretation of the South, a place of invention, as he declared in his book of poetry *Chão de Oferta* (1972), or yet, and as Giroto demonstrates in this chapter, as “a whole order of both emotional and epistemological meanings.” In her analysis of *As paisagens propícias*, in which Severo, the protagonist, travels from Angola to Cape Agulhas, South Africa, Giroto draws upon studies on border literature to demonstrate that Carvalho’s aesthetic and political (anticolonialist) project imagines southern Africa (Angola, Namibia, and South Africa) through overlapping while mapping the inter-related histories of the region in order to decenter Angola as the only point of reference of the colonial order. Giroto argues that it is only in the context of this extended geographical and cultural space that new epistemologies can rise, i.e., “a national project based on alternative and truly postcolonial horizons.” Southern Africa entanglements is also the focus of chapter 5, “‘Why Do They Kill Us?’: The Strange Neighborhood and Necropolitics in Lilia Momplé’s Novel *Neighbours*.” Reflecting on the Mozambican Civil War and the relevance of literature in reconstructing history from the perspective of silenced voices, Nilza Laice authors this chapter by engaging with Achille Mbembe’s perspectives on the limits of sovereignty and Nadine Gordimer’s discussion on the South African apartheid regime. Laice argues that Momplé’s characters in *Neighbours*, depicted through their traumatic experiences in postindependent Mozambique, correspond to “national immigrants,” a term Laice has coined based on her interpretation of Momplé’s novel; to Laice, national immigrants “correspond to displaced and peripheral characters who are marginalized” and, therefore, find themselves in an extremely vulnerable position, with no safe place to exist. Laice’s reading of Momplé’s novel not only sheds light on the historical events of apartheid repression, violence, limits of sovereignty, but it also raises the question from the point of view of those killed without even understanding why they were being killed, which is obviously, she articulates, an example of the banality

of evil. Completing this section, chapter 6, “Last Dinner at Polana: Peter Wilhelm’s *LM*,” offers an analysis of a relatively unheard-of novella, *LM and other stories*, written by the South African writer Peter Wilhelm and whose setting is a hotel in Maputo. Ludmylla Lima unfolds a thorough analysis of the novella comparing the “social processes that took place in South Africa and Mozambique in 1975.” Since the protagonist of this novella is a white South African male, this piece communicates, literally, an example of the problematic white gaze (Kelley 2002). Lima speculates that the protagonist’s condescending attitude towards even other white (and colonizer) Portuguese is a symptom of Portuguese subalternity *vis-à-vis* the British and as proposed by Boaventura Santos (2003). As a conceptual framework, Lima engages with Pamila Gupta’s (2017) discussions on “ethnography of decolonization” to show how this novella blends historical and ethnographic dimensions.

The last section of this volume, “The Role of the Writer,” draws together comparisons between postcolonial Lusophone metafiction writers and South Africa’s most internationally acclaimed writer, J. M. Coetzee. Chapter 7, “The Degrading Figuration of the Intellectual on the Periphery of Capitalism: A Comparative Study of Chico Buarque’s *Essa gente* and J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*,” offers an analysis of Buarque’s and Coetzee’s novels that interprets both intellectuals as torn between aesthetics and engagement. Referring to conceptual theorizations proposed by the Warwick Research Collective on world literature, Edvaldo A. Bergamo demonstrates how both novels, *Essa Gente* and *Disgrace*, aesthetically reveal “historical and social content about the contemporary representations of peripheral intellectuals in Brazil and in South Africa.” Both Brazil, particularly the city of Rio de Janeiro, and South Africa are depicted in these novels, particularly their deeply ingrained and unresolved colonial problems (racism, inequality, and violence); Bergamo demonstrates and argues that these problems are aggravated in our contemporary postindustrial age in which neofascist configurations threaten these young democracies. Chapter 8, “Dissident Authorship in Post-colonial Mozambique and Postapartheid South Africa: The Cases of António Quadros and J. M. Coetzee,” focuses on postcolonial white writing in Coetzee and Luso-Mozambican António Quadros. Tom Stennett offers a compelling comparative reading of António Quadro’s ode *Pressaga* and J. M. Coetzee’s novel *Disgrace* by examining analogies between the authors’ positions as dissident white writers. Stennett argues that both Quadro and Coetzee “deploy subversive discursive strategies respectively honed under the distinct censorship contexts of colonial Mozambique and apartheid South Africa to raise inconvenient questions over the place of the white populations in those countries.” The last chapter of this volume, chapter 9, entitled “Narrating the World from Africa: João Paulo Borges Coelho and J. M. Coetzee,” in dialogue with theories of world literature, especially the ideas developed by the Warwick

Research Collective, which focuses on (semi-)peripheral literatures, offers a compelling comparative analysis of representations of social power in the works of João Paulo Borges Coelho and J. M. Coetzee. Among the many scrutinizing arguments Marta Banasiak offers, she accurately points out that while there are undeniably similarities between the works of both writers, Coetzee is a global writer, while Borges Coelho is largely unknown. Banasiak demonstrates how linguistics and economics play a decisive role in shaping this status.

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NOTE

1. I borrow this term "Southern connectivity" from an article by Rebecca Fasselt (2016) on Imraan Coovadia's novel *The Institute for Taxi Poetry*.

Chapter One

Revisiting the Adamastor Myth in Fernando Pessoa's "O Mostrengo" and André Brink's *The First Life of Adamastor*

Paulo Ferreira

The narrative of Luís de Camões's Adamastor, in his epic poem *Os Lusíadas* (1572), has been revisited in the West's literatures in different approaches over the centuries. The focus of this analysis is the reworking of Camões's giant in Fernando Pessoa's poem "O Mostrengo" and André Brink's *The First Life of Adamastor* (1993). Pessoa retraces the monster, and its imagery, in the early twentieth century; however it was interpreted into propaganda during the Estado Novo in Portugal (1932–1974). Likewise, the monster is deconstructed in Brink's *The First Life of Adamastor*, which modernizes the story to tell the landing of the first European seafarers at the Cape from the perspective of the Khoisan people, and it destabilizes the Eurocentric concepts which permeate Camões's poem. The interpretations of the Adamastor myth by Pessoa and Brink emphasize their opposite ideological positions.

From the Greek word *mythos*, "myth" means "story" or "word," and as narratives myths articulate how characters enact events. The term refers to a genre of stories which share characteristics, making it different from other oral narratives. Many definitions of myth repeat aspects of the genre and may be summarized thus: myths are symbolic tales of the past which concern the origin and nature of the universe; they may be connected to beliefs or rituals and may serve to direct social values. Myths are value-based discourses which depict human nature. Therefore, myths cause intrigue because of their metaphorical and narrative appeal.

The definition of myth from folklore studies finds clearest reasoning in William Bascom's article "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives" (1965), in which he explains that

myths are prose narratives which, in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past. They are accepted on faith; they are taught to be believed; and they can be cited as authority in answer to ignorance, doubt, or disbelief. . . . Their main characters are not usually human beings, but they often have human attributes; they are animals, deities, or culture heroes, whose actions are set in an earlier world. (4)

Adamastor is a fabled giant, based on classical mythology, which Camões appropriates in *Os Lusíadas* to embody Nature daunting Vasco da Gama and his seamen from crossing the Cape into the Indian Ocean. In Greek mythology, Adamastor was outcast by Zeus to become a sea cliff. The first known reference to Adamastor in classical literature appears in Sidonius Apollinaris (*Carmina* n.d. XV, 20–22):

Porfyrión Pangaea rapit, Rhodopenque Adamastor
Strymonio cum fonte levat, veniensque superne
intorto calidum restinguit flumine fulmen!¹

Adamastor derives from the classical Greek word *adamastos*, meaning "untameable," and in Camões's poem it is appropriate because the seamen sail round the Cape and tame the monster.

Camões played an important role in Portuguese literature during the Renaissance, and his poetry has attained its significance in the West. *Os Lusíadas* is his most prominent work and has reached the world in translations and editions since its publication in 1572. Camões's notoriety rested on his epic poem rather than on his lyric poetry. It recounts the founding of Portugal in the twelfth century to the achievements of its empire in the sixteenth century. History supplies *Os Lusíadas* its heroes and provides its subject-matter—Gama's voyage and the rounding of the Cape. Camões's intention is to dramatize this voyage because it initiated a period which redefined human history. Gama is the narrator in some passages in the poem. Canto V is dedicated entirely to the narrative of the fleet's journey from Lisbon to Melinde. The stanzas of Canto V describe how his fleet rounds the Cape on its way to India (stanzas 37–60). Here, Gama describes his encounter with Adamastor and the titan tells his tragic story and mutation into the rock of the Cape. When Adamastor manifests himself:

Arrepiam-se as carnes e os cabelos
A mi e a todos, só de ouvi-lo e vê-lo (Camões 2020, v. 40.7–8).²

The titan is preceded by a storm cloud and is depicted as the “De Rodes estranhíssimo Colosso” (Camões 2020, v. 40.2),³ and his form is described as grotesque: “O rosto carregado, a barba esquelada, / Os olhos encovados, e a postura / Medonha e má, e a cor terrena e pálida, / Cheios de terra e crespos os cabelos, / A boca negra, os dentes amarelos” (Camões 2020, v. 39.4–8).⁴

Gama’s meeting with Adamastor does not merely embody the Eurocentric repulsion of the peoples of southern Africa, but evokes fear of the Other. Scholars maintain the titan is a pariah who symbolizes hostility, and therefore he plays the role of the colonial Other. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989), the exploration of Africa was

the dominant paradigm for the self-discovery of the twentieth-century European world in all its self-contradiction, self-doubt, and self-destruction, for the European journey out of the light of Reason into the Heart of Darkness. As such, the more extreme forms of the self-critical and anarchic models of twentieth-century culture which modernism ushered in can be seen to depend on the existence of a postcolonial Other which provides its condition of formation. (158)

Othering relates to power relations and delegitimizing the other when one side is defined against or is privileged in comparison to another in binary oppositions such as gender, class, and ethnicity. This implies a hierarchical relationship wherein the oppressed is cast into a lesser position by the supremacy of the oppressor (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989, 170).

FERNANDO PESSOA’S “O MOSTRENGO”

Centuries later, Camões’s depiction of Adamastor is revisited by Pessoa in “O Mostrengo” in *Mensagem* (1934), which celebrates the role of the figures of the Age of Discovery. It was Pessoa’s intention to pursue the glory days of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in terms of cultural regeneration. *Mensagem* revisits the past of Portugal which was later incorporated into the propaganda of the Estado Novo. The latter was a corporatist and authoritarian regime established in Portugal in 1933, until its end in 1974, based on an adherence to firm Catholic social doctrine and a one-party State which restrained public opinion and preserved traditionalist and nationalist values. The regime prescribed its nationalist values on its people, whose education focused on the exaltation of the nation. Therefore, Pessoa’s poem, a Portuguese cultural milestone, was appropriated by the National Union Party to legitimize its mission statement.

Mensagem ties the history of Portugal to Pessoa's wish to see it overcome the decadence it had fallen into at the turn of the twentieth century. In a copy of the first edition, Pessoa mentions that the forty-four poems which make up *Mensagem* were written between 1913 and 1934, so it is a modernist text, though it broaches nationalism and national mysticism. In a letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, Pessoa writes:

Concordo absolutamente consigo em que não foi feliz a estreia, que de mim mesmo fiz com um livro da natureza de *Mensagem*. Sou, de facto, um nacionalista místico, um sebastianista racional. Mas sou, à parte disso, e até em contradição com isso, muitas outras coisas. E essas coisas, pela mesma natureza do livro, a *Mensagem* não as incluí. (Pessoa 1935, 1)⁵

The lyrical subject in *Mensagem* talks about Portugal's history, and the numen which shaped its heroes when the country was living through two world wars. It is the lyrical voice's endeavor to rekindle Portugal's pride in its Renaissance past. *Mensagem* typifies a modernist characteristic; a movement based on a utopian idea of humanity in the pursuit of progress. As a modernist, Pessoa upends the aesthetics of the nineteenth century and finds new forms of expression.

The language in *Mensagem* is sophisticated and metaphorical as it occasionally uses archaic terms to emulate the Portuguese language of the sixteenth century. Pessoa's aspiration was to render those words, and their symbolic signifiers, ageless to rehabilitate the meaning they held in Camões's poem, albeit in a modernist fashion: “. . . este movimento poético dá-se coincidentemente com um período de pobre e deprimida vida social, de mesquinha política, de dificuldades e obstáculos de toda a espécie à mais quotidiana paz individual e social” (Pessoa 1912, 106).⁶ He yearns for an aesthetic which would end the decadence of the nineteenth century and make way for a modernist mode of expression. His aim was to usher in a period which would see the emergence of bold poets:

E isto leva a crer que deve estar para muito breve o inevitável aparecimento do poeta ou poetas supremos, desta corrente, e da nossa terra, porque fatalmente o Grande Poeta, que este movimento gerará, deslocará para segundo plano a figura, até agora primacial, de Camões . . . precisamente por isso que mais concluível se nos afigura o próximo aparecer de um supra-Camões na nossa terra. (Pessoa 1912, 106-7)⁷

The desire was the emergence of what he termed the “Grande Poeta” or “Supra-Camões” which would topple Camões as the singular Portuguese epic poet, and who would voice the changes needed in the twentieth century. *Mensagem* goads its readers to restore Portugal's past and build a better future.

The exhortation of the past was used by the Estado Novo to disseminate its fascist propaganda in the nineteen thirties. The propaganda the regime used claimed Salazar stood alongside D. Afonso I—the first king of Portugal (1139–1185) and who founded the kingdom where Portuguese national identity was forged. The Estado Novo regime compared Salazar to D. Afonso I because the former was striving to embolden the nation and return Portugal to its former glory. In 1934, Pessoa submitted *Mensagem* for a literary competition organized by the Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional (Secretariat of National Propaganda)—a government department instituted in 1933 responsible for the dissemination of propaganda—and the text was accepted because of its nationalistic theme: “The S.P.N. literary competition’s regulations demanded that, in the case of poetry, works should to be ‘[de] inspiração bem portuguesa’ [‘thoroughly Portuguese in inspiration’] and show an ‘alto sentido de exaltação nacionalista’ [‘a high sense of nationalist feeling’]” (Barreto 2008, 181). In due course, the SPN wanted to lure the elites to the regime and promote its agenda.

The Secretariat tried to bring Pessoa into politics. However, associating Pessoa to the Estado Novo was foiled due to his independent thinking. The Secretariat failed in its objective because *Mensagem* did not win the literary prize: “The planned awarding of the main prize to Pessoa’s book . . . did not proceed as expected. The jury was made up of Nationalists who were against Pessoa’s heretical mysticism, and what many then saw as his ‘defeatism’” (Barreto 2008, 182). Although *Mensagem* did not receive the first prize, the Secretariat praised it as a nationalist poem in an attempt to influence Pessoa to endorse the regime. Critics and political agents emphasized the national mysticism in Pessoa’s poems, so he was forced to declare his work did not validate nationalism. Nevertheless, his poetry was inexorably linked to the regime because of the themes it raised.

Mensagem is a twentieth-century piece of writing: it is a symbolist text made up of forty-four poems in three parts. The second part, called “Mar Português,” refers to Portugal’s Age of Exploration and its empire, and it is where the reader will find the poem “O Mostrengo” as it comprises Pessoa’s vision about the sea-exploring centuries. Pessoa’s poem is the refashioning of Camões’s Adamastor. This figure became popular in the Portuguese imaginary, particularly in the version of *Mensagem*, which places an importance on the nationalistic nature of the episode in *Os Lusíadas*. Firstly, Pessoa gives the character prominence by writing a poem about him and, secondly, fashions a scene which does not happen in *Os Lusíadas*—Pessoa pens a theatrical dialogue between the captain and Adamastor/O Mostrengo.

Pessoa’s “O Mostrengo” is analogous to Camões’s Adamastor. The titan represents the seas, and the captain is Gama. In the first stanza, the lyrical subject describes how the Mostrengo reacts to the approaching ship:

E disse,
 “Quem é que ousou entrar
 Nas minhas cavernas que não desvendo,
 Meus tetos negros do fim do mundo? (Pessoa 2013, lines 5–7)⁸

His question is unanswered because it is a complaint. Seeing rough seas, and sensing death, the captain says out loud: “El-Rei D. João Segundo!” (Pessoa 2013, line 9).⁹ The second stanza provides the reader with one line identifying the Mostrengo’s origin: “E escorro os medos do mar sem fundo?” (Pessoa 2013, line 16).¹⁰ There is no reference to the Cape because it embodies all the adversities the seafarers had to conquer. In the stanza, the Mostrengo’s fear is enhanced as he watches how close the sailors are to his domain:

De quem são as velas onde me roço?
 De quem as quilhas que vejo e ouço? (Pessoa 2013, lines 10–11)¹¹

The captain answers inwards in the same tone as before: “El-Rei D. João Segundo!” (Pessoa 2013, line 18), without addressing the Mostrengo.

The third and last stanza is a reversal in their roles. The captain is the first to speak:

Aqui ao leme sou mais do que eu:
 Sou um Povo que quer o mar que é teu;
 E mais que o mostrengo, que me a alma teme
 E roda nas trevas do fim do mundo,
 Manda a vontade, que me ata ao leme. (Pessoa 2013, lines 22–26)¹²

His intentions are clear, previously concealed by his monosyllabic answers, because he is the symbol of the Portuguese Crown in its endeavor to conquer the seas. Underscoring the courage of the Portuguese people, the scene draws attention to the authoritarian Adamastor because he symbolizes the victory of Portuguese expansion and legitimizes the establishment of an empire.

The title “O Mostrengo” is eerie because, on the one hand, it seems simulated and, on the other, the Mostrengo will reveal the unknown to the seafarers. Firstly, the word *mostrengo* is composed of the word *monstro* and the suffix *-engo*, from Germanic origin and having a derogatory meaning.¹³ Secondly, *mostrengo* is associated with the verb *mostrar*, and the creature will predictably show what is hidden. In symbolic terms, he typifies the seas and its perils, and the captain symbolizes the bravery of the Portuguese people on a mission which must be accomplished. The poem has an epic quality in describing the dichotomy between an insurmountable obstacle—the Mostrengo—and a captain who does not yield. It epitomizes fearlessness by

portraying the nation's heroism; it is Pessoa's modernist ode for a resurgence in national pride.

Modernism is not the lone literary aesthetic to parody classical themes. In postmodernism, myths permeate texts in new forms as authors create myths. Canto V of *Os Lusíadas* has raised interest within South African literature since it stands as an important document in the Cape literary tradition. The presence of Camões's Spirit of the Cape has been refashioned from a twentieth-century perspective by André Brink in *The First Life of Adamastor* (1993). The novella is inspired by the pre-colonial encounters between Africans and Europeans in southern Africa. Its "Introduction" parodies Camões's melodramatic description of Adamastor:

Converte-se-me a carne em terra dura;
 Em penedos os ossos se fizeram;
 Estes membros que vês, e esta figura,
 Por estas longas águas se estenderam.
 Enfim, minha grandíssima estatura
 Neste remoto Cabo converteram
 Os Deuses; e, por mais dobradas mágoas,
 Me anda Tétis cercando destas águas (Camões 2020, v. 59.1–8)¹⁴

The poem is penned in an epic language: "Rather exaggerated; but that is what happens to the truth when writers get their hands on it" (Brink 2000, 5). The narrator hypothesizes the birth of Adamastor: "Suppose there *were* an Adamastor, a model for the giant of Camoens's fanciful history" (Brink 2000, 7). He offers to guide the reader through the original episode: "Brink's closely crafted fable puts Adamastor forth as the eponymous hero . . . the victimized and wilfully misunderstood African" (Monteiro 1996, 144). *The First Life of Adamastor* is a contemporary parodied viewpoint which detaches Adamastor from its once exclusive Eurocentric meaning.

ANDRÉ BRINK'S *THE FIRST LIFE OF ADAMASTOR*

Brink has been a commentator about postcolonialism and apartheid since the nineteen seventies, and has insisted on a writer's engagement with and responsibility to society. Jochen Petzold maintains that Brink's novella ". . . lends itself to a postcolonial reading, as it clearly engages in the project of rewriting South African history from a marginalized point of view, directed against an established master-narrative valorizing the European 'discovery' of Africa" (2000, 52). Brink uses his protagonist T'kama to describe the first encounter of the Khoisan with the Europeans in a way that reveals cultural

differences and satirizes the West, so “. . . the story . . . engages in a criticism of colonial discourse that exposes and subverts its strategies of othering . . .” (Petzold 2000, 52). The colonizer’s discourse was a negative portrayal of non-Europeans, and Brink’s text is its opposite as it calls on its readers to rewrite the story of Adamastor: “But the appropriation which has had the most profound significance in postcolonial discourse is that of writing itself. It is through an appropriation of the power invested in writing that this discourse can take hold of the marginality imposed on it and make hybridity and syncreticity the source of literary and cultural redefinition” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989, 77). *The First Life of Adamastor* is obviously fictitious, so it is not an attempt to reconceive history or tell the truth, but to prompt readers to rethink the moral implications of colonialism.

Postcolonial theory was formulated to address texts and their interpretations of literatures written in colonized countries and it is predominantly based on Otherness; a world divided into opposites (the self and the other). The former is an ordered and rational concept, whereas the latter is chaotic and irrational, and so the construction of the Other is a process of demonization, an “ambivalence at the very heart of authority” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989, 3). Hence, postcolonial literatures, in a way, portray a center and a margin. Homi Bhabha (1994) reasons that the ambivalence in the colonizer’s and colonized relationship is significant in postcolonialism:

. . . the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference. It is this ambivalence that makes the boundaries of colonial positionality—the division of self/other and the question of colonial power—the differentiation of colonizer/colonized—different from both Hegelian master-slave dialectic or the phenomenological projection of “otherness.” (153)

Postcolonial fiction is written to depict the imbalanced power relations founded on this dichotomy. This model relies on the tension between colonizer and colonized, and so postcolonial writers protest against Western forms of binarism (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989, 113). The writer’s endeavor at addressing binarism is articulated in revisiting the Western canon, and reversing the dichotomy, wherein the bad—the colonial Other—is depicted as good.

In the nineteen seventies, Brink’s prose is part of a postcolonial discourse which unambiguously sets out to deconstruct the colonizer’s discourse. In *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (1995), Elleke Boehmer offers a description of the notion of postcoloniality and is useful when reading Brink’s novel:

Rather than simply being the writing which “came after” empire, postcolonial literature is that which critically scrutinizes the colonial relationship. It is writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonial perspectives. As well as change in power, decolonization demanded symbolic overhaul, a reshaping of dominant meanings. Postcolonial literature formed part of that overhaul. To give expression to colonized experience, postcolonial writers sought to undercut thematically and formally the discourses which supported colonization subordination. (3)

The postcoloniality in Brink’s prose is characterized by politically engaged texts. His novel *Looking on Darkness* (1974) signalled a new direction in his fiction, which would become committed literature in exploring the South African political condition. The texts from *Looking on Darkness* generate African voices foregrounding an identifiable South African reality and they are typically postcolonial anti-hegemonic discourses. Brink’s fiction corresponds with an interpretation of postcoloniality which is defined by Boehmer (1995) referring to her approach: “But it does not take the mimetic view that literature simply reflected political and social developments. On the contrary, empire is approached as in the main a textual undertaking—as are the movements which emerged in opposition to empire” (5). The aim of colonization was to enact one’s culture, language, and meaning onto the Other, and apartheid in South Africa is such an example.

The Eurocentric idea of Adamastor is Africanized in *The First Life of Adamastor* when T’kama is introduced—a Khoisan who, in his first life, was Adamastor (Brink 2000, 7). The text broaches political topics by depicting the confrontation between Europeans and non-Europeans, by exploring racism and parodying the West’s idea of uncivilized Africa. Brink indicates that Western myths must be revisited to allow for a new, reimagined postcolonial society able to judge its history. Petzold (2000) says “. . . postcolonial writing will often try to construct those peoples objectified in colonial encounters and marginalized by colonial histories as subjects in the stories of their own past” (47). This process is known as “abrogation” in postcolonial theory: “. . . a rejection of the process by which ‘authenticity’ is granted to the categories of experience authorized by the centre at the expense of those relegated to the margins of Empire” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989, 90). The center’s discourse (*The First Life of Adamastor*) does not want to replace the periphery’s/colonizer’s discourse (Camões’s Adamastor), yet it wants to provide a narrative which exposes and weakens the authoritative one imagined by the empire/center. T’kama is the personification and first-person voice of Adamastor, and he stems from Camões’s reimagining of the giant; however, Brink’s version is from Adamastor’s perspective as he chooses as narrator the spirit of Adamastor, who looks back to his incarnation as T’kama: “. . . in that

life my name was T'kama" (Brink 2000, 14). The narrator claims T'kama's story is the source of inspiration in *Os Lusíadas*.

In *The First Life of Adamastor*, the narrator refutes the substance of the truth in history: "Once upon a time there was and there wasn't" (Brink 2000, 1). With this beginning, which is "a formula I found in a book I can no longer trace, on the history of narrative forms" (Brink 2000, 1), the narrator undermines certainty in history, and so the text suggests there are other ways of representing the past. The fairy-tale-like formulation " . . . highlights the question of truth by turning the traditional opening on its head, in a paradoxical double movement that both asserts and denies reality" (Petzold 2000, 49). There is a deconstruction of the historical narrative by blurring the distinction between history and fiction. The choice of narrating the European encounter with southern Africa, from the viewpoint of the Khoisan, challenges the epic stories about conquest in *Os Lusíadas*. By contrast, in postmodern readings " . . . Adamastor has come to stand for many things. It begins as the symbol of African threat and danger to the European sailor, transforms itself into the symbol of the European menace to Africa itself . . ." (Monteiro 1996, 121), so Brink's narrative is an allegory of European colonialism: "From the beginning we had known that it was only a matter of time. . . . Our shore was exposed and open, like a woman already taken. The way it had been it could never be again" (Brink 2000, 120). Brink's and Camões's divergent interpretations of Adamastor accentuate their opposed ideologies. The myth encloses different historical perspectives which are variable in line with generic trends, literary movements, history, and the writer's worldview.

Authors are products of their times and are bound to historical circumstances. The first references to Adamastor appeared in classical Greek literature and its myth has since made its way into world literatures in many guises. Camões was a Renaissance poet whose epic poem embodies the Western canon as it extols enlightenment, civilization, and knowledge. In the nineteen thirties, fascism and nationalism spread in Portugal while Pessoa's *Mensagem* was published, and its mythical nationalist depictions were usurped to indorse an authoritarian regime. Brink's *The First Life of Adamastor* is postmodern, and so Adamastor is appropriated at a time when culture, history, and politics were under scrutiny in South Africa. Brink abrogates the story, held by the Western canon for centuries, to subvert its Eurocentric values in a piece of fiction, and thus recreate an origin-story version which emphasizes its refashioning from a twentieth-century perspective which speaks to its contemporaneity and revision of South Africa's historiography.

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NOTES

1. "Porphyriion snatches Pangaeus, Adamastor lifts Rhodope along with Strymon's spring, and, when the glowing lightning bolt descends, he throws the river at it and quenches it." (My translation)
2. "Cold gliding horrors thrill'd each hero's breast, / Our bristling hair and tott'ring knees confess'd." (Camões, *The Lusiad*, trans. William Julius Mickle. May 26, 2010; Project Gutenberg, www.gutenberg.org)
3. "High and enormous o'er the flood he tower'd" (Camões, *The Lusiad*).
4. An earthy paleness o'er his cheeks was spread,
Erect uprose his hairs of wither'd red;

Writhing to speak, his sable lips disclose,

Sharp and disjoint'd, his gnashing teeth's blue rows. (Camões, *The Lusiad*)

5. "I absolutely agree with you that the debut of *Message* wasn't fruitful. I am, in fact, a mystical nationalist, a rational Sebastianist. But I am, apart from that, and even in contradiction with it, many other things. And these things, by the very nature of the book, *Message* does not address." (My translation)

6. "This poetic movement coincides with a period of poor and depressed social life, of petty politics, of difficulties and obstacles to individual and social peace." (My translation)

7. "And this leads us to believe that the inevitable appearance of the supreme poet or poets, in this movement, and in our land, must happen very soon, because inevitably the Great Poet, whom this movement will generate, will move Camões, until now renowned, to the background . . . precisely for this reason the next supra-Camões in our land seems to be more attainable." (My translation)

8. Who is it has dared sound

My caverns which I never unshadow,

My black roofs of the world's end? (Fernando Pessoa, *Message*, 71, 1992. Translated by Jonathan Griffin. Berkeley: Small Press Distribution)

9. "The King, Dom João Segundo!" (Pessoa, *Message*, 71)

10. "As I ooze the terrors of deep without end?" (Pessoa, *Message*, 71)

11. "Whose are the sails my webs brush past? / I see, I hear—whose hulls, whose masts?" (Pessoa, *Message*, 71)

12. Here at the helm I am more than I am:

I am a People—your sea which it means to tame;

More than the thing my soul's terror,

Who prowls in the dark of the world's end

Is the will which ties me to the tiller. (Pessoa, *Message*, 71)

13. <https://dicionario.priberam.org/engo>.

14. In me the Spirit of the Cape behold,

That rock, by you the Cape of Tempests nam'd,

By Neptune's rage, in horrid earthquakes fram'd,

When Jove's red bolts o'er Titan's offspring flam'd

With wide-stretch'd piles I guard the pathless strand,

And Afric's southern mound, unmov'd, I stand. (Camões, *The Lusiad*)

Chapter Two

A Thread of Gold

Fernando Pessoa, Hubert Jennings, and Classical Education in Durban

Jeffrey Murray

Among the surviving books of the personal library of the writer Fernando Pessoa, today housed in the Casa Fernando Pessoa in Lisbon, is William Smith's *Principia Latina: A First Latin Course* (London, 1892), a Latin primer aimed at school use in "Lower Forms in Public and Private Schools."¹ This appears to have been Pessoa's first Latin textbook from his time as a student in St Joseph's Convent School in Durban. Scribbled in the front inside cover is some of Pessoa's juvenilia:

Don't steal this book
For fear of shame
For in it is
The owner's name.
And if I catch
Him by the tail
He'll run off
To Durban gaol.²

This simple example neatly captures almost all of the main elements of my focus in this chapter: Fernando Pessoa, classical education, and the city of Durban.

Situated on the east coast of South Africa, Durban was established in 1824. A subtropical port city on the Indian Ocean, it is home today to a population of almost four million people, making it the third most populous city in the country. Historically, the city was established at the Bay of

Natal, nomenclature derived from the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama's coasting of the region on Christmas Day 1497 (Stuckenberg 1997, 19–29). Roughly four hundred years later, the city was also where the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935) spent his early years and was later home to his first English-language biographer, Hubert Dudley Jennings (1896–1991).³ At the Durban High School (DHS), both Pessoa and Jennings shared the same educational and intellectual space albeit separated by several decades. Both writers demonstrate in their work a shared interest in the classical world. Through examining select works by both Pessoa and Jennings, as well as by surveying the classical education offered in Durban in these years, this chapter sheds light not only on the intellectual formation of both writers but also their creative reception of the cultures and literatures of ancient Greece and Rome.⁴

The circumstances and details of Pessoa's relocation to Durban in February 1896 are told more fully in Richard Zenith's recently published, magisterial biography of the author.⁵ It is sufficient here to note only that the young poet spent his formative years in the colonial city, and that it was in Durban where he first encountered the classical world. His first school, St Joseph's Convent, provided its pupils with primary education and Pessoa enrolled in the school in March 1896.⁶ Latin featured on the syllabus from around the fourth or fifth grade onwards and was taught every day (Zenith 2021, 71–72). And at the graduation ceremony for the year 1898, Pessoa won the prize for overall academic excellence and first prizes in both Latin and English (Zenith 2021, 71–72). By April 1899 Pessoa had left St Joseph's Convent and moved on to DHS—the premier government school in the city at that time.

As early as 1858 a commission on education in the Natal Colony recommended that a “high school” or “college” be established for training “civil servants, lawyers, and teachers,” and, by 1861, legislation was passed that enabled the foundation of Maritzburg College in Pietermaritzburg and the DHS in Durban (Jennings 1966, 18–19). By 1866, the DHS was opened with Robert Russell (1843–1910) as its first headmaster. Russell was educated in the Church of Scotland Training College and later enrolled at the University of Edinburgh, but he failed to obtain a degree (Jennings 1966, 23–26). He remained headmaster at DHS until 1874, when he was placed in charge of colonial education in Natal until his retirement in 1903. While no great promoter of classical education (Russell was keen on only the most basic education for the sons of the largely settler population), Latin was still taught at the school during his tenure, although it remained at a rather elementary level.

By the end of the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879, the appointment of two classicists to the positions of headmaster at these, the two leading schools in the colony, Robert Douglas Clark (1846–1917) to Maritzburg College and Philip George Sandford (1855–1903) to DHS, brought with it a raising of

educational standards as well as a move towards schooling at a level comparable with British public-school education. Clark, who I have dealt with elsewhere, was to have longer tenure in Natal making a considerable impact on classical education in Pietermaritzburg, but Sandford, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, was to remain in Durban only a short while, returning to Ireland in 1886 to the Professorship of Latin at Queen's College, Galway (today, the National University of Ireland, Galway).⁷ Although Sandford's stay in the colony was brief, he contributed greatly (along with Clark) to debates at the time over the quality and level of education as well as the value of classical education—debates from which he would emerge victorious against both Russell and conservative colonial attitudes which saw no value in anything other than the most basic education for the sons of settlers, fitting them for little more than commercial activities in the colony.⁸

Upon his return to Britain in 1886, Sandford was replaced as headmaster of DHS by Wilfrid Harry Nicholas (1855–1918), who had been second assistant master at the school since 1880.⁹ A graduate of the University of London, Nicholas, like Sandford, was a fierce supporter of a classical education.¹⁰ One obituary for him in the *DHS Magazine* from 1918 comments on his deep knowledge of both Homer and Virgil.

Jennings, in a letter written in 1965 to Alexandrino Severino, characterized Nicholas as follows:

I can add this information about the Head Master of the time which may be useful to you. W.H. Nicholas was H.M. from 1886 to 1909 and died in 1918. He was of Irish-Spanish descent, a forebear having been a sailor of the Spanish Armada who was wrecked off the coast of Ireland in 1588. He was a handsome, swarthy man who was the most brilliant teacher of his time in Natal and passionately devoted to Latin. All those who knew him mention this. He had no regard for anyone whose Latin was weak and thus would never have written "Excellent" against Pessoa's name if he had not shone in his favourite subject. I have hazarded the guess in my chapter that the manifestation of himself as Ricardo Reis is based on W.H. Nicholas. One of the men from a slightly earlier period remembers them reading the *Alcestis* of Euripides with Nicholas, but Geerdts tells me that Greek was not studied in his day. (Quoted in Severino 1970, 122–23)

In 1966, Jennings produced his centennial history of DHS. Inserted into the chronological narrative, he included one of his own short stories (chapter 15, titled "Judica Me Deus . . ."), set just after Nicholas's retirement in 1909.¹¹ In the story, Jennings has Nicholas reflect on his time at the school and the successes of his past pupils. He recalls some of his students responding positively to his imparting of a classical education, mentioning Pessoa specifically, and recalls reading Euripides' *Alcestis* with them. John Pedro

Schwartz has read this story as an impulse of “imperial nostalgia” on the part of Jennings in the face of the “high noon of decolonizing nationalism” in the 1960s, not unlike Pessoa’s own reflections on imperialism (Schwartz 2015, 18–35). But Jennings himself also had a personal connection to the play. In his unpublished memoir, written towards the end of his life, he records a youthful romance he had sometime around 1918 or 1919 with a woman called Bielle and writes of their attendance at a London company’s production of the *Alcestis*.¹² This youthful romance and the experience of their attendance at this play was remarkable enough for him to compose a poem about it:

How critical we were! Admetus’ woe
 Might well have stirred us had he bawled with skill,
 We’d have wept for Alceste but her voice was shrill,
 But suddenly the dawn-gold tale seemed sodden snow
 In that dark atmosphere. God! Time went slow.
 At last we see, and went (moved by one will)
 Into the fresh cold air and moonlight’s glow.
 What did we care for forgotten dreams of Greece.
 And strife of life with life and lust?
 With only this brief scanty hour in trust
 With which to build in that short space’s lease.
 The little drama which we thought so big that must
 Rise up star-high, then crumble down to dust.¹³

Returning to the imagined setting of Jennings’s story, Nicholas instructs the boys to translate into English what they can of Euripides’s text. At the end of the class, when Nicholas examines Pessoa’s attempt, he realizes that the poet has reproduced sections of Arthur Way’s translation. The first stanza follows lines 118–22 (of Way’s revised 1912 English translation) almost verbatim:

Dawn’s chasm hard by
 Yawns fathomless-deep,
 What availeth to cry
 To the gods, or to heap
 Their altars with costly oblations,
 or to plead against the slaughter of sheep?¹⁴

The second, longer, stanza comes from a chorus much later in the play (962–74 in Way’s 1912 translation), with no indication of the transition:

I have mused on the words of the wise
 Of the mighty in song;
 I have lifted mine heart to the skies;
 But naught more strong

Than fate I have found, there is naught
 In the tablets of Thrace,
 Neither drugs whereof Orpheus taught
 Nor in all, that Apollo brought
 To Asclepius' race
 When the herbs of healing he severed
 And out of anguish delivered
 The pain distraught.¹⁵

Nicholas, at first annoyed at Pessoa's use of a crib, soon realizes that, in fact, the boy had taken the time to memorize the English rendition of the Greek original; but it soon dawns on him that Pessoa has not only provided a mere crib of the original, but rather that he had corrected, and improved upon it: his version reads "*against* the slaughter of the sheep" in contrast to Way's "*with* the slaughter of the sheep" (emphasis mine). Next, Nicholas proceeds to turn over the page of Pessoa's exercise book, finding on the next page an English poem. Questioning him as to who wrote it, Pessoa meekly replies "a friend," to which Nicholas responds, "Tell your friend . . . that he has a great poetic gift. Far better than Arthur Way's. But not better than Euripides's."¹⁶

Under Nicholas's teaching, Pessoa excelled in Latin (Zenith 2021, 87–88, 106). His initial stay at the school, however, only lasted from 1899 to 1901. Pessoa's schooling was then interrupted by a period back in Portugal because his stepfather, the Portuguese consul for Natal, was granted a period of leave (Jennings 1986, 4–8; Zenith 2021, 124–28). Upon the family's return to Durban, Pessoa was enrolled in the Commercial School in Durban, run by Charles Henry Hagggar (1854–1934). Here, as Zenith has pointed out, Pessoa would have been confronted by a "radically different academic environment" (Zenith 2021, 125). While Latin was taught, commercial subjects, such as shorthand, typing, and bookkeeping were the school's priority. Pessoa's Latin suffered under Hagggar. His 1903 matriculation results in Latin were unremarkable, gaining 54 percent and a third-class pass overall (Zenith 2021, 147; Severino 1970, 143). The University of the Cape of Good Hope's Latin examination for that year was set by Professor Arthur Stanley Kidd (1869–1956), a graduate of St John's College, Cambridge, and at this time Classics Master at St Andrews College, Grahamstown, along with the South African College's Professor William Ritchie (1854–1931). In Part I, students were asked to translate passages from the first book of Caesar's *Civil Wars* and asked grammar questions upon them; students then had a choice of contextual and interpretative questions; these ranged from knowledge of the leaders of the party opposed to Caesar and his explanation of their opposition, to an account of the campaign in Spain; they were also tested on their knowledge of Latin military terms and of Saturninus and the Gracchi. In Part II, the paper

focused on prose composition and the students were asked to translate an unseen passage from Cicero's *De divinatione*.

In 1904 Pessoa returned to DHS for postmatriculation studies, enrolling in Form VI, in order to prepare to take the BA intermediate examination. Once more under the tutelage of Nicholas, his textbooks in Latin for this course were Kennedy's *Revised Latin Primer* and Bradley's *Arnold: A Practical Introduction to Latin Prose Composition*.¹⁷ As set texts, Pessoa would also have had to read Sallust's *Jugurtha*, sections 1–65, along with Vergil, *Georgics IV*.¹⁸

The examiner for Latin at the University of the Cape of Good Hope that year was the Reverend Hedley Vicars Taylor (1864–1926), a graduate of both Oxford and Trinity College, Dublin.¹⁹ The Latin paper, moderated by Professor Charles Samuel Edgar (1874–1945) of Victoria College, consisted of two sections, and students were given three hours in which to complete them. In the first, students were asked to translate passages from both Sallust and Vergil and answer basic questions of grammar. These were interspersed also with questions of content and interpretation; for example, they were asked to write a short note on either the distinguishing features of Sallust's style or his value as a historian, and in relation to Vergil, were asked about any political purpose detected in the *Georgics*. The second section of the paper consisted of prose composition as well as translation of unseen passages taken from Cicero's *Pro Sestio* and Lucretius. Pessoa achieved a mark of 195/300, 65 percent in Latin, and passed overall with a second-class pass; he was the top student at DHS for that year (Severino 1970, 144, 149; Zenith 2021, 149).

Undoubtedly, Pessoa's classical education in Durban directly contributed much to his literary output, particularly his early, English-language works, such as *Antinous* (1918) and *Inscriptions* (1921), but also his early Portuguese-language works, such as several texts on the Roman emperor Julian, produced between the years 1916 and 1919.²⁰ To these should be added his creative translations of several classical authors, including Catullus and Ovid and, finally, also the classical "spirit" evident in his work, and the work of his heteronyms, perhaps no more clearly so than in the Horatian odes of Ricardo Reis or the Greek literature and philosophy of Alexander Search.²¹ Jennings arrived at DHS as a young teacher in 1923, having completed his university education in Wales, graduating with a BA degree from University College, Aberystwyth.

By that time, Pessoa, in his thirties, was living in Lisbon, and Nicholas had died several years earlier in London in 1918. Unlike Pessoa, though, Jennings did not receive a classical education at school. He writes in his memoirs:

Some of the masters were scholars and I can remember one who recited the chariot race from Homer. No one in the school took Greek and few chose Latin. Most, like myself, chose French and German. But it made an imminent impression on me, and I determined to learn some Greek one day. The most I could find then was a Latin primer from which I taught myself some conjugations—but soon forgot them.²²

He did, however, as a university student attend some of the public lectures of Herbert Jennings Rose, Professor of Latin at Aberystwyth from 1919 to 1927.²³

At DHS, Jennings worked under Aubrey Samuel Langley (1871–1931), a headmaster who was even more fanatical about the discipline of Classics than Nicholas.²⁴ He was a controversial headmaster, famed for introducing rugby to the school and for being a strict disciplinarian (one student, the poet Roy Campbell, dubbed him “Plagosus Orbilius” after Horace’s schoolmaster) (Hilton 2007, 135). Under his leadership, classical education at the school continued to thrive. Langley himself had been taught Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and French by his father, the Reverend James Langley, a minister in the small Natal village of York. He was then also sent abroad to Kingswood School in Bath, England, and, before joining the staff of DHS, was a schoolmaster first in the Cape Colony at the South African College School and then later back in Natal at Maritzburg College under Clark, under whose tuition he gained the BA degree via the examinations of the University of the Cape of Good Hope.

Jennings himself, although a teacher of English, through the course of his own research on Pessoa as well as from his own experiences in education in Durban, not only contributed to the classical education at the school, but also continued the classical tradition in its history. As he did in the fictional chapter of the school’s record, *The D.H.S. Story*, so Jennings elsewhere in the work also cast its earlier years in classical terms. At the opening of a chapter which takes its title from a line of Vergil’s *Aeneid* (1.437: *o fortunati, quorum iam moenia surgunt!* “How fortunate are those whose walls are already rising!”), before turning to the school’s fortunes in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Jennings opens with three paragraphs of prose set down with clear epic overtones, concluding: “So in these words, or in others more inspiring, Mr. Nicholas may have reflected” (Jennings 1966, 63). In these lines, the bay of Natal is described as a kind of classical *locus amoenus*, replete with mythological figures appropriate to the marine setting:

When Old Oceanus, father of the gods and all things living, whose sinuous form girdles the earth, stirs in his sleep beside his spouse, the regal and full-bosomed Tethys, a pulse from his dreaming mind enters the havens and sea-sanctuaries of the world; and here in this far and austral jewel of jade, which in old time was presciently called the Bay of the Birth or Portu Natalensis, we see the incoming

wavelets lap the glaucous sands with slow, voluptuous fingers, while the white-breasted Nereids teem in with their attendants, the leaping dolphin, the sharp-toothed barracouda, and the tenebrous forms of those salt-water thieves, the questing sharks, and the fleeing mullet flings arcs of silvery joyous light above hyaline waters. (Jennings 1966, 63)

On another occasion Jennings had cause to cast another story, also set in Durban's bay, in classical terms. Initially also planned to be included in *The D.H.S. Story*, "A Thread of Gold" failed to make it into the final version. Jennings writes about its composition in his unpublished memoir, "Cracked Record V," in the context of his writing of the school's history:

Neville [Nuttall] had been impressed by some stories I had written for the *Mentor* . . . but he studied my MS as soon as it was written and sedulously weeded out any solecisms as well as encouraging me with lavish praise. I think he really enjoyed reading the passages I sent to him and I added sometimes a little *jeu d'esprit* which had little to do with the history and were left out of the final publication. One of these was the still unpublished story, *A thread of gold*.²⁵

A typescript of the story is found among Jennings's papers, housed in the Brown University Library.²⁶ The narrative opens with the protagonist, the young schoolboy Bill Soames, hunting for shrimps in the bay during the school lunch break. So engrossed is he in this activity that he fails to hear the school bell signaling a return to class. Realizing that if he returns late, he will fall foul of the headmaster, "Old Nick" (the nickname by which schoolboys referred to Nicholas), he decides to take the whole afternoon off and stay at the beach. Soon he finds an abandoned green scarf which he ties around his head to shield himself from the sun. Swimming in the sea, he soon spots something on a sandy islet which turns out to be the sea-nymph, golden-haired Galatea. Somewhat bewildered at meeting her, Bill asks her if she is French, to which Galatea replies, "Sometimes. . . . But Greek mostly." He responds by declaring that he knows some Greek, but then haltingly quotes out a line from Byron's "Maid of Athens," "Ζῶν μου, σὰς ἀγαπῶ" ("My life, I love you"). The exchange which follows comments on the classical education available at DHS:

She laughed and repeated [the words] with a lilting accent.
 "Did Mr. Nicholas teach you that?" she asked.
 "Oh, you know about him, too?" he asked, surprised.
 "Of course," she answered.
 "No, only some of the older fellows take Greek, but I'm good at Latin. I read
 it in a book of poems. By Byron. 'Maid of Athens,' you know."

“Yes, I know,” she said, “I remember him.”
“Remember ‘it,’ you mean. He’s dead now.”
The girl laughed softly but said nothing.
“But do you know what it means?”
“Yes,” she answered simply, “It means you love me.”

Galatea then reveals her antiquity and lists the many men who have loved her, including Homer, Pindar, Horace, Aristo, Titian, Claude, Tintoretto, Bernard Shaw, and Byron. She concludes by saying that the “funniest of all was an old one-eyed giant” who sang to her at Naxos. “His name was Polyphemus,” she says. “I was sorry when I heard that Odysseus had put out his eye.” At this point, Bill begins to feel sick, suffering from sunstroke. The following morning, he awakens at home with his mother standing over him, dispensing medicine. As she does so, his mother holds up the green scarf and with it a single golden hair and asks him where they had come from.

While the story clearly has autobiographical elements, the setting in Durban, the headmaster Nicholas, the name of the protagonist—Bill Payn was a friend and colleague of Jennings at DHS—as well as the mention of Polyphemus (also a nickname given to Jennings because of his one glass eye), it also conflates several strands of classical myth and its reception: the Galatea of Theocritus and Ovid, with the story of Pygmalion by both Ovid and George Bernard Shaw. Indeed, Shaw’s version appears to be the most recent inspiration behind Jennings’s version of Galatea. For found written in pencil on the final page of the typescript is the following note: “Notice in the *Natal Mercury*: January 30th 1910. ‘Theatre Royal, West Street, Durban. The performance of Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion* has, unfortunately, had to be cancelled. The leading lady, not used to our climate, is said to be suffering from sunburn . . . ”²⁷

The archivist who prepared the item entry for Brown University Library, however, noticed an inconsistency: the catalogue record states, “The date presumably erroneous, since Shaw’s *Pygmalion* premiered in 1913.” On the short story itself, Schwartz comments, “Just as the ivory statue carved by Pygmalion comes to life, so Galatea revives in a setting so inhospitable to art and classical ideas as early Durban. Credit for bringing Galatea, a synecdoche of Greek civilization, to African shores goes to Old Nick . . . ”²⁸ Equally so, I would argue, to Jennings. Dear old Durban doesn’t appear to be as inhospitable to classical ideas as Schwartz suggests. Rather, as I have shown above, the city provided a solid classical education to Pessoa in the English tradition. As Jackson has noted, “Pessoa’s classical ideas were formed by his education in English literature at the DHS. His contact with the classics was that found in the study of Latin and of English literature, which formed his early intellectual foundation”—a tradition that likewise was taken up also and

continued a generation later at the school by Langley and Jennings in his own further literary mythmaking.²⁹

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NOTES

1. Fernando Pessoa's Private Library is housed at the Casa Fernando Pessoa in Lisbon; both the catalogue and digitized copies of his books are available on their website: <https://www.casafernandopessoa.pt/>.

2. Two of the lines of the poem are crossed out and the spelling of "jail" changed to "gaol" (see also Zenith 2021, 72).

3. For biographical details of Jennings and his scholarship on Pessoa, see most recently Jennings (2019) as well as the special issue of *Pessoa Plural* (2015) devoted to him, which has now been revised and republished as Pittella (2016).

4. On the history of classical education in South Africa more generally, see Lambert (2011).

5. Richard Zenith's recently published biography (2021) is the new standard work in English on the writer. It should, however, also be mentioned that Pessoa's mother had a knowledge of Latin (Zenith 2021, 8).

6. The "high school" division of St Joseph's was restricted to girls.

7. Murray 2022. On Sandford, see Keaveney (1999, 341–42).

8. Cf., e.g., a report in the *Natal Witness* (December 30, 1880, 3) on the proceedings of the end of year activities at DHS: "His Excellency, I perceive, scarcely agreed with Mr. Sandford, the Head Master of the High School, in the remark that the Government examination was no test of the education imparted to his school. Mr. Sandford, as will be perceived by his elaborate address, is greatly in favour of Greek, Latin, and other high subjects, but the Governor thought that the work at the school should be thorough in every branch."

9. See the *Natal Who's Who* (Durban, 1906, 146).

10. Nicholas completed his BA at the University of London between 1875 and 1878; I thank Sean Macmillan, archivist of the Senate House Library, for supplying me with these dates.

11. Nicholas retired in 1909, and Natal joined the Union in 1910; Jennings conflates the two dates for effect. The Latin title ("Judge me, O God") is taken from the Latin Vulgate translation of Psalm 43.

12. The episode is recorded in "Cracked Record, volume II" (1987, 11–13), Hubert Jennings Papers, Brown University Library. Jennings erroneously states that the play was written by Sophocles.

13. Jennings, "Cracked Record, volume II" (1987, 12–13). Hubert Jennings Papers, Brown University Library. I have attempted an accurate transcription of Jennings's handwriting, but some of the words are almost illegible.

14. Jennings 1966, 114. In fact, earlier in the story, when Nicholas first looks at Pessoa's translation over his shoulder, the opening line reads "Doom's chasm hard by," which is changed a few lines down to "Dawn's chasm"; Way's translation reads "Doom's chasm" for the original Greek's "fate" (Eur. *Alc.* 117: *μῦθος*). Arthur

Sanders Way first produced translations of Euripides in 1894; his initial attempt at these lines produced the following:

Doom's imminent slope
Is a precipice-steep.
In no God is there hope,
Though his altars should weep
With the crimson atonement, should veil them in
clouds of the hecatomb-sheep.

He later revised his translations for Harvard University Press's Loeb Classical Library series in 1912. Pessoa's personal library holds only copies of volumes I–III of the 1916 reprints of this edition; none of which contain the *Alcestis*.

15. Here Jennings follows Way more closely, merely changing punctuation.

16. Jennings 1966, 115. The poem on the next page is an English translation of one of Pessoa's later poems, by a fellow DHS poet, Roy Campbell.

17. Both textbooks are still extant in Pessoa's library—the name of one of his earliest heteronyms from this period, Charles Robert Anon, appears signed on one of the back flyleaf pages of Kennedy as well as on one of the opening flyleaf pages of Arnold.

18. See Severino (1970, 139). Pessoa used Merivale's 1897 school edition for Salust, his copy of which can be found among his books; the first forty-nine chapters are heavily annotated. Several of the back flyleaf passages also have historical and contextual notes in his hand. For Vergil's *Georgics* Pessoa used Winbolt's 1902 edition (also extant in his library). The text is also heavily annotated.

19. Taylor had, in the year 1904, left his teaching post at Lovedale, and moved to Wellington, where he is listed on the college register of Huguenot College.

20. On *Antonius*, see Reed (2016); on *Inscriptions*, see Haynes (2016); and on Julian, see Pittella (2017).

21. See Jennings (1986, 74–77); Jackson (2017); and, on Alexander Search, Zenith (2021, 210–19).

22. Jennings, "Cracked Record, volume I," (n.d., 40), Hubert Jennings Papers, Brown University Library.

23. In volume II of his memoir Jennings mentions attending a memorable lecture by the Latin professor Herbert Jennings Rose while at Aberystwyth.

24. On Langley, see Löser and Morrell (2019); biographical information is also to be found in his unpublished memoir, "Youthful Reminiscences of Natal in the Seventies." I thank Jean Thomassen for sharing this with me.

25. Reproduced in Schwartz (2015, 70). Jennings may have also intended to publish the story as a part of a collection of short stories, possibly under the title *No Man*, for "A Thread of Gold" is listed in a typed and numbered list found among his papers. The title of the collection, "No Man," also has classical pedigree, for below it, Jennings has typed, "When Odysseus was hiding under the fleece of a ram in the cave of Polyphemus." See H.D. Jennings, "Contents," Hubert Jennings Papers, Brown University Library. In another notebook found among his papers, Jennings drafted a preface and a table of contents for a planned collection of his writings titled "A Thread of Gold and Other Stories." See H.D. Jennings (1986).

26. The text is also found transcribed in Schwartz 2015, 44–48.
27. See Jennings (1986). “A Thread of Gold,” Hubert Jennings Papers, Brown University Library.
28. Schwartz 2015, 28–29.
29. Jackson 2017, 126.

Chapter Three

Van der Post's Postcolonial Melancholia and Zimler's Reparational Mourning in Novels on the San

John T. Maddox IV

Mourning and melancholia play central but different roles in the coming-of-age stories penned by Afrikaner Laurens van der Post and US-Portuguese expatriate Richard Zimler. Van der Post is the best-known fiction writer on the San, as I will show. While Van der Post's text largely reaffirms colonial ideologies, Zimler's text communicates grief for the San people of southern Africa and unites the struggles of diverse marginalized groups. After a brief introduction to Zimler, this essay will proceed to show how Van der Post's novels on the San and biography show mourning for a romanticized British Empire that included much of southern Africa. Then, I will show how Zimler breaks with the Afrikaner's colonial mentality in his reception of his work, despite being inspired by Van der Post to write on the San. I conclude that Zimler's work challenges readers to ask how the enslaved can be indemnified for their suffering today. However, we must not forget the San writers who are also representing their living culture.

Zimler is a best-selling American author who has deep ties to Portugal (2021). He fell in love with a Portuguese scientist in 1978 (2021). In 1990, they moved to Porto, and in 2002, he became a Portuguese citizen. He taught journalism for sixteen years, including at the Universidade do Porto (2021). Today, his novels debut in Portuguese translation followed by an English edition (2021). This experience, as well as his own Ashkenazi Jewish identity, no doubt influenced his "Sephardic Cycle" of five novels that

chronicle the perambulations of generations of the Ladino Zarco family from sixteenth-century Portugal to Poland during the Shoah (Zimler 2019).

In the acknowledgments section of *Hunting*, Zimler claims that he is “forever in debt to Laurens van der Post, whose books first started me hunting for Midnight” (2004, n.p.). This homage, along with both novels’ San characters and mythology, non-San protagonists, as well as the meditation on colonial systems of oppression, warrant a comparison and contemplation of Zimler’s reception of Van der Post.

Marcia Farrell has eloquently argued that *A Story Like the Wind* (1972, 1978) and *A Far-Off Place* (1974), while praising and arguing for the preservation of the San’s lives and lifestyles, ultimately reinforce colonial ideologies (2012, 325–26). Even while lauding the hunter-gatherers, he does not escape the “noble savage” trope, and even when showing how the children of colonizers “go native,” he ultimately has them return to their European lifestyles and adopt a paternalistic viewpoint of “protectors” of the San (Barnard 2007, 129). J.D.F. Jones, the knight’s biographer, calls their representation “shameless stereotypes” (2002, 305).

A STORY LIKE THE WIND

Mourning is an important topic in Van der Post’s bildungsromane, since the boy protagonist, Francois Joubert, must process his father Ouwa’s death (199). He is studying to occupy the father’s position in a paternalistic co-op in what was then known as Rhodesia called Hunter’s Drift (202). Shortly after learning of his father’s passing, he meets a Portuguese-Angolan-British girl, Luciana “Nonnie” Monckton, with whom he shares adventures in both books, so at least three colonial empires are represented in the novel: the British/hegemonic South African, the Dutch/Boer/Afrikaner, and the Portuguese (218). These empires, by the time of the first novel’s publication (1972), were in decadence, though apartheid was in full effect. Nearby Angola and Mozambique were in the throes of their independence struggles. Clearly, Van der Post is writing in the midst of change and violence. Yet he is not mourning the glories of conquest or an overtly racist narrative of civilization triumphing over barbarism. He is mourning the possibility of something that never reached plenitude—even if such an ideal may not exist. He is mourning a harmonious cooperative in which white colonizers and Black locals collaborate for the betterment of all. While Ouwa occupies the center of power on his property and as the area’s Director of Education, he gives a European instruction to the local people who work the land for him but who also live in traditional villages or kraals (53). Additionally, the cooperative’s occupants at the time of narration no longer perturb the San—until one of them is

accidentally caught in a lion trap, once again giving evidence of the violence, however unintentional or unnoticed, of colonization (33). Francois's coming of age story is his struggle to occupy the place of his lost father. By today, one can quickly see this harmonious colony and the bildungsroman that imagines it as largely a benevolent fantasy of colonialism.

In his texts, Van der Post is displaying what sociologist Paul Gilroy has termed "postcolonial melancholia" (2005, 21). It explains racism and xenophobia in the United Kingdom in the new millennium (19). He argues that the British continue to treat the nation's central role in the Allied defeat of the Nazis as its foundational victory over pure evil (147). Van der Post gained great success and a new identity in the service of the Queen after years of poverty and depression in England (Jones 2002, 161). Though an Afrikaner, he fought for Britain in World War II. He survived a Japanese prisoner of war camp (161). After the conflict, he severed ties with many friends and families associated with his "old self" and focused on gaining English distinction (161). He is not the first descendent of Boers who abandoned that past as less refined or uncivilized, as Dirk Klopper shows (2010, 5). He worked for the Colonial Development Corporation, designed to increase commodity production from Central Africa for the war-torn metropole (Jones 2002, 171). He continued the legacy of the "Victorian spirit of manly courage" by journeying into the African wild (Klopper 2010, 9). England was the font of his success, and its enemies were his enemies.

He became a friend and spiritual counsellor of Prince Charles and was knighted, so the bildungsromane are part of a general conservative, neocolonial, British outlook (Jones 2002, 392). The prince accompanied him to the Kalahari, where he "discovered" its peaceful people (142). Regarding apartheid, he spoke out against its "excesses," but "he was condemned to remain a paternalist, and at heart a conservative, and his critics would argue that this meant he was a racist" (263). Jones claims, "He always believed in a multi-racial, federal South Africa" beginning in the 1930s but not in universal democracy (2002, 263).

Van der Post personifies the phenomena of postcolonial melancholia (Gilroy 2005, 21). He whitewashes the colonial pasts of Britain, Holland, and South Africa in *Story* (1978) and *Far-Off* (1974) (Gilroy 2005, 21). The agricultural collective Francois's schoolteacher father runs is a fantasy of the British/Western civilizing mission (29). Gilroy argues that Britain has masked the mourning of the prestige it lost with its empire with the glorious victory over the Nazis (2005, 151). The Afro-Briton defines the syndrome thus:

Once the history of the empire became a source of discomfort, shame, and perplexity, its complexities and ambiguities were readily set aside. Rather than work through those feelings, that unsettling history also was diminished, denied,

and then, if possible, actively forgotten. The resulting silence feeds an additional catastrophe: the error of imagining that postcolonial people are only unwanted alien intruders without any substantive historical, political, or cultural connections to the collective life of their fellow subjects. (2005, 151)

To sum things up, he claims, “The hidden, shameful store of imperial horrors has been an unacknowledged presence in British political and cultural life during the second half of the twentieth century” (2005, 157).

One of Gilroy’s melancholic “Churchilists,” Van der Post cannot fully acknowledge the continued effects of colonialism in Africa and Britain. This is evident when he sets *Story* (1978) and *Far-Off* (1974) in the 1960s and yet the technology and infrastructure of the books is that of colonial times (Jones 2002, 305). It is a “Merlinesque” Africa that he intentionally creates as a new Eden (Van der Post, “Introduction,” ix). When evil enters it, the child protagonists are cast out and must confront death for the first time (Jones 2002, 306). It is interesting, however, that the first “invader” of the farm is not an assailant, but Xhabbo, who brings Francois closer to the San. Would the protagonist have remained in this Eden had that impossible origin remained the harmonious, multiracial, and polyglot (yet white-run) reserve on which he was born? Even the “liberal” school teaches only the white heir (307).

While Gilroy notes Freud’s centrality to theorizing “melancholia,” he focuses on Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich’s theorization of the term. They studied Germany’s collective mourning of Hitler (165). The country had largely reacted to their lost leader through depression, inhibiting any “capacity for responsible reconstructive practice” (165). They acknowledged no culpability for their actions and projected their guilt on the fallen Führer, creating a reactive narcissism (165). Likewise, Britain, mourning its lost empire, must accept responsibility for its ethnic absolutism and atrocities, according to Gilroy (2005, 165). His goal is for Britain to turn paralyzing guilt into a shame that leads to constructive change (165).

Van der Post considered his “walking” of Africa a search within himself, claiming that Africa was “the mirror of our age” (Jones 2002, 260). His texts and outlook reflect colonial narcissism (260). He wrote *Story* (1978) and *Far-Off* (1974) twenty-one years after his two weeks in the Kalahari, building on his own memories, readings, and fantasies much more than those of the San (305). The parents of the Afrikaner Francois closely mirror Van der Post’s (305). Like the author’s, Francois’s father dies while the boy is young, and mourning is central to the plot (305).

Jones claims that the multiracial, multi-ethnic threats to the San are historically correct, but Van der Post’s solutions to them reflect a paternalist outlook (2002, 305). Like his forebear Bleek, he presents the “innocent” San as superior to the demonized Black people that threatened them (Moran 2009, 125).

Van der Post convinced the UK Parliament to create the Central Kalahari Game Reserve on which the San could live in 1958 (Jones 2002, 238). If the San must be protected from other Africans as well as white colonialists, according to Van der Post, is the Kalahari Desert where they live nothing more than a giant, foreboding terrarium for him? The title of the book (1958) and television series (1957) he narrated, *Lost World of the Kalahari*, implies so. Anthropologist Edwin Wilmsen criticizes Van der Post, as well as himself and other members of his field for incorrectly depicting the San as remote from the flow of history and virtuously unchanging in their primordial way of life (1989, 9). Farrell argues that the Queen grants the San guides symbolically colonizing medals of honor and protection (2012, 326). Is this different from tagging an endangered animal? Jones notes that the San are the second saviors of the white children, in this way similar to Hintza, the protagonist's dog (2002, 309). Francois discovers Xhabbo when he is caught in an animal trap. One recalls the July 1840 display of a San woman's skin alongside "other" animal pelts (Adhikari 2011, 1). The animalization of the San dates back to nineteenth century pseudo-scientific hierarchies that justified British imperialism (Klopper 2010, 17). Xhabbo does not die, but he is faced with literal death as an extension of the necropolitics of colonialism—only to be rescued by a white savior. His near demise recalls the centuries of Black death and dehumanization that Achille Mbembe has called "necropolitics" (2019, 75). Western worldviews and policies have created those who are alive but are not treated as such by the protections of the law. Xhabbo is alive, but he is not treated as fully human.

While nursing Xhabbo to health, Francois discovers the mythology of the San (*Story* 1978, 49). The source material for the novel comes, reportedly, from Van der Post's time with that culture. While he visited the Kalahari as a colonial official, not someone living off the land, his accounts of the region were important. They created the first serious world interest in the San since their genocide at the turn of the nineteenth century (Barnard 2007, 58). Previously, the only well-known chronicler of the San was Lawrence Marshall (Jones 2002, 211). The ethnographer later confessed to creating a false image of them as an "unspoiled" people living in harmony with nature (Jones 2002, 211). Van der Post's father also influenced him, since he had a large collection of San artifacts (213). Reportedly, he had a half-San wet nurse and there were two San workers on the family farm growing up (214). His biographer makes his outlook explicit: the Afrikaner "colonized" the stories of the San and made them his own (215). Jones claims he only spent a fortnight or less with the San, communicating with them with unknown effectivity via an interpreter (2002, 223). He questions the veracity of Van der Post's accounts of San mythology (223). Scientists of his time shared a

mutual mistrust of the writer's methodology, which homogenized diverse San groups and did not include their language (Barnard 2007, 59).

One can also see him making the San part of his quest to overcome his origins as an Afrikaner among the British, since he claims—impossibly—that his grandfather had hunted and killed the last of the San in Griqualand in 1836 (Jones 2002, 213). By presenting himself as the protector of the San for the British, he is distancing himself from the “evil” Afrikaners who killed the “innocent” San and, later, savagely imposed apartheid. If the Afrikaners were the exotic, savage colonists for him, the British were the noble civilizers. While he identified the former Dutch colonizers with pure evil, his own postcolonial melancholia keeps him from imagining action to repair their or the Britons' damages to Black Africans. He calls instead for forgiveness of one's enemies, comparing white colonists and Black revolutionaries alike to his Japanese captors in World War II (261). The result he proposes, then, is rooted in postcolonial melancholia.

Van der Post's trove of folklore likely came from friends of his father, George Stow and W.H.I. Bleek. At the University of Cape Town, Bleek gathered the book *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*, which has been re-issued in 2001 (Bleek 2019; Jones 2002, 232; Klopper 2010, 13). The narrator is named Xhabbo or “Dream,” just like Van der Post's male San character (Jones 2002, 232). Among the animals in Bleek's tales is the divine Mantis (233). Hence, the “Kalahari Bushmen's” tales from the 1950s are, almost certainly, actually “Cape Bushmen's” tales from 1870 (233). The insect is still a trickster quasi-deity (235). However, some of today's anthropologists claim Mantis plays no role in the Kalahari San's mythology (Jones 2002, 235). Van der Post makes the insect a Prometheus-like purveyor of fire, which he stole under an ostrich's wing (236). The bird is the symbol of Truth, which leaves a mythical hunter a single white feather just before it dies (236). The myth of the feather is—ironically for Zimmler, as we will see—probably his invention (236).

San faith has always been part of colonial discourse in southern Africa. One of the Europeans' justifications for stealing the group's land, beginning in the seventeenth century, was their lack of a religion or a systematic faith (Chidester 1996, 53). Their religion evolves constantly due to context and its myth is not synonymous with its rituals. If Van der Post's appropriation and probable invention of San myth is dishonest, it does draw attention to these traditions and helps legitimize them for the West. Whereas San (non-)religion once justified land theft, for the Afrikaner, preserving it is a reason to grant the Kalahari to the San (under Western care) (53). He repeats the colonial tendency of “rediscovering” San religion once they have surveillance over its practitioners and making the desert a “closed frontier” (57). Furthermore, their religion is too often relegated to a primitive past (58). Van der Post is

part of this tradition, since Michael Wessels claims the author depicts the San as “quintessentially human” due to their proximity to the “pure” origin of humankind (2010, 94). Wessels criticizes Van der Post for romanticizing the ethnic group as permanently “childlike” (432).

The most influential mourning in the plot of *Story* (1978) is that of the protagonist for his father, a process Freud already analyzed in “Mourning and Melancholia” (1994). The theorist claimed that the subject internalizes the lost object through the process of mourning and must work through that process in order to avoid falling into melancholia (245). Francois is attempting to assume his father’s place on the colonial plantation, but he is interrupted by two forces: the “noble savages” Xhabbo and Nuin-Tara on one hand, and the primitive mercenaries in the service of pure (Communist) evil on the other. This process of mourning the father, i.e., taking up the civilizing role of paternalist colonizer, is complicated by the intervention of Nonnie’s father, Sir James Archibald Sinclair Monckton, who attempts to seduce Francois’s mother Lammie (Jones 2002, 308). Jones already notes the retreat of the white children and the San couple into the sacred cave of Xhabbo’s people as a symbolic return to the womb (2002, 309). Yet its location on the agrarian collective affirms the paternalist colonial role of protector, whether the colony is run by the enlightened Afrikaner or Briton (309). Nonnie’s lost Portuguese mother symbolizes the inability of the Iberian nation to withstand the forces of evil and is replaced by a cave owned by more “deserving” colonizers (308). In the cave, the San Nuin-Tara helps Nonnie learn the skills of a future wife, which is a symbolic assuming of the role of her mother, only in the form of the San customs as imagined by the Afrikaner (309). The tale evokes British South African Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of An African Farm* (1883), in which two children discuss San cave art (2009). Even his models for the white protagonists are colonial.

Van der Post’s uncredited and uncritical use of the Bleek archive reaffirms his paternalist outlook. The Bleeks’ informant, Xhabbo or ||Kabbo, was released from prison into their “care,” where he worked like a house slave for two years (9). Bank sees the aloof melancholy of ||Kabbo as a clear precursor of Van der Post’s stereotypical “harmless Bushman” (2006, 9). One sees precursors to the mystic captive Midnight as well. Shane Moran claims that they are the “exemplary threatened minority” (2009, 2). They are seen as the origin of humanity, language, and myth (3). One wonders what ||Kabbo’s point of view might have been, minus the mediation and colonial outlook of his captors, a question to which I will return.

If Van der Post’s depiction of the San is marked by Churchillist nostalgia, he can also be seen as a clumsy or opportunist precursor to the post-apartheid South African government’s appropriation of the San’s term for “people who are different” to mean a diverse nation in the context of the national coat of

arms (Solomon 2014, 329). Commercial advertising is also mining the San for primitivist cultural authenticity (Guenther 2003, 105). Another awkward attempt to use the San as an origin for post-apartheid identity is the literature of white South African Stephen Watson, who adapts the San lament to poetize his nicotine withdrawal and the death of a pet (329). Watson is part of an attempt to revise the national canon to include the marginalized ethnicity (331). Nonetheless, no comprehensive survey of the San in southern African literatures has been done, excepting the pioneering work of Helize van Vuuren, *A Necklace of Springbok Ears* (2016). Even as writers work to humanize this minority, they continue to do so amidst the limits of incorporating their representation into Western understanding. Negotiating alterity is a challenge faced by San like Kuela Kiema, author of *Tears for My Land* (2010). Kiema's text represents San writers coming full circle from secondary characters in an Afrikaner's depiction of the Kalahari to self-representation. Surely, he has benefited from the world attention Van der Post generated to demarcate his home in the Kalahari reserve and learn about its people. The Afrikaner was followed by anthropologists practicing high academic rigor like Richard Lee, Jiro Tanaka, and Edwin Wilmsen (Barnard 2007, 61–62, 91). However, even the San writer faces the same challenges visual artists of that ethnicity confront: being pigeonholed by primitivist discourse as voices of cultural essence, as opposed to individuals with their own styles of representation (Guenther 2003, 97). They are often associated with the world-famous cave-paintings like those in *Story* (1978) and the West too often cannot overcome its quest for a dead origin (97).

HUNTING MIDNIGHT

Richard Zimler displays a different kind of mourning, and it is also based on his lived experience. In *Hunting*, the protagonist, John Zarco Stewart, is the son of Scotsman James Stewart and the Jewish Portuguese woman Maria Pereira Zarco, who lives in Porto at the turn of the nineteenth century (2004, 164–65). Despite hiding the mother and child's Jewish identity and raising him Christian (162), they are threatened by a Catholic zealot and his followers (184). Meanwhile, James returns from the Cape Colony accompanied by a San man, Tsamma, whom they rename "Midnight" (100). He has rescued Tsamma from captivity on an abusive plantation much like the previous one where he was treated like chattel (111). Midnight comes to Porto willingly to work as a gardener for the family while he works with the Smith-Zarcos' friend Senhor Benjamin to discover a cure for the smallpox that has been ravaging his people (129). Napoleon invades Portugal, and John is told that his father has died (129). Later, Senhor Benjamin reveals to the

narrator-protagonist that the boy's father has not, in fact, fallen while fighting the invaders (329). James has committed suicide in regret (293). John learns that, when his father and Midnight travel to England on business, he has sold the African into bondage in the United States for sleeping with the boy's mother (329). Feeling betrayed by and alienated from his family, John sets out to rescue his friend from a plantation in South Carolina (334). There, he meets Midnight's daughter Memória/Morri, who narrates much of the second half of the novel (353). Midnight has gone missing from the plantation (391). Yet, once John and Morri escape to New York, Midnight reappears there, and they form a new family (633).

Alongside this main plot, which focuses on Midnight and John, there are two major subplots. One is on John's friend Daniel, who drowns while both are still young boys, leading to John's opium addiction (103). There is another on Violeta, a girl who escapes an abusive home, leads a hard and wandering life as a sex worker, and, as she grows up, remains John's unrequited love interest, even when John settles near her in New York (500).

What, specifically, does Zimler repeat from Van der Post's works? A white protagonist grows from a boy into a man for the first half of the novel, which has parallels with the bildungsroman genre of *Story* (1978) and *Far-Off* (1974). The voyage across the Atlantic and into the perilous fiefdoms of the US South is a journey that parallels the trek across the Kalahari of the Afrikaner's characters. The bond between a white main character and a San man is also repeated. Interestingly, John has a beloved dog named Fanny that parallels Hintza in that regard, but the urban setting of Porto makes her character very different (103). She does not hunt or take orders in a mystical San tongue. Like many children's pets, she is loved, lost, and remembered, adding to the nostalgic tone.

The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century setting of *Hunting* helps Zimler add realism to the kind of San mythology he incorporates into the novel (2004). His source seems to be Van der Post, which, then, means it is mostly from Bleek. In many ways, the Cape San to which Midnight belongs is a group that has mostly disappeared, since, as sociologist Mohamed Adhikari has shown, Boers killed many of them, primarily in the years leading up to 1777, although attrition continued under the British (2012, 75). Thus, we must keep in mind that "the subaltern cannot speak" (Spivak 2010, 78), since this US-Portuguese author is dialoguing primarily with a twentieth-century Afrikaner and a nineteenth-century German. Even the ostrich feather Midnight gives John and which he carries throughout the novel is Van der Post's invention. It is on the cover of the 2018 Portuguese edition of Zimler's book.

While the mythology is highly mediated and partially fabricated, Zimler is not reducing Midnight to a "noble savage," as in Van der Post. Zimler's characters have sexual desires and relations. Midnight's affair with John's mother

shows two key elements of white society's perception of him. At first, she is repulsed by him, but eventually her disgust turns into attraction toward the uncanny (106, 288). If John's mother's sense of transgression is based largely on racism, Midnight's willing participation in the consensual affair makes him a flawed and thus humanized character. Their unwanted child, lost to miscarriage or abortion, depicts a complicated union in a context that would not accept such a child (291).

Zimler and Van der Post face the challenges of San alterity, the topic of Anne Solomon's "People who are Different" (2014, 329). She claims that social scientists and authors are faced with a "primitivist dilemma": of either claiming the San are radically different from the West or that they are just alike (333). The US-Portuguese and South African writers wrestle with the same issue, but they cannot escape making protagonists like themselves (Western, male) the center of concerns of alterity (330). Zimler does a better job of making Midnight a dynamic character facing colonial oppression (including racial oppression in the independent United States), for which Solomon calls, but he does not capture the elements of San identity that cannot be reduced to colonial relationships (2014, 333). Yet mourning is another means of relating to alterity.

John's lament throughout the book humanizes the San man. Judith Butler describes a new concept of "grievability" for Black lives:

Once we see that certain selves are considered worth defending while others are not, is there not a problem of inequality that follows from the justification of violence in the service of self-defense? One cannot explain this form of inequality, which accords measures of grievability to groups across the global spectrum, without taking account of the racial schemes that make such grotesque distinctions between which lives are valuable (and potentially grievable, if lost) and those which are not. (2020, 17)

Butler was referring to the cases like that of African American Treyvon Martin. Yet her interpretation of grief as providing a kind of humanity or symbolic "life" can be extended to the centuries of Black death and dehumanization of necropolitics. Zimler grieves the loss of Midnight, who his father tells him is dead (2019, 342).

Van der Post's fictional father personifies the fantasy of the European "civilizing mission" in Africa. Mourning his death compels Francois to struggle to internalize him at a psychoanalytical level and occupy his position at a social level. On the other hand, Zimler has John's father die in an ignoble fashion and lie about it. The Scotsman has the pharmacist tell his son he suffered a heroic military death. In reality, he was wrought with guilt for selling his one-time friend and rival into social death, slavery. While Ouwa's

passing reaffirms colonial norms, the Scotsman's passing creates disillusion in John. The context does not allow for romanticizing of the father as the embodiment of the colonial state, since John is a trans-national subject between the British and Portuguese empires and the United States. Portugal is a terrifying place for the Zarcos and the topic of a lachrymose history for Zimler due to its history of pogroms and other forms of antisemitism, personified by the Necromancer Reis. There is no fantasy of harmonious colonial or European Lusotropicalism in this novel (Freyre 1940, 1). The Portuguese are, in some ways, as violent as US enslavers and Afrikaners toward Black and Jewish people. There is, however, humanizing grief for Midnight, the man who he suspects killed the Necromancer and saved many Jewish lives. There is also grief for the noble side of his father, that of the one who saved a man from slavery.

Herman Bennett cautions us away from viewing history as a triumphant conquering of slavery by a noble, abolitionist British Empire (2018, 226). However, British abolitionism gives John a means of overcoming his grief through reparations. Gilroy criticizes paralyzing guilt and calls for active shame (2005, 165). Self-loathing would only leave John in a state of melancholia. Midnight, whom he internalizes due to his loss, gives him the drive to set things right after learning of his father's misdeeds. Midnight's first gift to John is to drive away his depression, animalized as "Hyena," a myth taken from Van der Post/Bleek (104). That "evil spirit" was that of Daniel, the scrappy young lad who drove away the antisemites to protect John as a child (11). That truculence returns as John challenges the US South, which has many parallels with the agrarian colonies of South Africa. Blacks were exploited for their labor in inhuman conditions, and Zimler draws on abolitionist-style depictions of grotesque, brutal punishments of captives. In this sense, he is creating a more realistic, more condemnatory representation of what is essentially a colonial reality for enslaved Africans, even if the United States has declared independence by the 1820s, when John travels there.

In South Carolina, Zimler extends his concept of death and mourning in a manner closer to combat what Mbembe calls "necropolitics"—the creation of subjects with no legal "life" or rights (2019, 75). Instead of envisioning a loyal noble savage like Nonnie's mentor Nuin-Tara, he creates a maroon figure who takes over narration from the self-centered, even narcissistic John. Though a house slave, when her father Midnight escapes, she is punished by exile to a cotton plantation where her days are overwhelmingly depressing. "I was smelly as a skunk most of the time—addlebrained too—because Papa was gone and Mama was dead. And caring for cotton is even worse on your spirit than on your back" (397). The enslaver tells the captives at River Bend that she is dead (397). Once she returns from her "punishment," a fellow

captive reflects: “I guess when the white folks say you’s dead, you’s dead even if you’s alive” (392). Slavery is, for these characters, and likely, for their historical counterparts, a living death, and they have been objectified in the eyes of the colonizers, suffering a social death. *Midnight* describes it as being slowly filled with and buried by stones (523).

Yet Morri, whose nickname is short for “Memória” and means “I died” as well, is not only capable of mourning and being mourned, but she also finds the drive to take action against an unjust system. Her exile is what drives her to lead a slave insurrection inspired by the rebel Denmark Vesey (1767–1822). There are parallels between his fight with the slavery Goliath and the valiant San warriors who fell before the colonizer’s firearms (111). Morri’s active, shrewd quest for self-determination makes her a dynamic, modern character. Her voice and her plans for revolt keep John from falling into the “white savior” stereotype, since both forces drive the struggle. The head patriarch dies, as does his son, at the hands of Crow, a Black man, and neither John nor the captives grieve him (490). Crow kills the foreman Mr. Johnson and frames him for killing the patriarch (490). There is no sympathy for the enslavers and no grief for their loss on the part of characters, narrator, or, most likely, the reader.

At first, Jewish solidarity, which had helped John survive in Portugal, is lacking in Ladino Charleston when it comes to freeing enslaved Africans. Black-Jewish solidarity, like when *Midnight* saves the Sephardim from the Necromancer, is completely absent. Many Conversos own captives and have become a traditional part of Charleston society. Yet one of them, Isaac, has a secret Black wife, Luisa, and supports John’s mission to liberate his friend (419). This is a dynamic depiction of Jewish communities on both sides of the Atlantic. Mourning his lost friend and grieving his lost Sephardic support system, including those who died there in pogroms, leads him to fight the injustices of his time.

In New York, his grief turns into action once again when he takes up the abolitionist cause. His unrequited love Violeta finds jobs for the Black refugees from South Carolina on farms run by the abolitionist Quakers in the North (493). Life on these settlements is not described, so they may be heading to another paternalist Hunter’s Drift, but the book presents it as a happy ending. They have wages and a schoolhouse, which were absent on the South Carolina estate (493). Violeta’s protagonism in this process attenuates John’s role as “white savior” and presents collaboration between multiple sectors in society as a means of overcoming injustice. Also, Morri’s refusal to work on any farm shows the newfound freedom of the captives. They can say “no” for the first time (493–94). John adopts her and she becomes a schoolteacher (497). Hence, he assumes the role of her father, having internalized aspects of *Midnight* through mourning (496). Interestingly, John associates saving

Morri with the loss of an arm—he has been shot while helping her escape. Her adoption and success give new meaning to the mourning of a missing limb (497). Helping their family makes it a worthy sacrifice.

John considers his adult life's most important work to be gathering the names of the enslaved and freed Africans in South Carolina (496). Later, he covers other states alongside Jewish and Quaker allies. By assigning a name to these objectified, socially dead individuals and telling their families they are alive and where they can be found, John is symbolically grieving their social death and using that mourning to spur him to action (496). Zimler is proposing through his characters that such documents should be read today to recognize enslaved lives and give them meaning. I am reminded of the Montgomery Lynching Memorial, which is largely a solemn list of names of those who suffered this genocide. Merely seeing the names is a powerful monument to those who died and the extent of the crime against them. Knowing a humanizing story of each name will bring healing. Seeing the names of the enslaved in the context of slavery gives them the chance to be mourned and, in concrete terms, liberated, whether through legislation or other efforts at retrieval. John cannot see that abolition would only bring with it the new challenges of Jim Crow, among others. In addition to his list, the abolitionist Jew also puts an advertisement out for Midnight, who appears at his door in New York.

As John is mourning the recently deceased Benjamin, Midnight comes to Manhattan after years of wandering the US Kalahari—the Arizona Territory—grieving his daughter, whom he thinks is dead, with the comfort of Mantis (518, 521). Rosner (2003) and *The Age* already note the parallels between Jews and Black people in the novel (2012, 78). If, for Van der Post, the mourned father is the harmonious empire, Zimler's protagonist mourns his bonds with Midnight, the culture he represents, and the associations he forms between his love for his father, the San man, and other lost loves and cultures of history.

Midnight adds the indigenous to these rehumanized subjects, since the Creek are responsible for delivering Midnight out of River Bend (520). They do not do it simply out of mercy—they do so because Tsamma had cured their leader (520). His role as healer contributes to him not being merely a noble savage. He sets out to provide care for his people in Cape Province, he dialogues collegially with the pharmacist Benjamin, and he earns his freedom through solidarity with another group the whites have colonized (520). Yet Benjamin says he is like a “son” and not a brother or full equal, indicating continued hierarchies within these solidarities (292). What is clear is that, like the San who Sam Challis studies, Midnight is a highly creolized individual, not an isolated primitive, and traditional medicine is part of inter-cultural collaboration (2014, 247).

The mythical San ostrich feather John mentioned in the newspaper brings Tsamma to New York to reunite with his family (522). He and John reflect on slavery, life, and death. Midnight feels betrayed for his enslavement, not by the Scotsman individually, but by the world itself (524). The Jewish abolitionist is working on memorializing the “field slaves” in a tile panel in the style he learned in Portugal (532). Memorializing is a form of productive grief, working through his trauma, and humanizing his new partners in abolitionism.

Zimler’s lachrymose protagonist, who repeatedly overcomes his lifelong melancholia through love, mourning, and solidarity with others—Daniel, Midnight, his father, his own arm—grows from a boy to a man. The “hunt” symbolizes his passage (Klopper 2010, 14). This quest is one that humanizes, not animalizes, Midnight, since it grants him greater freedom. Unlike Van der Post’s characters and those of the classic bildungsroman, the second half of the novel is dedicated to carrying out one’s duties as a fully formed adult. The second half’s adult characters give the lie to Anthony Giardina’s dismissal of the work as a rewriting of *Huckleberry Finn* (2003). Does he say that about all books with a white protagonist and a Black friend? By accepting responsibility for the “sins” he has inherited from his father—namely, the enslavement of Midnight—John shows that there is a way forward for a world burdened with colonialism. One must recognize those who have been lost to the colonial-modern system, mourn them, and work to liberate them—alongside them as partners, not as simplistic, paternalistic saviors.

The novel can be read as a neo-slave narrative, since its narration is divided between John and Morri (Bell 1989). She is a dynamic, active, strong, and intelligent narrator-protagonist who recounts her autobiography. This well-developed characterization adds another semantic layer to her nickname, which means “I died” in Portuguese. The implicit “I” (*eu morri*, ‘I died’) is humanizing in its individuation and its role as speaking subject. Since the verb means “to die,” the sentence is an impossible utterance, the tale of a ghost. Her name evokes Paul de Man’s reading of autobiography as “de-facement” (1984). He reads Wordsworth’s *Essays upon Epitaphs* (1810) as autobiography (72). The statement “I died” evokes these epitaphs and, as in de Man’s reading, it performs *prosopopoeia* (personification): it uses language to create the textual illusion of a living, speaking, human even after death (76). In Zimler’s novel, due to her name, Morri’s life repeatedly reminds the reader of her death and thousands like it. The fact she does not die enslaved is a reminder of those who lived and died in bondage as well as those who fled. She is created through writing, which reminds the reader of the millions of voices silenced by illiteracy, dehumanization, and social as well as literal death.

As he does with the African diaspora and the San in particular in *Hunting* (2004), Zimler is using literature and memory to recover a history that the majority of historians have overlooked (Fróes 2009, 76). If Zimler re-creates Van der Post's shortcoming of presenting highly mediated or fictionalized San mythology as their sacred worldview, his act of mourning their death and imagining them as friends, heroes, rebels, and lovers is a discursive step toward recovering the past and providing reparations for its atrocities. The reader must decide what specific, concrete forms and acts this entails.

THE LIVING

One of the shortcomings of humanization through mourning is the danger of confining the San to the past, mythical or otherwise, as Zimler's Portuguese subtitle indicates: *O principio do mundo* (beginning/principle of the world) (2018a). There are still 100,000 San people who are united across southern African borders by the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa and served by the Kuru Family of Organizations (Chennells 2014, 418–19). Many are integrated into outside society, and they wish to be further incorporated. The San face large high school dropout rates, unemployment, poor healthcare, language death, and a lack of representation in national curriculum (Biesele 2014, 395; Gabototwe 2014, 423). The ethnic minority is facing these challenges by joining with, not withdrawing from, other indigenous groups to advocate for cultural preservation and infrastructure (Chennells 2014, 420). Wits University's Origins Center, under Thabo Mbeki, is working to preserve their language and culture by collecting oral testimonies (Moran 2009, 6). While Zimler's melancholy is more humanizing than Van der Post's, we should not forget the living in our quest to resuscitate the dead.

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Chapter Four

Ruy Duarte de Carvalho's Border Literature in As *paisagens propícias*

Alice Giroto

It is since the very beginning of the Angolan writer, anthropologist, filmmaker, and intellectual Ruy Duarte de Carvalho's literary project that the South—understood not as a mere geographical expression, but as a condenser of a whole order of both emotional and epistemological meanings—imposes itself at its core, running throughout the different aesthetic forms that project took along the successive phases of Carvalho's life. References to what he called an “irreversible consecration” can be found both in his first poetry collection *Chão de oferta* (*Land of Promise*, 1972) and in the short stories of *Como se o mundo não tivesse leste* (*As if the World Had no East*, 1977), his first prose work, and, through the lenses of the fieldwork he carried out with pastoralist and agro-pastoralist societies in southwestern Angola and northwestern Namibia, this primordial consecration reaches a more mature, more complex and yet clearer articulation in the novels that constitute the trilogy *Os filhos de Próspero* (*Prospero's Children*, 2009), his last work.

This chapter will focus on the second novel of the trilogy, *As paisagens propícias* (*Propitious Landscapes*, 2005), whose contents and structure attest Carvalho's consideration of the broader Southern African context as essential for collocating and understanding the fate of Angola as a nation and, with it, of all the peoples living within its borders. By expressing this deeply rooted conviction, the author's work has always presented a geographical alternative to the central (and centralizing) role played by the capital city Luanda,¹ in both literary and political terms, as symbol of the Angolan national project; as has already been pointed out,

[by] challenging a national design incapable of boldly taking on the plurality which the country is made of, Ruy Duarte insists on a debate guided by the inclusion of what has been sidelined, a decision from which an intellectual project based on the incorporation of other geographies stems. (Chaves 2019, 65)²

Given these premises, it can be said that the South staged in Carvalho's work is a sort of inner South of what has been defined, by the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2009; 2020), as the global South—that is, a political, social, and cultural space-time experienced by those subjected to capitalism in its colonial and patriarchal relationship with the world and resisting to it. (Thus, it coincides partially but not necessarily with the geographic Southern Hemisphere.) And it is only in this inner South that the proposal of an alternative epistemological order—a national project based on alternative, truly postcolonial horizons—is possible, due not only to its distance from the new, postcolonial center of power, but above all to the blurring of boundaries that its borderland nature makes conceivable.

This analysis of *Paisagens* will be centered precisely on the concept of “border” in both its “historical” and “metaphorical” acceptations (Martins 2001, 43), articulated with that of “frontier,” deemed particularly productive for the African context (Kopytoff 1987). The tripartition of the analysis follows the internal division of the novel into three³ books and will demonstrate how the primacy given in the narrative to this particular austral geography is aimed at subverting its link, stated in Said (1994, 78), with imperialism and the culture associated with it.

WHERE THE HISTORICAL BORDER IS DELIMITED AND A METAPHORICAL BORDER(S) APPEAR(S)

The narrative begins in Outjo, in the Namibian region of Kunene bordering the Angolan province of Namibe, where the narrator (meta- and autofictionally coinciding with the author) has decided to go precisely to write down the story he has to tell (Carvalho 2005a, 11). Places in their geographical understanding are not a mere setting in Carvalho, and it is even more so in a novel that from its title has to do with landscapes: along with theoretical speculations on the nature of literary forms, the narrator starts reporting historical facts involving the two sides of the present-day border between Angola and Namibia during the last quarter of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth centuries (14–18). This is the period of the colonial invasions, from the conquest to the establishment of the colonial rule (Davidson 1991), which spans, for the then Portuguese colony, the frantic years before the

Berlin Conference, which laid down the principle of effective occupation, to the Colonial Act promulgated in 1930 by the Salazarist regime (Pinto 2015).

Severo (alias SRO) is a pale, mixed-race, Angolan-born man living in the northern part of this same Namibian region, Opuwo, where they met a year before. Before entering into the details of his main character's story, the narrator dwells on the

long process of hesitations, misunderstandings, delaying strategies and confusing and ambiguous situations surrounding the demarcation of the border between the Portuguese authorities in Angola and the German, British, and South African administrations that succeeded in governing Southwest Africa, which is nowadays Namibia. (Carvalho 2005a, 40)

The geopolitical dispute, caused by the potential for exploitation of the hydrographic resources of the area and temporarily stalled, immediately after the Berlin Conference, by the delimitation of a no man's land, or "neutral zone," was finally solved in 1928 by the Kakeri Agreement.⁴ The long historical process involved migration waves of both indigenous, mainly herder, populations under the pressure of the exploration of Namibian territory and Boer settlers from Transvaal to Angola. Another factor is the mercenary leader of Tswana descent Vita Tom/Oorlog, who alternately served the Portuguese imperial authorities or the German colonial government, and ultimately established a Bantustan in Southwest Africa. The porosity of this border, which these events demonstrate, was not limited to the colonial period but is something still true a century later, at the time of the encounter between Severo and the narrator, if the narrator himself can say to Paulino, his trustworthy Ganguela assistant, that

[this] land, Paulino, seen from the inside, by those who inhabit it, turns out to be the same, the same thing surrounds everything. And that's why you can go from Moçâmedes to Opuwo, and back again, as you did, without needing a passport or a safe-conduct, you just have to cross the roads. (25)

Hence, the historical border—which is, for Martins (2001, 43), "the political border, and, more exactly, the version of it proposed by the nation-State"—shows an ambivalence between a firm existence on the maps (even if conquered after long negotiations) and an actual indefiniteness on the ground. The same characteristics can be found if we are to consider the metaphorical border that, in this first part of the novel—not coincidentally titled "a white man from Namibia" (Carvalho 2005a, 9)—is clearly represented by the colonial order. In the very first chapters, more than one scene is constructed like a "consolidated vision" (Said 1994): a group of white explorers sitting around a fire; the story of Severo's father, who was a disgraced son sent off to Angola

for redemption; the brief mention of a teacher's mixed-race servant during SRO's childhood in Portugal. Yet, in all these scenes, a deviation from their fixed, "consolidated" interpretation is declared or shown, thus revealing the porous and indefinite character of the metaphorical border, too. The condition for the existence of the first one—where "one of those European travelers who, especially in the last quarter of the second half of the nineteenth century, was giving news to the Western world about what things were like here" is presented "sitting with other white men around a fire"—is challenged by the narrator, as he says: "If I were to write a novel" (Carvalho 2005a, 14). This means calling into question not only the structure of attitude and reference that founds the colonial order, but also the genre of the novel, since the syntax of this hypothesis expresses improbability. The mixed-race Severo, the son of a young Portuguese rebel and an African girl who died delivering him, is but a sign of "an affront to the milieu and the world, [a] malignant blight on the body of the colony and the regime" (65). And the caress through "the curl of his hair" given by that servant in his remote memories might have been the first time that Severo experiences the "fleeting perception of his difference" (57) in the Salazarist Portugal of his childhood. He was the only one who wore shoes and had a soccer ball, but nonetheless he was systematically excluded from the matches by his mates (56).

There are other metaphorical implications of the indefiniteness and porosity of these borders. The previously mentioned speculations about literary forms are but hints of the metafictional nature of this novel, just like every one of Carvalho's. The utmost expression of this characteristic can be found in the narrator, whose twofold overlapping with the figures of the author and the protagonist⁵ blurs the boundaries of the literary genre by bringing about a circular relationship between life and text (Miceli 2011, 27). The scene of the first conversation between the narrator and the protagonist, at Severo's in Opuwo, turns this construction particularly clear:

From the wall that, sitting there, I could see beyond the table and his figure, who was looking at me from the front, hung a shard of mirror that reflected the scene like a succinct cinema reverse shot. Maintaining the left-right relationship, the figure looking at me from the table was the one seen from the back, there . . . and the one seen from the back in reality, which was me, was facing me from there. And it is here, to tell the truth, that the whole thing begins.⁶ (Carvalho 2005a, 39)

What the narrator sees is, at the same time, Severo sitting in front of him, and himself reflected in the mirror behind Severo's back: here is where the overlapping of the author, the narrator, and the protagonist turns particularly clear. A grasp of the Self is at stake here, playing again with the ambiguity of

the frontiers between (racial)⁷ identities—which colonialism always thought, and consequently imposed, as fixed, but of a fixity which the mere existence of the offspring of the colonial encounter, like Severo is, contradicts. This challenge to the Self cannot but open the possibility of a different understanding of the Other. In fact, if constructing the Other implies building the border that separates the Self from the Other—the border being, above all, the imaginary line on which the notion of difference is projected and from which the affirmation of identity becomes possible (Ribeiro 2002, 481; Sferrazza Papa 2020, para. 6)—the border crossings on multiple levels staged in this novel, on the contrary, will pave the way for a deep self-questioning of the protagonist's own identity and his welcoming of a different logic to the one inherited from the (post-)colonial order.

WHERE THE BORDER TURNS INTO A FRONTIER AND CHALLENGES THE (POST-)COLONIAL ORDER

The events narrated in the second book of the novel further confirm the nature of structuring concept of both the historical border between Angola and Namibia and its metaphorical implications. We are brought back to the Kunene region and follow the narrator's journey from Outjo to Sesfontein, which passes through "propitious landscapes," and this gives him the chance to digress on the colonial patterns of figurative (painting and photography) and literary representation. He considers how Severo himself, who had spent his teenage and young adult years back from Portugal to this same area of "wide open spaces," in the southern Angolan city of Moçâmedes during the late 1950s, "couldn't help but having been marked by the spirit that then animated such adventurers . . . always ready to penetrate uninhabited and inaccessible folds of this geography" (Carvalho 2005a, 126).

Once arrived in Sesfontein, the narrator resumes his self-imposed task of telling Severo's story, which he organizes starting from the contents of a long e-mail. At the beginning of the 1980s, in the chaotic years after Angola's independence, Severo travels from Luanda, where he is living and planning to settle down, to the port city of Tômbwa, in the south of the country, then from there to Peditiva, then again, after having left his car, in the middle of the bushland area near the Iona Conservation Area (138–46). The reason for this journey is to carry out an illegal affair: selling a couple of rhino horns in exchange for dollars to be used on the black market, which had turned out to be the only economic system in force in the country: "Everything was entering into these logics and the State itself was also being integrated into the parallel market, integrating into it, oil, diamonds, fishing, everything, with salaries being worthless and everyone forced into this scheme" (99–100). He

gets caught in a trap. The only exit strategy envisaged by his friend K, who was with him at the moment of the transaction, is for Severo to stay and live there, host of a local family of low-rank Kuvale, until a chance arising for getting back to his urban life at the right moment. Then, complicated and risky explanations would no longer be necessary to justify his reappearance (149–55). The two years Severo spends in this “hole without a name surrounded by the desert” (163), as he calls it, represent a period of learning of a different lifestyle, making the most of the natural resources provided by the place that he uses according to ancient, traditional techniques, which also helps him integrate into the local society.

Years later he will have the opportunity to delve into readings that will help him understand that the place he had found himself compelled to live in by the course of events—that is, the area of the Curoca River basin—is far from being just a geopolitical borderland, forgotten by state authorities in the middle of the invasion of Angola by the South African Defence Force through Kunene and Kwando-Kubango. It is a frontier in the sense of “interstitial areas between organised societies, open to intrusion” (163)—precisely the definition given by Kopytoff (1987)⁸ of local frontier zones in Africa, where “ambiguous, anomalous, marginal societies that nestle in the interstices between ‘normal’ societies and ethnicities” develop (4). Thus configured, these are ideal places for the settlement and actions of frontiersmen (and women) that collectively form a new type of society:

Because he was also, and it was important not to lose sight of this, sunk into what he could perhaps call an “ethnic pocket,” that is, one of those configurations that are still to be found in certain parts of the world and of Africa, in which the processes of cultural and genetic mongrelisation are not triggered only by generalised westernisation. In which processes of assimilation to economic models that are generally considered to be among the most archaic and on the verge of total disappearance are in full swing. There, there were still hunter-gatherers adopting the pastoralist model, when, in the light of the world, the normal thing would be for all of them to be converting to the Western mercantile model. (Carvalho 2005a, 163–64)

Given the complete absence of any form of state administration or trade in the area, due to the Angolan Civil War raging in those years, it is clear that the only viable option for surviving—here limited to the overriding economic aspect but objectively implying a less palpable epistemological one—is a self-sufficiency model, which takes into account the surrounding environmental conditions and represents an alternative to Western (and Westernized), colonial, and postcolonial societal models. It may seem that the “archaic” character of this alternative only confirms a dimension of resistance

to metamorphosis, a “conservatism,” the crystallization of the socio-historical matrices present there, according to the elements Kopytoff identifies (1987, 14)—and Martins recalls (2001, 46)⁹—as constitutive of the frontier perspective. Yet Severo is a character whose body carries the significance of the Western colonial order, upon which he has not much deeply reflected until this moment. He adapts to and adopts a “premodern” (in Western terms) way of being in the world. He does so in order to survive in a place where the technological advances of the modernity of Western descent would be useless. This cannot be deemed a conservatism, but a transition, instead, to a new kind of modernity. This modernity *a contrario* is defined by Carvalho in his *Vou lá visitar pastores (I Am Going There to Visit Herders, 1999)*, precisely in relation to strategies of adaptation in frontier zones:

This is a fertile ground for theoretical developments: a model of pastoral culture preserves a local (perhaps even regional), circumstantial (in relation to current times) and operational (in relation to the environment) relevance which leads it to be fully adopted by new populations and to become a social and economic innovation—despite being undoubtedly archaic in the face of the generalised onslaught of globalising modernity, and inexorably threatened and made unviable in the long term by it—for groups who thus seek to gain a position as players fully invested in the development of local processes. We could thus insinuate and risk that “modernity,” for some, may ultimately involve the adoption of millenary models! (Carvalho 2015, 264)

This kind of reversed metamorphosis also attains the identity of the protagonist. In his resettling in the context of the “ethnic pocket” of the Curoca River basin, Severo relies completely on his friend K, a local seer who is perfectly integrated into that society, showing a relationship of dependency for his own survival. The relationship subverts the colonial racial order. SRO becomes K’s assistant, pretending to be unable to speak during the soothsaying campaigns in which he follows his friend, in order not to raise concerns for the lack of fluency in the local language. The strategy of silence is also devised by K because, in this way, Severo could be confused with a look-alike, Tyipialala, a mixed-race man living in that vicinity who actually has a speech disability—insisting again, also in this part of the novel, on the theme of the double (Carvalho 2005a, 171–72).

But the most striking subversion of the pre-established order may be Severo’s marriage with a seer woman, Beliela, an event that definitively and officially integrates him into this society and takes him away from the “looks and laughs of much disdain and contempt” (182) that his pretended disability provokes. The “traditional” female submission is reversed, since she is the one who chooses her partner, not the other way round, and, given the

movement of cattle that a marriage among pastoralist societies of southwestern Angola involves, she is also the one who virtually pays for the marriage, since Severo is completely devoid of such wealth:

. . . I married, and willingly gave myself up to the good treatment of that woman, who, from her quality as *tyimbanda* of the *makumukas* cult, from her competence in those domains, and from the care with which she managed the profits she drew from them, knew how to extract the capacity for marrying whomever she wished, taking upon herself the heavy burden of the payments due to her family and of the compensations due to her ex-husband, which should normally come out of me and my family, and also for me to continue marrying when and with whomever I thought best . . . (262)

These examples make clear the complete independence from Western(ized) logics of the frontier society in which Severo ends up living and where he is finally accepted. This independence makes the area an inner South of the global South—that is, a society whose political organization and culture are alternatives to and resist the colonially exploitative and patriarchal relationship imposed by the new, postcolonial center of power.

WHERE THE MAP OF UNDERSTANDING CAN BE DRAWN FROM AN EX-CENTRIC POINT OF VIEW

In the third book, the narrator, who has left Sesfontein and is now heading to Opuwo—the town where he had met with the protagonist one year and a half before the narrative time—with the purpose of picking up some papers belonging to Severo, falls silent and lets SRO himself tell his own story (Carvalho 2005a, 229). His marriage with Belielia represents a new phase in his life, since he finally assumes an occupation according to his own, artistic inclination and begins to produce objects that, in Western(ized) terms, would be defined as craftsmanship. The couple then moves from Kambêno, where they had settled down, to go and live in Opuwo.

Since this is the place where all the narrative threads until this point converge, it is from his sudden departure from here, and after his encounter with the narrator, that Severo resumes his narration in a second long e-mail sent from Cape Town. This latest relocation in the South African city carries out the final realization and mentalization, by the protagonist, of the transformation processes in which he has been involved. Gradually, he adheres to these processes more consciously and actively, as if it could only be possible to really grasp them from outside the physical, geographical spaces where they occur. It is an outside not coincidentally still located in the South, and still

in Africa, and it is not by chance that this third part of the novel is entitled "From the Algiers Pier to Cape Agulhas" (223).¹⁰

Severo feels he owes his reader an explanation for the discomfort he experiences and manifests each and every time Luanda is concerned—the last discussion he had had with the narrator before disappearing involved precisely this issue (231). It is the appalling difficulty with coping with the political system established in Angola after the independence from Portugal (the core of which is in the capital city) that turns this issue into such an emotional ball of yarn for SRO. It is there where he had first imagined making a life for himself. What is clear for him, though, is that, in his new life far from the center of the postcolonial nation, "what was left behind was Luanda, not Angola, it was Luanda that I was leaving, not Angola . . . what would even happen to me, somehow, I was seeing myself expelled from Luanda and finding myself back in Angola . . ." (235). The protagonist refuses to identify the nation with its capital (as do the narrator and author, considering the overlappings I have already explained), distancing himself from the nationalist mythology built around it by Luanda's label of "cradle of the nation." This primacy, which connects the port's role in the political sphere with its nature of sign and symbol of a certain idea of national specificity in terms of identity and culture (*angolanidade*), derives from the position the city has had in the imaginary of the elite who have controlled the government since independence, the MPLA. Hence, Luanda can only be a symbol of the MPLA's chosen societal model, which it imposed on the nation. Said political system was based, not differently from colonial times, on unequal relations, the worst excesses of corruption and insatiable capitalism, and "a neo-liberal and eminently urban European world vision" (Rothwell 2019, 194). That is to say, it is a model contrary to any "Southern epistemology."

But it is in Cape Town where, after having settled down in Opuwo and having finally found his own place in life after so much roaming, Severo decides to go and analyze, through a theoretical and scientific approach, the unique experience through which he has gone. The successive readings and investigations on southwestern Angola and northwestern Namibia herder populations he conducts there—besides the evidence based on his own experience of the relations, links, transits, and circulations between the two sides of the border—lead him to formulate an "idea of nation . . . that one day will remedy in Africa the fallacy and irreducible ethnocidal inevitability of the geopolitical configuration bequeathed by the Berlin Treaty" (Carvalho 2005a, 302). This would be a "clan nation" based on common land, connections, interests, practices, logics, reasons, meanings, and memory shared by a kinship—thus confirming the idea already expressed by many, but by Kopytoff (1987, 3–4) with a particularly in-depth and clear display, that European political notions (that of "nation," directly deriving from that of "tribe") are unfit for

the historical reality of non-European societies. Carvalho states, through his character Severo, that the time has come for Africa to rebuild his own political culture, learning from his own models and experiences—finally freed from the conviction represented by

criteria, values, “added values,” concepts, services, and achievements that fit judgements and results measured and delivered by those who continue to dominate in a world dominated by white programmes, and not according to the common and collective interest of all in general and “ours” in particular. . . . (Carvalho 2005a, 309)

The other important element Severo realizes for the first time in his life, now in Cape Town, is his own skin color: undoubtedly, the actual embodiment of colonial frontier processes, but also of that “dwelling in the border” appointed by Mignolo (2012, xiv–xvi) as the necessary condition for the development of a “border thinking” (49–88).¹¹ border thinking in Carvalho is an epistemological challenge, a place where decolonized creation and knowledge manifest themselves and return dignity to the Other erased even by postcolonial holders of power (Basto 2019, 127); it is attentive to pluralities and to unforeseen and unforeseeable connections (Miceli 2019, 101)—precisely those experienced and embraced by Severo in his life’s trajectory. Aesthetically, it founds a border literature, which is “any writing that, by its way of saying things, becoming speech that becomes voice, disturbs the expression of power that language also is. . . .” (Carvalho 2008, 22).

Finally, at Africa’s southern limits, Severo closes his narrative suggesting that precisely this “geographical notion” enshrines the notion of himself, the meaning of his existence: “Does the fact that I have finally reached Cape Agulhas correspond to a map of myself?” (Carvalho 2005a, 333). The same journey completed by Severo in *Paisagens*, from southern Angola to Cape Agulhas, in South Africa, will be made also by the protagonist of Carvalho’s latest novel, *A terceira metade* (*The Third Half*, 2009), the last of the trilogy—with a significant stopover in Saint Helena, an ex-centric viewpoint on Southern Africa. An “austral novel” narrated by the frontier character Trindade, it completes the identification between a geographical and counterhegemonic African South and a border thinking and writing posited since the “irreversible consecration to the South” that marked the poetic beginnings of Carvalho’s literary work. And for it to be really counterhegemonic, it must “think of an Angola that goes beyond . . . national borders” (Miceli 2019, 103), including Namibian territories and the portion of the continent that goes south until “the austral limits of Africa into the oceans beyond. . . .” (Carvalho 2005a, 333).

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NOTES

1. For a recent, even if not completely satisfactory, treatise on the important role played by Luanda in relation to Angolan literature, see Ribeiro and Noa (2019).

2. In this respect, see also Miceli (2019). The translation of all the quotations from works that were not translated into English is my responsibility.

3. The importance of triangles, tripartitions, and more generally of the number three in Carvalho’s creative work is explicitly highlighted in Miceli (2019), who relates it to a certain Shakespearean character of the structure of his works (both films and novels)—without forgetting the much more evident and often commented echo of João Guimarães Rosa’s “third bank.” At the end of the novel, the protagonist of *Paisagens* himself talks about “my rule of three in life” (Carvalho 2005a, 322) while exposing “a geography in the space” able to explain, in his view, the relationships among subjects, groups, environments, and cosmos and, ultimately, the meaning of their existence.

4. Griffiths (1986, 212) talks about an in-principle agreement in 1886 and the final demarcation of the boundary in 1931. See also Pinto (2015, 582–83): “. . . on 30th December 1886, Portugal signed a treaty with Germany delimiting the southern border of Angola, separated from South West Africa (future Namibia) . . . by the bed

of the Cunene River up to the Ruacana Falls and the parallel that passes through a landmark of those falls to meet the Okavango River.”

5. In this respect, Miceli (2011, 43) talks about “a progressive erasure of the main narrative voice . . . in favour of another one,” since in Book I the narrator tells, among other things, what he recalls from the conversations he and Severo had had in their only encounter; in Book II, the narrator organizes the contents of a long e-mail sent to him by Severo after this had disappeared without an explanation, leaving unsolved many issues of their conversation. Finally, in Book III, the narrator merely transcribes the text of a second e-mail from Severo, who in this way turns up to fully represent the second narrative voice of *Paisagens*: “He himself is the one plotting” the narrative (Carvalho 2005a, 50).

6. An excellent narratological analysis of the ambivalence captured in this scene is Miceli’s (2011, 49–52).

7. The author, a white Angolan who chose Angolan citizenship at the moment of independence, was born in Portugal and had moved to Angola with his family in his early childhood.

8. “The African frontier we focus on consists of politically open areas nestling between organized societies but ‘internal’ to the larger regions in which they are found—what might be called an ‘internal’ or ‘interstitial frontier’” (Kopytoff 1987, 9).

9. Rui Cunha Martins’s discourse, particularly the second part of his article (Martins 2001, 42–51), is a good starting point to think about the aporias implied by the concept of border; in this respect, see also Balibar (2002), who prefers to term it a “dialectical notion.”

10. This is also the refrain verse of “Noção geográfica” (Geographic notion), a poem of Carvalho’s second collection *Das decisões da idade* (*About the decisions of age*, 1974). This is but one more example, of many others already seen, of self-quote by the author, a proof of the deeply interrelated, intertextual (and autofictional) character of his comprehensive literary work.

11. The coincidence in time of the publication of Mignolo’s crucial work and of Carvalho’s prose works, through which he narratively elaborated a sort of “pastoral metaphysics,” must not be considered as an influence of the former on the latter since, according to Luhuna Carvalho (2019, 16–17), “[it] is precisely because it does not emerge directly from the circuits of academic debate, or from a particular scholasticism, that it is relevant to point out the way in which this project by Ruy Duarte mirrors reflections, processes and ideas that were at that precise moment being formulated from debates that were considerably alien to him.”

Chapter Five

“Why Do They Kill Us?”

The Strange Neighborhood and Necropolitics in Lília Momplé’s Novel Neighbours

Nilza Laice

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter on the novel *Neighbours* (1995), by Mozambican writer Lília Maria Clara Carrière Momplé (1935), examines how repressive governments, allied with the incursion of apartheid and the Sixteen Years’ War¹ in Mozambique, established a politics of death and contributed to the emergence of what I call “national immigrants” in that society. “National immigrants” are displaced and peripheral individuals who have become marginalized by the society that birthed them and, consequently, should welcome them, but instead, in this society, national immigrants face contempt, indifference, and sometimes death.²

Several causes have been pointed out for the Sixteen Years’ War. Michel Cahen elucidates that “the communal aspect of the war [. . .] was social rather than ethnic: between the population living in the sphere of the modern state and the population protecting itself from the state, living in RENAMO autarchies” (Cahen 2019, 342). Factors include the potential support of the government of Pieter Botha’s South Africa, Ian Smith’s Rhodesia, and Portugal (which was not pleased with the political independence of Mozambique and the implications of it for its economy); ethnic disagreements that existed even before the colonial occupation and that become exacerbated during colonial

times; and disagreement between the leaders of FRELIMO. Other causes include the desire to restructure the traditional authorities (now marginalized and infantilized), combating the policies of operation production, communal villages, re-education camps, assassinations, and death sentences.

It is estimated that around a million people died in combat and from hunger due to the crisis caused by the Sixteen Years' War and the economic recession at the time. The outcomes of the war in Mozambique brought about, *inter alia*, destroyed infrastructure, businesses sabotaged, roads bathed in blood, people kidnapped, citizens forced to become soldiers, populations forbidden to circulate, and minefields that resulted in almost five million mutilated people. Terror, fear, and hunger spread during a period of sixteen years, a time of uncertainty and brutality. Even if the intentions of the new local government for building the new nation were good, their strategies revealed a lack of knowledge about the society that was to be governed. The new government's relentless authoritarianism ignored the specificities of Mozambique's different peoples.

In this context, I reflect on the role of Lília Momplé in the development of Mozambican literature and, at the same time, in revising the nation's history. I do so by engaging with the theoretical perspectives of Achille Mbembe (2017) on the limits of sovereignty, Nadine Gordimer's (2013) discussion about the apartheid regime of South Africa, and the importance of the relationship between literature and politics in Momplé's only novel, a work of historical fiction, *Neighbours*.

But is *Neighbours* really a historical novel? Lukács (1962, 39) explains that crossings between the private and the historical are what enables the reality of the historical novel, which, otherwise, would be nothing more than a chronicle. Because the fictional lives of Momplé's characters are affected by history, *Neighbours*, therefore, is inscribed in the category of the historical novel. As Fredric Jameson (1982, 2) points out, the historical novel is not the description of the customs and values of a people in a certain period of its history, nor it is the representation of great historical events (2). It is not the story of the life of ordinary individuals in situations of extreme crisis, and certainly it is not the private history of great historical figures (2). Instead, it is the intersection of all or some of these elements. Momplé, in her own way, intersperses facts of private life in a particular historical moment. Yet again, this confirms *Neighbours* as a historical novel.

The novel opens with an exasperated tone due to the interference of apartheid in Mozambique and the tragic family experiences that resulted from it. The author states in the novel's preface: "I have always been impressed by the permanent and tragic interference of the racist minority from South Africa in my country, where, especially in the 1980s, countless Mozambicans saw the course of their lives diverted or, simply, ceased to exist, by the will and

order of the apartheid defenders” (Momplé 1995, 5).³ The narrative recounts the tragic story of three neighboring Mozambican families, who happen to be completely unknown to each other. Although these Mozambican neighbors did not know each other, they all met the same fate: death perpetrated by the segregationist regime of South Africa. The novel is divided into five parts. The first part is entitled “19 horas” (Momplé 1995, 9). It introduces the main characters and their households. The narrator directs the reader to visit three flats, and at the same time the narrator historically contextualizes this period of political instability, economic and food shortage for many people in Mozambique. Narguiss and her family, however, seem to have plenty as they prepare a feast.

In the second part, “21 horas” (27), the reader is introduced to the daily life of the characters, as well as to their dreams, agonies, and past histories. The author makes constant use of analepsis in her writing, enabling the reader to become more familiar with Januário’s story more deeply. The chapter also introduces two new characters, Zálua and Romu, with whom Dupont will participate in the raid to destabilize and discredit the new government of independent Mozambique. It is, therefore, with the aim of destabilizing the government that the war is instigated. It is interesting to note that this is a recurring theme in other works of Momplé, such as: *Stress* (1997); *Os olhos da cobra verde* (1997); *O sonho de Alima* (1997) (although briefly); *Xirove* (1997); and *Era uma outra Guerra* (1997). In these narratives, Momplé depicts teachers, merchants, former combatants, wealthy generals, men, and women; old, young, Mozambican, and Portuguese people, among others, to give the reader different points of view on the same subject. This is a counternarrative to the official history intended to help the reader understand how the Mozambican national elite were created.

In “23 horas” (69), part three, it is almost dawn in Narguiss’s house as well as in Leia’s. The news announces more deaths:

“At least thirty people,” the speaker continues, “including women, children, and men, were killed and an unknown number kidnapped, when a group of armed men attacked a bus on national road Number 2. The attack took place near the village of Manhiça and survivors claim that the group was made up of about fifty heavily armed elements, mostly children aged between twelve and sixteen.” And the speaker’s voice continues, devoid of emotion, serene and as if indifferent to the fate of the thirty men, women and children murdered and the indeterminate number of those kidnapped. (71)

On the other hand, Narguiss is made restless by the absence of her husband at the party. Íris, daughter of Leia and Januário, cannot fall asleep, so this instills tension in the narrative. Paraphrasing Januário, it seems that they are

predicting doom. The South Africans arrive at Mena's house, another neighbor, and the conflict is set in motion. The narrative voice presents the reader with the executioners and their motivations, and the reader sees them leave to meet their victims.

In "1 hora" (91), Narguiss wakes up from a nightmare and hears the neighbors' screams, while the reader is informed that Dupont and his accomplices are already in action: "[. . .] the screams and the strange noise coming from the street are not dreams. They are real and cut through the silence of the dawn with frightening clarity" (93). Leia and Januário are shot without mercy, Narguiss, then, reacts, and is killed. Mena, fearless, calls the police to report Dupont. In "8 horas" (99), at Narguiss's home, family members comment on "the fact that the assassins came with searchlights in a clear disregard for the security of this country" (101). They realize that it is too dangerous to live near members of South Africa's African National Congress (ANC), and they all agree that the Mozambican government needs to intervene. Íris and Mena are now orphans. Dupont is dead. A new future awaits Mena.

In this tense narrative, Momplé creates a dense and image-filled atmosphere that takes the readers back to the nineties in Mozambique. With this imagery, one can glimpse the climate of social insecurity that existed in Mozambique at the time. The plot depicts several issues related to the politics of sovereignty as the work of death is not the struggle for emancipation of the subjects but the generalized instrumentalization and materialized destruction of human existence (Mbembe 2017).

STRANGE NEIGHBORHOOD: APARTHEID AND NECROPOLITICS IN *NEIGHBOURS*

It is impossible to understand the novel *Neighbours* without discussing apartheid and necropolitics, even if briefly. When I submitted the article "A interseccionalidade na construção da heroína típica no romance *Neighbours* de Lília Momplé" (Laice 2021),⁴ I added the definition of "apartheid" in a footnote. When I received the revised text, one of the revisers had written the following: "I think that a definition is unnecessary, everyone knows what apartheid was!" At the time, I agreed and withdrew the definition from my text. However, after some time, I have come to understand that apartheid is not yet over—that apartheid continues to exist—so I choose to define it like Gordimer does:

Men are not born brothers; they have to discover each other, and it is this discovery that apartheid seeks to prevent. . . . What is apartheid? It depends on who's answering. If you ask a member of the South African government, he will tell

you that it is separate and parallel development of white and black—that is the official, legal definition. If you ask an ordinary white man who supports the policy, he will tell you that it is the means of keeping South Africa white. If you ask a black man, he may give you any one of a dozen answers, arising out of whatever aspect of apartheid he has been brought up short against that day, for to him it is neither an ideological concept nor a policy, but a context in which his whole life, learning, working, loving, is rigidly enclosed. (Gordimer 2012, 77)

The apartheid system constitutes a set of interconnected social restrictions that forbid black people from access to education, health care, employment, decent housing, leisure, respect, humanity, dignity, and, ultimately, life. Therefore, this regime is also a form of necropolitics. Mbembe (2019, 66), in turn, when talking about this segregationist regime, calls our attention to the extermination fantasy that resides there, i.e., the colonist’s fear of being annihilated, because, despite having powerful tools to cause death, they were surrounded by considerably larger native populations. The colonizer also felt threatened by nature: wild animals, reptiles, microbes, mosquitoes, the weather, and even belief in sorcerers. It is, therefore, fear dressed as bravery, and the intense desire to rule that made the white colonizer sustain the “fantasy of purity”:

Apartheid, in particular, openly refused the possibility of the same body for more than one. He believed in the existence of distinct original subjects already constituted, each one made of a race-flesh, of a race-blood, who evolved at their own pace. It was thought that it was enough to consign them to specific territorial spaces to re-naturalize the strangeness of some in relation to the others. (Mbembe 2021b, 46)

Put another way, the policy of destabilization focused on the fantasy of purity, and the intense desire to oppose the economic independence of the countries in the southern region of Africa. As explained by Newitt (1995), South Africa sought to prevent the Southern African Development Community (SADCC) from becoming an economic force in the region. To this end, they made use of mechanisms such as the destruction of ANC’s external bases, destruction of Southwest Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO), and the political weakening of neighbor states, all so that these associations could not act in an effective and concentrated manner against South Africa.

It is in this context that Momplé’s novel is woven. In it, the author tells in twenty-four hours the story of three families, which almost corresponds to the three Aristotelian units (time, space, and action) (2008), which does not happen, because the narrator’s “curious” gaze moves to the three apartments and reports what is seen in a non-linear way. The omniscient narrator tells the plot of these “dark times,” inviting the reader to think about the domestic tragedies

that occurred during the civil war and the apartheid regime: “[. . .] They are ordinary people who do not know anything about those who live in other houses. However, their destiny is fatally intertwined, once again, by the will and order of apartheid, which so well knew how to take advantage of human weaknesses, kinks, passions, anxieties, and insecurities” (Moplé 1995, 5). Thus, it is clear how in *Neighbours*, necropolitics is a “legal” institution. Every day repressive and plutocratic governments invest, without scruples, in weaponry and military training. In the novel we come face to face with a South African military that specializes in creating chaos abroad:

Career military, he specialized in destabilization actions against Mozambique and Angola as soon as they became independent. It is not the first time that he has operated in the country, so he takes the mission he will carry out this morning with the greatest serenity. He just wants the operation to end quickly, because, if all goes well, he will be entitled to an extra week of vacation. (83)

That is, and in Mbembe’s words, the power to dictate who can live and who must die is an example of the limits of sovereignty (Mbembe 2021b, 66).

The poignant scene that depicts the agonizing death of Leia and Januário is an example of how necropolitics works, and the vulnerability in which different societies find themselves, since life and death are in the hands of sovereigns. It is also clear how, through this policy of destabilization, South Africa acted to discredit the efforts that had been made to achieve colonial independence, leaving the Mozambican population with a strong feeling of insecurity and helplessness, as the narrator of *Neighbours* states:

Intentionally, it should appear that the attackers have the target of their action confused, since the objective of the mission is to provoke insecurity and panic among the population and, at the same time, revolt against the Mozambican government for supporting the ANC.

[. . .] Leia understands what her husband means because attacks on ANC’s refugees are already common. Last time alone, eight were killed in Matola. The South African command came, killed, and left without anything happening to them. And now . . .

“They sure missed the door,” Leia mutters, referring to the ANC’s refugees who live next door.

“What do you want me to do? Go there and say that it’s not us they should kill after all?”

“I don’t know . . . I just know that I don’t want to die because of the ANCs.” [. . .]

Januário feels her shudder into his arms and hates himself for not finding a quick solution because, in his perplexity, he cannot reason. [. . .] Slowly, very slowly, Januário detaches himself from her and leaves the room, at the same time that a strong urge to vomit invades him:

“ANC, other flat. We Mozambicans, we Mozambicans,” he shouts, cursing his broken English. (Momplé 1995, 86, 96)

The executioners’ indifference is revolting and recalls the notion of “brutalism,” described by Mbembe (2021a), in which the author reflects on the depreciation of humanity and men and women are treated as “object-things”:

This becoming artificial of humanity and its correlate, the becoming-human of objects and machines, are perhaps the true substance of what some today call the “great replacement.” Brutalism is its true name, the apotheosis of a form of power without contours or limits and that renounced both the myth of the exit and that of another world to come. In concrete terms, brutality is characterized by the close imbrication of various figures of reason: economic and instrumental reason; electronic and digital reason; and neurological and biological reason. It is based on the deep conviction that there is no longer any distinction between living beings and machines. (Mbembe 2021a, 29)

At the end, Januário begs for his life, and, in an unconscious or conscious act, he explains to his murderers that the neighbors with links to ANC, whom he believes to be targeted for death, live on the other side:

He feels like a perfect scoundrel but continues to yell at the two men who, taken by surprise, stop, for a moment, from taking care of the very safe bars. Januário, confident that he has duly elucidated what he supposes to be a mistake, comes a little closer. It is then that the man with the flashlight focuses it on him with one hand and with the other tries to shoot above him. They are muffled, dry shots, like corks popping out of champagne bottles.

“It has silencers,” he notes, trembling. (Momplé 1995, 96)

Such depreciation of humanity can be seen on both sides, not only on the part of the murderers, but also on the part of the neighbors, who, even upon hearing the couple’s cries for help, never rush to help them. The degree of violence is a reminder of the old saying “every man for himself.” There is no more empathy, no more solidarity. It is a neighborhood of strangers:

He goes back to his room and, without another word, takes his daughter, who is now sleeping peacefully, and hides her under the bed. He then runs to the small balcony of the room, dragging Leia by the hand. It is his intention to alert the neighborhood before the South Africans (because he is certain that they are South Africans) manage to enter. Barefoot, Leia in a shirt and he, wrapped in a sheet, hastily thrown over his underpants, both scream in vain at the cold dawn. They are only aware of the spotlight and that they are being shot at from the street, at the same moment that two men, who have just burst through the

bars of the front door, burst into the room. There is nowhere to escape, trapped between two fires. (96)

This is how—in the crossfire, with no one to whom they can turn and nowhere to flee, Januário and Leia are arrested and mercilessly killed inside their home. Although they are objectified by the segregationist regime, by placing these two “marginal” characters together, Momplé’s writing denies the objectification of the Mozambican people. This constitutes what Pires Laranjeira calls *negro-realismo* (black realism),⁵ that is, by employing realism, African authors represent black and peripheral subjects as protagonists in their narratives:

Undeniably, realism and violence occupy a prominent place in *Neighbours*, as well as in an important part of contemporary African literature from colonial societies. One possible explanation for this is, undoubtedly, the constant presence of violence in the culture of these countries, a fact that has influence in the organization of the social order itself and, consequently, in the experience of these local countries. (Martins 2016, 09)

It is in a scenario of constant cultural, political, social, and economic violence with which much of Mozambican literature is interwoven and confronted. It searches for reflection and reconstruction of the social *locus*. It denounces and confronts what official history has suppressed and still silences: the tragic daily experiences and traumas arising from the period of the civil war and from the building process of a nation.

Refuting the “strange neighborhood” that remains silent and indifferent to Leia and Januário’s cries for help, Narguiss takes pity and cries out for the neighbors’ lives, which unfortunately will lead to her death:

Despite the darkness of the moonless night and the red acacia that hides them a little, Narguiss can see them now, perfectly, illuminated by spotlights managed from the street. The man continues to cry out something incomprehensible and the woman does not stop asking for help. Suddenly, she starts running from one side to the other, on the tiny balcony, in a macabre dance. Narguiss doesn’t know if the bullets that hit them come from inside the house or from the men in the spotlights, who also fire incessantly. But when she sees them falling, she starts screaming.

“He’s killing people . . . *muanene inluco* . . . he’s killing people . . . in there, *muanene inluco* . . .”

She doesn’t see the man who, from the street, points his gun at her because all her attention is focused on the balcony of the flat in front of her. The bullets hit her, accurately, in the neck and chest [. . .] Narguiss finally falls down in a sitting position, with her back leaning against the railing of the balcony. (Momplé 1995, 94)

This violent scene confirms that brutalism fits the reading of this historical novel. From the report of private stories, the reader is persuaded to read beyond the official history (which prioritizes economics over empathy), thus exposing the absence of friendship in some human beings, which makes even more vulnerable those who are already vulnerable.

MISFORTUNE FEARLESSLY EMBRACES THE WEAKEST

As stated by Ubiratã (2017), Leia and Januário represent the precariousness and social adaptation that was experienced at the time. Now, even if chosen at random, bad luck falls on the poorest couple, the ones who suffer the most, and as they pay, they lose their lives. Misfortune fearlessly embraces the weakest as Januário's parents suffer the same fate, they are burned alive in a hut in the midst of the war:

They arrived at dawn. [. . .] There were many and there were very young boys, almost children, all with weapons. [. . .] The robbers worked in small groups that entered the huts, looting them and later setting them on fire. Only teenagers and young men and women were ordered out. Old people, small children and also women in an advanced stage of pregnancy were burned alive inside their own huts, and, if they tried to escape, they were hunted down and shot or bayoneted to death. Januário's parents, whose hut was close to Assane's, were burned alive and their screams still echoed in his ears. (41)

It is, therefore, this situation that makes Januário a national immigrant. He is forced to migrate, to search for better living conditions because of the loss of his parents, the trauma of the war and daily marginalization: "[. . .] and, since that day, more taciturn and introverted he has become. He also began to be affected by intense headaches that came on suddenly, without any apparent reason, at the same time, a singular restlessness prevented him from feeling well anywhere" (42).

It is noted, unfortunately, that post-traumatic stress disorder, due to war, and which has motivated new conflicts, is seen in an uncompromising way. The Abogados Sin Fronteras Canada (ASFC), reporting from the provinces of Nampula, Zambézia, Sofala, and Gaza on the impact of armed conflicts on the lives of women and girls in Mozambique, has declared:

In Mozambique, there were no systematic and effective post-conflict reparation measures and initiatives within the framework of national reconciliation. The victims pointed out that they had to forgive the perpetrators of the war's atrocities in order to take advantage of the benefits of peace. The government authorities called for the horrors of the war to be forgotten and forgiven in the

name of coexistence and harmony among brethren, just as the main signatories of the 1992 peace agreement had indeed treated each other (Joaquim Chissano and Afonso Dlhakama). [. . .] The continuing electoral political crises are also proof that the conflict transformation process was not successful and that the parties, whenever they can, enter into direct confrontation and threaten a return to war. (Abogados sin Fronteras 2019, 63)

Bóia Efraime (2015) explains that one of the main reasons that war traumas pass from generation to generation lies in the absence of social and political spaces that, through the psychological elaboration of the traumas experienced, allow the reflection and recognition of brutalities and humiliations suffered by the Mozambican population.

The same ASFC report (2019) explains that, even though the Cessation of Military Hostilities Agreement was signed, and the Peace and National Reconciliation Fund (FPRN) was approved in 2014, it is still exclusionary. It makes no mention of the victims of the conflicts and aims exclusively to promote the economic and social insertion of combatants from the colonial liberation struggle and war, demobilized from RENAMO's government. In turn, the amnesty and national reconciliation laws implemented in several countries, including Mozambique, in addition to constituting a very serious violation of human rights, failed to lead the civilian victims of that war to forgive or forget, as expected:

In conflict transformation approaches, political scientists such as Snyder and Vinjamur argue that the motivation to obtain retributive justice through trials and the court systems can have pernicious effects on the establishment of the rule of law and democracy. They further defend a solution based on amnesty concessions, which can be more effective—in the short- and medium-term and especially at the moment of transition—in the promotion of the Rule of Law. Nonetheless, at the international level, it is increasingly argued that granting amnesty for war crimes and crimes against humanity is a serious violation of international human rights. (64)

That said, it is understandable that one of the ways to avoid this violation of human rights would be for Mozambique to consider, like South Africa, investing in the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a body committed to restorative justice during Nelson Mandela's government. Paraphrasing Gordimer (2013), one should not talk about the preponderant role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa without mentioning the name of Desmond Tutu (1931–2021), who was highly engaged in the fight against apartheid and central to the effectiveness of this commission. Gordimer explains that when considering the objectives of this commission, she, inevitably, reflects on the character of this magnificent

archbishop, who, in his own way, knew how to highlight that the focus of that work was not to punish but to make people recognize their responsibility and publicly admit that they had committed terrible and inhumane acts.

Desmond has never accepted the evasion that truth is relative, for himself. At the Commission I understood that he extended that ultimate condition to our people and our country as the vital necessity for living together in survival of the past. The acceptance of that, he has taught, has to come from within. (Gordimer 2013, 489)

In my view, the absence of a Truth Commission in Mozambique is an example of the “banality of evil,” a level of evil that, as Hannah Arendt (2021) explains, goes beyond words and thoughts. Echoing Arendt, Maria Teresa Salgado (2018) concludes that the objectification of colonized subjects and civil death is nothing but the structural violence of this regime that guaranteed the functioning of the colonial machine:

Hannah Arendt showed that, more than legitimizing irrationality and barbarism, the circumstances of Nazism created conditions in which men seem prone to give up their condition of individuals, moving away from reality and ceasing to have their own thoughts. Lília Momplé’s tales, therefore, lead us to a similar conclusion with regard to colonialism. (Salgado 2018, 167)

By examining the novel *Neighbours*, and Momplé’s entire *oeuvre*, this line of thought can be extended since, even after colonial independence, such civil deaths prevail in Mozambique, i.e., governments in power in the country continue perpetrating structural violence as a strategy. Through this realistic novel, inspired by events that took place in 1985, the author denounces how the lack of social integration after the independence of Mozambique and excessive ambition led some people to obsession with finances and stability. Like Dupont, they were willing to do anything to get it:

And so, almost without realizing it, money became an obsession, dominating his thoughts and words in such a way that, one day, a co-worker asked him, joking: “Look, Dupont, for money, you would even kill your mother, wouldn’t you?”

“I wouldn’t say that much. But money is always good,” replied Dupont, also jokingly. (Momplé 1995, 49)

The precariousness experienced by most of the population after independence is one of the striking themes in this novel. If, on one hand, Narguiss prepares a feast for the party, on the other, Leía and Januário only have corn flour and cabbage to eat.

In fact, maize flour and cabbage, and sometimes frozen horse mackerel, have been, for the last three years, the only products available in the market of Maputo. As for the rest, it either doesn't exist or is sold on black markets and *Interfranca* to cooperators and a few privileged Mozambicans or thieves. The common worker has to make do, daily, with the infallible *ushua* and so much cabbage that, in popular slang, it has become known by the grateful name of "if it weren't for you . . ." (34)

Perhaps one of the encouragements for people "with the weakest spirit," like Dupont, to join the world of crime is the food shortage that was experienced at the time, even though he had certain privileges due to his status as a post office employee. The lack of social and family prestige is presented to us in the narrative as the character's *leitmotif*. However, other readings can be employed if one reflects on this speech by Dupont's co-worker. For economic reasons, neighboring South Africa encouraged some Mozambicans to ravage their beloved homeland, even though at first such an attack seemed to be limited. "When asked about the nature of such little jobs, Romu informed that it wasn't much . . . just to support the liquidation of some uncomfortable individuals for South African neighbors and friends who only wanted to help Mozambique" (50). But reality is more severe. The word "liquidating" means both killing and turning into money: "War, terror and the economy are so intertwined that one can no longer speak of a war economy. By creating new military markets, war and terror became, *tout court*, modes of production" (Mbembe 2017, 62).

Zaliua is a character in the novel who lost his father in the mines of South Africa. He revolts and dives into the patriarchal myth that makes boys feel privileged, even when he is still a child:

He was born shortly after his father left. He grew up, always treated by his mother and sisters with deference for being the only male in a family of women. And very early on he knew how to take advantage of this privileged situation, complaining since he was a child for special attention, and reacting violently to any setback. He later became a boastful and maddened teenager who despised fieldwork, considering it only suitable for women and men of little strength. His secret hero was the father he never got to know and who, in his opinion, had done very well to escape so much misery, albeit sacrificing his wife and children. (Momplé 1995, 52)

This privileged situation will accompany him to adulthood. Unlike his sisters, he already has the opportunity to live and study with the priests, which will allow him to pursue a job in the country's capital and, eventually, progress economically. Momplé's psychological characterization of Zaliua points to

the lack of evaluation in the admissions process to recruit Mozambican police staff and the resulting implications:

A year after independence, he was already in sixth grade. I learned by chance that the police were recruiting young people to join their ranks. He applied and was accepted. Without undergoing any aptitude testing and after brief training, he was invested with an authority he had never dreamed of. . . . For Zálúa it was then the pleasure of having beautiful *marrusses* arrested in order to rape them in the filthy cells of the jail, and rich Indians to buy their freedom with expensive equipment and big sums of money, and husbands of desirable women making them pay with their own bodies for the release of their men, and *suruma* traffickers to enter their networks and share in their profits, and secondary school teachers to extort false grades on their exams. Also, the lust of owning a house with sumptuous *jambire* furniture, and cars to drive at suicidal speeds, and drinks running like water at weekend bacchanals, and women, lots of women, and, finally, even a wife, the exquisite daughter of the harbor captain who accepted him out of fear. (57)

Momplé invites the reader to examine how the lack of commitment to the people by the ruling elite, as well as their greed, compromise the dignity of the ordinary citizen, who is constantly dispossessed by those who should protect him.

CONCLUSION

So all efforts to let their opponents “disappear in silent anonymity” were in vain. The holes of oblivion do not exist. Nothing human is that perfect, and there are simply too many people in the world to make oblivion possible. One man will always be left alive to tell the story. Hence, nothing can ever be “practically useless,” at least not in the long run. (Arendt 2021, 109)

The absence of a truth commission in Mozambique is due to the “banality of evil” (Arendt 2021). Mozambican literature, by revisiting history, has been denouncing this missing historicity. The heroic and humane attitude of Narguiss and Mena in denouncing the murderers, a rebellious act that reveals, as Arendt states, that nothing can be practically useless, and that, even if we are afraid, silence is not always the best response to the enemy. Echoing Arendt, I understand that the burrows of oblivion do not exist, and that there is always a human being, or an entity, left to claim the life (in the broad sense of the term) that was stolen from it.

One can say that there are spirits that not even death has been able to silence. Referring to this idea, Efraime (2015) describes the experience of

one of his patients, whom he calls Ricardo, an ex-soldier recruited as a child by RENAMO's guerrillas. In this extremely strong and imagistic report, the youngster says that after returning from the war, he was tormented with nightmares, which led him to seek a healer (Macuacua) who, through a ritual, allowed the soul of the man who tormented him to express himself. Ricardo, even though not acquainted with the man, knew him, called him Uncle Cossa. He was a neighbor of his aunt. After several attempts to spare his life, the boy had no choice but to behead him. He remembers:

“Those eyes, those eyes . . . the man's head next to the baby's body continue to haunt me in my dreams.” [. . .] “If I hadn't done that, the commander would have killed me right there.” [. . .] “I had even saved your life once, uncle, I saved you when I found you in the bushes . . . I didn't want to . . .” (Ricardo starts to cry). “But you killed me. I can't take care of my family now. How do you want me to leave you alone? Who is sorry for me? I am not a wild animal, to be killed as I was and left halfway without a decent burial (Macuacua).” Ricardo cries, not responding. (Efraime Junior 2013)

Neighbours exposes to the reader accounts and first-person experiences of the war, stories often silenced, like those of child soldiers: “There were many and there were very young boys, almost children, all with guns” (Momplé 1995, 41). Those children fought in a war that was not theirs, about which they understood little. Consequently, like their victims, those young torturers were also wounded in their bodies and spirits. Daniela de Brito (2019), referring to the epigraph of *Neighbours*—“Who does not know where he came from does not know where he is nor where he is going to” (Momplé 1995, 7)—reflects on the problem of alienation in Mozambique:

The process of alienation from memory, which can be understood as loss of mastery over what we are and produce, both with regard to the place we are part of and with regard to the historically situated and defined social body from which we come, the subject experiences depersonalization and lethargy. (Brito 2019, 109)

I add that, in Mozambique, the alienation process can be understood as the result of the advancement of economic and ideological forces of modern society that, when building the nation, put aside several spatiotemporal and human references. In the novel, this phenomenon is demonstrated by the aversion that characters such as Rui, Romu, Zaliua, and Dupont have toward their country and fellow countrymen. Outraged, they express their discontentment by cutting off comrades: “Rui plunged into a kind of torpor, conscious only of a constant sensation of helplessness and unreality. . . . Rui found himself among the mobs who stormed the Radio Club and carried out a veritable

hunt for the black man” (Momplé 1995, 85). The alienation of the characters, among them, Dupont, Zaliua, and Romu, could be associated, according to Tutikian (2006), with Mozambique’s experiences as a nation that has given itself up to alienation because of the processes determined by the colonial and civil wars. Alienation has so much power, so much effectiveness, that it leads Mozambicans, stripped or disconnected from their memories, to promote actions against themselves (Brito 2019, 109).

Efraime (2013) also speaks of this alienation in his own way. In Mozambique, there was no recognition of the war atrocities, much less individual or collective responsibility for what happened. In fact, there were attempts to put the blame on South Africa, the Soviet Union, and East Germany, but never the recognition that Mozambicans, primarily, carried out these acts of violence. Cahen (2019) states that the atrocities of that war were committed by both groups. In the history of massacres, there are always rapes and other gendered crimes against women and girls. Therefore, it is incorrect to imagine that only RENAMO soldiers carried these atrocities out and that the MPFL soldiers always respected women, for example.

Another aspect that stands out in this war is the massive involvement of civilians, mainly from the central and northern regions of the country, which made it known as a Civil War and signaled to the international community to intervene. When Botha and Smith stopped supporting it with the involvement of some disaffected Portuguese settlers, as in the first phase, the international community became aware of the problem.

Those principally involved in the opposition to Frelimo fled abroad, taking with them a determination to sabotage the new regime. The government of Ian Smith was the first to give dissident Mozambicans some haven. Jorge Jardim and his agent Orlando Cristina are, after independence, supposed to have escaped with some of the DGS files and helped the Rhodesians found Renamo, recruiting elements from the black military and paramilitary units that had fought for the Portuguese. Firmly under the control of the Rhodesian security organization, Renamo developed as a military unit and not a political movement. (Newitt 2012, 563–64)

That said, it is necessary to agree with the ASFC (2019) that, although the amnesties were complemented by local rites and traditions, these were not enough to restore trust between communities and to create a genuine atmosphere of peace. Therefore, collectively ignoring the impact of the Sixteen Years’ War on the lives of Mozambique leads Ricardo and Zaliua to live haunted by their past and leads them and other individuals to become national immigrants. Even worse is the lack of recognition that does not allow even the dead their sacred rest. The deceased Cossa cries out for justice. He

represents the Leias, Januários, and Narguisses, all those who, through this war, were silenced forever, without anyone even revealing to them why they were killed. The thousands who were left to die along the way, like indigents in unknown lands, far from their loved ones, today cry out for a decent burial and, in unison, they ask: after all, why do they kill us?

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NOTES

1. The Sixteen Years’ War, it should be noted, also has been called a “war of destabilization,” “war for democracy,” “civil war,” and “war of aggression.” For my part, I still believe that all wars are either destabilizing, aggression, or civil, because they involve civilians (whether they want to or not—in these conditions, warfare is a form of self-defense), so I dare only call it the Sixteen Years’ War, which marks the period in which it took place (1976–1992). I also believe that this way, I will abstain from this complex debate, which is not necessary for this study.

2. My understanding of the existence of national immigrants in Mozambican literature was born from the study of Momplé’s narrative and the idea of “no place” that her characters have. It is an idea that is intertwined with the restlessness we feel when we do not feel well anywhere, the strange feeling of vulnerability that comes over

us whenever we are being observed. The concept of “national immigrant” has social ramifications that the term “migration” does not encompass (Laice 2020).

3. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

4. “Intersectionality in the construction of the typical heroine in Lília Momplé’s novel *Neighbours*” (Laice 2021).

5. Term created to indicate a specific literary reality of Africa (Laranjeira 2001).

Chapter Six

Last Dinner at Polana

Peter Wilhelm's LM

Ludmylla Lima

This chapter is part of my current research on contact zones between Mozambican and South African literatures. These connections may not be immediately evident, since they are written in different languages and, therefore, are part of different linguistic communities. However, since both countries are located in southern Africa and share a geographical border, it is possible to assume that these countries also share diverse historical and cultural ties, which enrich both literatures when brought to light.

When I arrived in South Africa in September 2018 as a postdoctoral researcher, I first looked for literary pieces written by South African authors that mentioned in any way the neighboring country Mozambique or its people. In ten months, I found only a few works. I came across the novella *LM* (1975) and two novels, *Skyline* (2000), by Patricia Schonstein Pinnock, and *The Institute for Taxi Poetry* (2012), by Imraan Coovadia. By contrast, references to South Africa are very prominent in the Mozambican literature. For instance, Mozambican author Aldino Muianga's short stories (2013) mention with greater or lesser depth the figure of the Mozambican miner working in Johannesburg mines, often called *magaíça*. Lília Momplé represents the figure of the Mozambican in relation to the neighboring country in *Neighbours* (2012), as well as in the short story "Caniço" (2012).¹ The great poet Noémia de Sousa wrote the poem called "Magaíça," referring to Mozambican migrants in South Africa working in precarious circumstances in gold mines (De Melo and Lima 2020).

LM is a novella written by the South African author Peter Wilhelm (Cape Town, 1943–2021), which depicts the last period of the Portuguese colonial presence in the city of Lourenço Marques, now Maputo. It outlines the

moments before the expulsion of the Portuguese, which was only carried out in the aftermath of the war (Santos 2003), in the context of an independent Mozambique.

The novella is part of Wilhelm's *LM and Other Stories*, published in 1975 in South Africa. It was the beginning of a writing career of a journalist who had been in Mozambique on a journalistic assignment at the time of the FRELIMO uprising in 1974.² According to Mike Nicol: "[*LM*] was a novella that was both fiction and nonfiction in one. This was front-line journalism as fiction." As the author published many other pieces, navigating through different literary genres, such as poetry, romance, and theater, "slowly, the books accumulated and the landscape darkened. Loneliness, disaffection, repression, the colonial past, apartheid, a future riven with conflict were constant themes in his work, and yet so too were love and compassion" (Nicol 2021, 2).

The novella depicts a South African white man's perspective on Mozambican independence from Portuguese colonialism. It is based on events that took place in a hotel in Maputo in 1974. The author details some of the political episodes that took place in the country on several days in September 1974.³ The objective of this chapter is to reflect on (de)colonization issues from a personal perspective, and based on daily issues represented in this literature piece. According to Pamila Gupta, "these details have the potential to shed light on the complexities of the colonizer/colonized relationship as well as on the long-term consequences of colonialism, effects that do not simply end with colonialism's physical demise" (Gupta 2007, 93). Echoing Gupta, my analysis of this piece enables the reader to see an aspect of (de)colonization which she describes as "the shifting moral political landscape that comes with decolonization and an inability to articulate colonial loss for some" (Gupta 2020, 10).

Thus, my proposal is inspired by a perspective that touches on anthropology to approach the literary text. I concur with Gupta's intention to conceptualize decolonization "less as a historical moment but as a series of juxtaposed ethnographic moments, whose postcolonial dissonances reverberate across oceans and national borders, amid acts of everyday affection experienced by ordinary citizens" (Gupta 2017, 97).⁴ In this sense, anthropology can be a helpful tool to enlighten the reader regarding context, point of view, and power relations. In turn, the field of comparative literature studies contributes with empathy, pathos, catharsis, details, dramatization, and irony. Jointly, these fields expose different ideas to each other, thus creating something bigger than their parts, which is my intervention in these fields.

The novella gives the reader the chance to draw a parallel between the social processes that took place in South Africa and Mozambique in 1975 (Santos 2003). Gupta (2007) proposes to write an ethnography of decolonization, and

this idea also can enhance the field of literature and enable researchers to draw broader literary comparisons, aiming at a larger disciplinary field that could include South African and Mozambican literatures, for instance.

THE NARRATOR AS EXILE

LM begins with the description of a meal prepared at the Hotel Polana, in the capital of Mozambique.⁵ On the last day of August 1974, while the narrator-protagonist Peter is eating with the Portuguese colonizer José, the movement for the country's independence reaches its peak outside the hotel: "[w]e are glad to be indoors, stuffing on prawns, wading through their pink shells and antennae, guzzling with the impetuosity of our class" (Wilhelm 1975, 9).

The story is divided into three parts. It is narrated in first person by Peter,⁶ a South African who has been a migrant in Mozambique for five years. The narrator's presentation is direct and supposedly honest, though he adopts an ambiguous position on the events he witnesses throughout the story. He describes himself as a white man, thirty-five years old, with fair hair and pale skin. As he looks at himself in the mirror of the small hotel room, he thinks of himself as almost invisible: "I peer shortsightedly at the chubby cheeks and absurd cupid's lips, generally reddened by wine; the reflection is sadly misplaced, since I am all too aware that this is Africa and the dying years of the 20th century" (11).

It is possible that such a direct, even self-deprecating, description of himself may be used to win the reader's trust. Who would question a person who looks in the mirror and is self-critical about his position? Why would one doubt the words of a man who admits to being aware of the historical moment in which he lives, even if he feels out of place? In fact, the narrator-character is constantly revealing a feeling of (or desire for) invisibility and displacement throughout the story. The narrator's presumed invisibility is nothing more than a fantasy, because a white South African in Lourenço Marques on the eve of independence would certainly not go unnoticed.

Miki Flockemann's analysis is helpful in sensing the narrator's psyche and at the same time to considering displacement issues that involve and are frequent in South African literature:

The sense of unbelonging is often the ongoing legacy of apartheid, imbricated in notions of whiteness. Commonly, these narratives are not about the diasporas of marginalised communities or as a result of forced removals of indigenous inhabitants, but about a self-imposed exile. In turn, this search for a new or a better place "to be" often results in a restlessly entropic and endless inbetweenness.

The chapters which could be read along these lines include those on Breyten Breytenbach, J.M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, Ivan Vladislavic and Michiel Heyns. (Flockemann 2017, 4)

Peter feels out of place, despite having arrived at Lourenço Marques looking for a feeling of belonging; he fostered the dream that he could belong and filled his room with African art, such as “wooden heads, bizarre tapestries, clay animals” (Wilhelm 1975, 11). Over time, the narrator-protagonist falls short of his expectations, which were created by a superficial feeling of belonging. An African decoration obviously does not evoke a deep feeling of belonging, nor would it be able to fill the void of an existence. The narrator asks himself: “How was I to know that later this detritus would only confirm me as a tourist, a vagabond? And do so in my own low opinion of myself” (11).

Moreover, it is possible to analyze *LM* in the context of diaspora, even if in Peter’s context, a self-imposed exile. Flockemann, in her review of *Diaspora and Identity in South African Fiction*, positions the diaspora element as something very present in South African literature as it constitutes an element that shapes South African identities in literary pieces by authors such as Karel Schoeman, Elsa Joubert, and Azis Hassim “which perform and enact the interplay between locations of belonging and relocation” (Flockemann 2017, 2).⁷ On the other hand, authors like Breyten Breytenbach and J.M. Coetzee are known “by an acutely self-reflexive sense of unbelonging, of being a perpetual sojourner, not comfortable in one’s own skin, imbricated in the burdened privilege of whiteness” (2).

The plot develops this privilege and alienation. From his arrival in Lourenço Marques in 1969 to the present day, Peter lives with the Portuguese woman Mrs. Ramalho⁸ and her daughter Clara, owners of the Cosmos Hotel (12). His entire project of rebuilding his life and starting over in a new place result in a comfortable relationship with the Portuguese widow and her circle of relationships (13), including José, a character that is at the center of the second part of this piece. Although their opinions on the historical facts often differ, an alliance with the Portuguese colonizers in Lourenço Marques forms because of their coexistence and cohabitation (9). Upon crossing the border, Peter finds in Maputo people who correspond to his social class—the white settlers—despite his initial desire for reinventing himself. When he first went to Mozambique, five years before, he had the energy of the exiled and, by choosing another country to live in, he expected to be a radically different person, as if he could change his upbringing (13).

According to Edward Said, the exile standpoint for an intellectual is advantageous, as he “tends to see things not simply as they are, but as they have come to be that way. Look at situations as contingent, not as inevitable”

(Said 2005, 67). Although *LM*'s narrator is not an intellectual, Said's theories are helpful to understand Peter's mental movement and its limitations. Furthermore, it is possible to extend this understanding to the relationship between the two border countries: South Africa, which he left and where his past is, and Mozambique, where he wants to establish a future.

This novella describes the experience of displacement of a South African man for personal and social political reasons. The narrator, who does not follow his friends' whereabouts who choose more convenient destinations, states that he would leave South Africa but would not go to England, Australia, or New Zealand. Instead he would go "to Africa: to the heart of my *casta* feared and hated and tore apart for profits" (32).

The other option that Peter considered was becoming a freedom fighter in Tanzania, although he soon stops entertaining this prospect. Peter chooses a safer strategy: to become the hotel owner's lover and to draw closer to the Portuguese settlers, even though he refuses to help them when they need to flee the country (22). His refusal to help the Portuguese could be related to personal, as well as political, reasons. After warning his wife that he would leave her, Peter feels nauseated as he stands alone in the cold garden, and faces the conflict: "I felt at odds with implacable forces, Africa, my whiteness, a decaying society, a god to whom I might be no more than an insect" (35).

When examining *LM*'s narrator, it is necessary to keep in mind the historical moment in which the story is written. In 1974, South Africa was living under the apartheid regime and many South Africans were political refugees in Mozambique at this time.⁹ In an open letter to the then president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, occasioned by xenophobic attacks that took place in that country, the Mozambican writer Mia Couto recalls the connection between the two countries based on this humanitarian aid across borders:

Lembramo-nos de si em Maputo, nos anos oitenta, nesse tempo que passou como refugiado político em Moçambique. Frequentes vezes nos cruzamos na Avenida Julius Nyerere e saudávamo-nos com casual simpatia de vizinhos. Imaginei muitas vezes os temores que o senhor deveria sentir, na sua condição de perseguido pelo regime do apartheid. Imaginei os pesadelos que atravessaram as suas noites ao pensar nas emboscadas que congeminavam contra si e contra os seus companheiros de luta.

Não me recordo, porém, de o ter visto com guarda costas. Na verdade, éramos nós, os moçambicanos, que servíamos de seu guarda-costas. Durante anos, demos-lhe mais do que um refúgio. Oferecemos-lhe uma casa e demos-lhe segurança à custa da nossa própria segurança. É impossível que se tenha esquecido desta generosidade. (Couto 2015, 1)

It reminded us of you in Maputo, in the 1980s, during the time you spent in Mozambique as political refugee. We often cross paths on the Avenue Julius Nyerere and we greeted each other with the casual friendliness of neighbors. I imagined many times the fears that you should be feeling, being persecuted by the apartheid regime. I imagined the nightmares disturbing your nights when you thought about the ambushes they prepared against you and your fighting companions.

I don't remember, however, seeing you with a bodyguard. In fact it was us, the Mozambicans, who served as your bodyguards. For years, we have given you more than a refuge. We have offered you a home and provided you with security at the expense of our own security. It is impossible that you have forgotten this generosity. (Couto 2015, 1)

Crossing the border, but in the opposite direction, from Mozambique to South Africa, is what the Portuguese widow Mrs. Ramalho desires at that moment, and when the tensions related to the end of the Portuguese rule in Mozambique are boiling over.¹⁰ She needs Peter's help to flee to South Africa, but he rejects the idea, claiming that he left his country never to return. He thinks to himself: "Should I scuttle? Go to South Africa with Mrs. Ramalho and Clara?" (21). But he decides that he could never go back, even stating that he loves both women, Mrs. Ramalho as a wife and Clara as a daughter.

In her studies on colonial migrations, focused on the Portuguese people who migrated from Mozambique and Angola to South Africa after 1974, Gupta points out:

The civil war of these two countries [Angola and Mozambique] was a period when the Portuguese did not know what to do. They knew there were some Portuguese in South Africa who had already settled there for several years before. But their main reason was to flee to another country in Africa, because they consider themselves African in a certain way. Thus, South Africa became another possibility. Other analytical data here is the idea of an ethnography of decolonization. It could be interesting to think of the Portuguese decolonization as a producer of diasporic journeys. (Gupta 2018, 6)

Put another way, *LM's* plot gives news of the displacements of Portuguese analyzed by Gupta in her research, especially with regard to the departure of these people to South Africa, a place that even today hosts a large number of immigrants of this nationality, even though South Africa was in the midst of a period of racial segregation (giving it a dubious reputation at the very least), due to apartheid, which lasted between 1948 and 1994. Even so, this country was seen as a possible destination for many Portuguese during the civil wars in the former colonies. In this sense, the narrator's opinion about South Africa

is very critical and full of disappointment due to its racism and violence. It is considered a barbaric, feudal society with a high level of unreality (29).

Due to the censorship in force in South Africa under the apartheid regime, where the author published the story, it is possible that the relationship established with his country of origin could not be fully detailed and the author disguises it by merging his connections with South Africa with personal issues that torment the narrator, such as his troubled marriage, the death of a newborn daughter, and professional dissatisfaction. Mrs. Ramalho, while talking to José, concludes that there will be armed conflict and retaliation against the Portuguese who are in Lourenço Marques; therefore, she must flee the country. Upon discussing her concerns with Peter, he provides the following response: he can't go back because "it would be like returning to a prison . . . a cell with dead things in it" (22).

For Peter, staying in a turbulent Lourenço Marques renders him an escape from his personal issues, although it does not alleviate his personal crisis either; the image in the mirror aggravates his feeling of displacement. Peter's remark about the presence of South African tourists in *LM* is not flattering to his countrymen or to himself: "I am a South African: one of the scum of the earth, a mad dog, a big white pig. The plump tourists in the Polana who come to whore on weekends" (14).

Apparently, a sense of historical justice would justify his apathy. He waits for the dynamic movement of historical events to see what happens: "'Portugal's main contribution to Africa,' I put in, 'has been one way miscegenation. History could be on the point of redressing this balance'" (20).

The next section will focus on analyzing the literary representation of an important historical event that took place in Lourenço Marques in 1974, i.e., the occupation of the Mozambican national radio. The importance of the literary representation of historical events can reveal meanders that would otherwise be silenced; therefore, by examining how the occupation was experienced by Wilhelm's characters, Portuguese colonists in collusion with a South African colonizer who, despite objectively not taking a side with the former, ends up—on some level—benefiting from the situation.

JOSÉ, A DRAGON OF DEATH

Aiming at developing the concept of ethnography of decolonization proposed by Gupta (2007), but this time focused on a literary text, I shall now analyze the character José and intertwine his path in the story with the main historical fact represented in the work, the aforementioned occupation of the Mozambican national radio.

There is a massive presence of historical events in *LM*. In the second part, after the protagonists have been introduced and the central conflict has been created, there is a warning to the reader regarding the way the historical events are to be portrayed stating that certain historical events are treated introspectively, and a certain amount of condensation has been necessary (8). Thus, the author gives clues about how the historical events will be fictionalized. According to the note, the approach will not be explicit, and the events will be condensed. Nevertheless, based on the acts of the character José, it is possible to follow the thread of events related to the moment when the Portuguese colonizers took control over the Mozambican Rádio Clube and occupied it from the seventh to the tenth of September 1974.

The Rádio Clube occupation plays a very important role in the process of the independence of Mozambique. As the historian Benedito Machava (2015) states, while the overwhelming African majority and the liberal wing of the European community enthusiastically celebrated the Lusaka Accords, the conservative settlers considered themselves betrayed by the Portuguese government.¹¹ In a desperate attempt to delegitimize the agreement, the enraged settlers occupied the Mozambican Rádio Clube (a national radio station) and the airport in the capital Lourenço Marques, proclaiming themselves the Free Mozambique Movement (MML). The character José is a representation of this elite of conservative settlers in *LM*.

José is the man with whom the narrator has lunch at the Polana Hotel at the beginning of the novella. They both gorge themselves, for they will soon be annihilated. They feel relieved to be indoors, but there is a sense of foreboding: “The hotel is a great, barren, colonial womb” (9). Despite sharing this moment with José, the narrator regards him with contempt and an air of superiority and fatalism: “Soon José will be dead. Not knowing this, his talk of death and sex and manhood surrounds me with no more meaning than the generalized jabbering in the decaying lounge: in all probability, his nuances and images could be duplicated at a dozen other tables here, since José is never original” (9).

The contempt that the narrator-character Peter shows towards José can be explained by the fact that José is a Dragon of Death, and he is very proud of it; “he belongs to the awesome society of men who fought *them*, FRELIMO, the terrorists, the liberators. He rode on bush convoys, scouted for land-miners, listened to lectures on his civilizing mission. And he machinegunned children in burnt, blackened villages” (10). The Dragons of Death were a violent paramilitary force that carried out the September upheaval in Lourenço Marques. According to Machava, “the Dragons of Death, who supported and protected the radio station, were radically against FRELIMO and displayed a more rampant racism” (Machava 2015, 73).

According to one of the testimonies Machava recounts, the action had catastrophic results. On September 9, “the Dragons of Death and civilian settlers carrying shotguns carried out one of the most inconsequential and brutal attacks to the so-called suburbs, inhabited mainly by Africans. They have arrived at the suburbs in taxis and opened indiscriminate fire against defenseless Africans” (72).

The story does not mention this episode. The approach to the historical fact is spatially circumscribed to the “city of cement,” where all the white characters of the story live.¹² The occupation of the radio station is described as an unbelievable uproar: “Wives and children waved Portuguese flags as they surged to the Radio Clube to join their men.” The streets were crowded with hunting cars and rifles; as the narrator comments, “It was to be the last stand of the white man in LM: a *laager* would be formed around the radio station, facing outwards at the army, at FRELIMO” (Wilhelm 1975, 24).

Taken by José, who wants Peter to participate in the action over at the radio station, the two characters get closer to the place and José joins the radio station movement. He believes Peter, as a South African, will also support the invasion of the radio station, taking a political stand against FRELIMO. Rhodesia and South Africa, neighboring countries to Mozambique, and established racist regimes of government, worked hard to disarm the movement that fought for Mozambican independence.¹³ FRELIMO adopted an attitude of open repudiation regarding these regimes, and it had consequences that erupted in the civil war, which began in 1977.

Since the first moment, President Samora Machel had declared his support to the establishment of black majority governments in these countries, then ruled by a white minority.¹⁴ This position led Rhodesia and South Africa to support the opposition group RENAMO, which would fight FRELIMO in a bloody and brutal civil war (Visentini 2012, 99).

Peter, contrary to what José expected, rejects the action. He asks himself: “Why am I here? In LM? What are you going to make me witness?” (Wilhelm 1975, 24). Then, he comments on the invasion of the radio station: “These people had pitched their beings against history: they would never again live at this level, in their burning vision of themselves at the centre of time” (25).

The entire description of the action is made in a tone of repudiation, adding an air of superiority, perhaps because the narrator is a white South African man, as if somehow, he had already experienced all that or because he was from a former British colony. The idea of the Portuguese subalternity *vis-à-vis* the former British Empire, as proposed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006), is evident here.¹⁵ Further in the story, the narrator compares Portuguese body language as a well-marked and ridiculous feature: “[José] shrugged the Portuguese shrug, diffident, head slightly tilted, palms fanning upwards; the shrug of gross cynicism” (Wilhelm 1975, 26). The narrator

points out the shrug not (only) to caricature the Portuguese man but also to express his “gross cynicism.” There is a war going on, the narrator disagrees with the terms defended by the Portuguese side in that war, but, at the same time, we do not know the terms of his resistance. We are left with his personal crisis and his silence in relation to the dramatic historical moment lived.

The speech that echoes from the loudspeakers, amid patriotic music, also promises an alliance with neighboring countries, which would send troops to strengthen the radio station movement: “Join us citizens! Join us for a free Mozambique! Down with FRELIMO! Down with Samora Machel! Our friends are coming! The South African navy will land tomorrow! The Rhodesian air force sends its best wishes for our success! No deal with terrorists! Down with communism!” (25).

As a way of consolidating a white power alliance, the watchwords coming from the radio speakers cry out for help from neighboring countries Rhodesia and South Africa and propose a binary thought: either the rich whites are left in control, or the country will be run by (incompetent or worse) communists. In this sense, communists would be any organization that might disagree with this mentality.

After witnessing a distressing scene in which a man swings a monkey by the tail saying that the monkey was Machel, José tries to convince Peter to join the Rádio Clube movement; he wants Peter to make a statement speaking to “our brothers in South Africa of our glorious movement!” which Peter rejects, saying that he is going home (26). This excerpt reveals the narrator’s contradictory position. Despite living with the white Portuguese conservatives, he is pro-FRELIMO.

The narrator positions himself as a silent antagonist towards José. On one hand he speaks against José’s conservative character; on the other he continues enjoying the dinner offered by José. He truly enjoys washing down seafood with *vinho verde* (a Portugal-Africa blend, combining the benefits of both worlds). These benefits were not harmoniously or equitably shared or mixed but forced together through depredation by these very colonists. Trying to capture the best of both worlds is a synecdoche for five hundred years of “sucking up” Africa’s resources and people like a cannibalistic vacuum.

From the narrator-character’s migration, the reader is informed about some details concerning the colonial processes that took place in Mozambique and South Africa. This amalgamation of history and theory help “locate the (de) colonization policies in personal and daily life aspects, since there are very few details recorded,” according to Gupta (2007, 93).

This analysis of the pivotal historical event represented in the story—the takeover of the national radio—detects a literary record that mimics an important moment in the recent history of Mozambique. The scene and dialogues that take place in that moment, which depict Peter’s position and his

refusal to participate on the side of the reactionary Portuguese, illustrates the turbulent political and social movements from within.

In this coeval time of the emergence of silenced narratives, and in an effort of counterbalancing the hegemony of discourses (Chaves 2020, 153), what is the significance of offering the perspective of a white South African in relation to the booming that preceded the Mozambican liberation? Besides the curious aspect that the novella shows through the characters, the point of view, and the historical facts narrated, it is important to highlight pieces that show various angles of the relation between the neighboring countries. These nuanced, ambivalent, transnational stories usually are silenced, due to limitations of comparative literature studies that overlook other possibilities of comparativism outside the so-called Lusophone world (Brugioni 2019).

Examinations of relatively unknown stories such as *LM* are essential for future research on literatures of southern Africa, particularly on the connections between South Africa and Mozambique. An interdisciplinary approach, like the one I have engaged with in this chapter—combining literature, history, and postcolonial theory—is necessary to rescue from oblivion important historical incidents such as the one *LM* depicts. Until now, this piece has not been critically examined. This is a pioneering study, though further research is needed. Thus far, Luso-African texts are not widely studied, much less immigrant or exile narratives in these territories. Nonetheless, they and the events they record and evaluate helped form the Africa we know today.

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NOTES

I am grateful to Caio Simões de Araújo, who first spoke to me about LM.

1. The dependent worker on precarious contracts in South African mines, the *magaíça* or *madjondjon*, and the marks resulting from this experience form the background of the disintegration of the family and the individual that this short story thematizes (Lima, forthcoming).
2. “Frente de Libertação de Moçambique”: Liberation Front of Mozambique is a socialist independence movement founded in 1962 in the context of the Cold War and continent-wide African decolonization (Cabaço 2009).
3. I am translating this story into Portuguese to be published in Brazil.
4. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
5. Lourenço Marques was founded in the sixteenth century and became the capital of the colony in 1898. The city was named after a Portuguese explorer. On March 13, 1976, the city was renamed Maputo after national independence.
6. It is notable that he shares a name and biographical details with the author.

7. Johan U. Jacobs analyzes stories written by South African authors such as Njabulo Ndebele, Karel Schoeman, Elsa Joubert, Azis Hassim, Breyten Breytenbach, J.M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, Zoë Wicomb, Zakes Mda, and Ivan Vladislavic, among others.

8. Mrs. Ramalho is forty years old and had been a widow for ten years (Wilhelm 1975, 15).

9. It would be sixteen years before Nelson Mandela was released from a Robben Island, Cape Town, prison in 1990.

10. Peter explains the situation to José by saying that several people are leaving Lourenço Marques and that Mrs. Ramalho wants to sell the hotel and leave as well. He adds that she wants Peter to become a Catholic, marry her, and take her and her daughter to South Africa (19).

11. On September 7, 1974, the new Portuguese government that emerged from the military coup of April 25th officially recognized FRELIMO as the sole and legitimate representative of the Mozambican people. The Lusaka accords (Zambia) established a transitional government that should prepare the conditions for the declaration of full independence on June 25, 1975 (Machava 2015, 53). In the four-day period after the Rádio Clube was occupied (September 7–10), the city of Lourenço Marques was struck by a wave of violence that resulted in “large hundreds of deaths” (Cardoso 2014, 303; Machava 2015, 53).

12. The Mozambican colonial city was divided into the city of cement, “cidade de cimento,” where the Portuguese settlers lived, and the city of reeds, “cidade de caniço,” where the poor, mostly Black residents lived.

13. South Africa, Rhodesia, and Malawi supported RENAMO (Mozambican National Resistance), a resistance movement opposing FRELIMO.

14. Samora Moisés Machel was the second president of the Mozambique Liberation Front, after Eduardo Mondlane was killed, and became the first president of the People’s Republic of Mozambique after its independence in 1975 until 1986, when he died in a mysterious plane crash in Mbuzini, South Africa (Christie 2015).

15. “The subalternity of Portuguese colonialism is twofold: it occurs both at the level of colonial practices and at the level of discourses. Concerning practices, subalternity consists in the fact that Portugal, as a semiperipheral country, was itself for a long period a country dependent on England, at times an ‘informal colony’ of England” (Santos 2006, 146).

Chapter Seven

The Degrading Figuration of the Intellectual on the Periphery of Capitalism

*A Comparative Study of Chico Buarque's *Essa gente* and J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace**

Edvaldo A. Bergamo

THE NOVEL AND SOCIETY

The novel genre continues to express the main contradictions that move modern and contemporary society, both in central and emerging literatures (Moretti 2015, 200–201). Realistic representation of the intellectual in meaning-making is a prominent artistic problem, especially with regard to the historical condition of the subaltern intellectual belonging to peripheral literatures of the capitalist world-system (WReC 2020, 41). The protagonists of *Essa gente* (*Those People*, 2019), by Chico Buarque (Rio de Janeiro, 1944), and *Disgrace* (1999), by J. M. Coetzee (Cape Town, 1940), eloquently reveal the unpleasantness of intellectual life in nations originating from the nefarious experiences of colonization and decolonization. These obstacles include: institutional and educational precariousness, urban and rural violence, an uncertain book market, the derisory role of art and culture, leaders with authoritarian pretensions, the chasm between the impoverished classes and the ruling elites, and racial tensions, among many other determining factors.

Our objective in this chapter is to carry out a comparative study, focusing on the degradation of the professional writer and the university professor, between commitment and alienation, commitment and indifference, commitment and omission. This is a complex path highlighted by intellectual performance in aesthetic and ideological senses in societies torn apart by a multiplicity of conflicts, such as is the case of Brazil and South Africa.

According to Antonio Candido (2006, 97), the novel in Brazil was at first a cultural and literary instrument for discovering and interpreting the country. As an imported form, the Brazilian novel is characterized by a double fidelity: local reality and foreign influence (Candido 2006, 98). Given the modernity of the form in question, it demonstrated an unusual historical and sociological vocation from the beginning (99). With regard to the long formation of the national novel, the aforementioned critic emphasizes that Brazilian literature shaped the paths it would take by representing everyday life in urban areas in development, even with the prominence of Indianism and Regionalism in the nineteenth century (100). The inaugural picturesque narrative was not a decisive element in the rise of the Brazilian novel (101). It is observed that since the beginning of the acclimatization of the genre there has been a prose focused on the urban scene with a more universal vocation, paralleling a regional, naturalist narrative, with uneven artistic results. In this way, the country's literature followed an experimental and renewing path, realistically adapted to the human problems of civilization installed in the largest urban centers, with an accumulated technical-fictional apparatus that reformed and reconfigured conventional regionalism (193). Later, it reflected a new aesthetic posture, typical of the radical political contours of the last century (193). From the 1930s onwards, there was an authentic plurality of ideas. Formal research influenced the configuration of the Brazilian modern novel, with a new, authentic language. It incorporated avant-garde elements combined with the national-popular and the new challenges of a massively urban nation in the second half of the twentieth century and today (Candido 1989, 204–5).

In South Africa, in its case, the novel genre is also a privileged literary form that shows the multiple African temporalities, the African *longue durée* in constant movement and uninterrupted transformation (Chinweizu et al. 1980, 16). Thus, the novel can be considered an aesthetic and ideological projection that inquires into the heterogeneity of the continent, dialectically contemplating ancestry, coloniality, and contemporaneity, as epochal transits in becoming, ranging from the valorization of original mythologies to the struggles for autonomy that have led to disillusionment today (87). African writers refuse recurring stereotypes, emphasize the damages of colonial occupation, and point out the permanent obstacles of African collectivities arising from the tension in the transition period between colonization and

decolonization and its subsequent developments (Lazarus et al. 2004, 15). They also address social unrest, ethnic and racial obstacles, as well as the inconveniences of secular diasporas elsewhere (forced displacements). The novel, even transplanted to Africa due to colonization, became remarkably attentive to local peculiarities, having demonstrated great aesthetic originality with the use and incorporation of African oral narratives (oraliture and novel), consolidating itself as a singular literary genre in that continent, under the different detectable aspects, mainly in view of the important correlations between novelistic configuration and oral poetics (Fraser 2000, 8). South Africa's history is widely known because of modern novels that, to a large extent, detail the onslaughts of competing European colonial projects. These gradually installed an authoritarian State, the principle of government of which was racism (Chapman 2003, 385). The South African novel, on the one hand, reflects a long process of violence that, in order to privilege whites, sought to capture and immobilize the nonwhite populations of that country. On the other, it intends to highlight the despoiling social and racial stratification (Irele et al. 2009, 70). Due to the variety of languages spoken in South Africa (Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans, etc.), these novels have become quite diverse in order to reflect and to question the heterogeneous conflicts that are so damaging to everyday life (Chapman 2003, 411). Two of these, *Essa gente* and *Disgrace*, reflect these social forces in their representations of peripheral intellectuals in Brazil and in South Africa.

THE INTELLECTUAL AND LITERATURE

The intellectual, the controversial figure par excellence, emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and still provokes much discussion about this individual's social function. An example of this debate was the organization of a cycle of conferences in Brazil in the 2000s, which resulted in the book *O silêncio dos intelectuais* (*The Silence of the Intellectuals*) (Novaes et al. 2006, 15). It evaluated the relevance of intellectual activity in a time marked by unprecedented challenges. For the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci (2001, 52), everyone is a potential intellectual, although not all of us perform this specific function in society. For Jean-Paul Sartre (1999, 20), the purpose of the literati is to problematize the contradictions of social life and, when confronting dilemmas, to face the truth, through explicit political engagement. For Edward Said (2005, 16), the intellectual is an outsider, an opponent of the established order, breaking consensus.

Concerning the literary intellectual (author and/or character), in the hazy contemporary era, cultural development has certainly opened up new frontiers of exploration and new paths of expansion for literature and art in

general (Agamben 2009, 64). In this sense, the novel remains one of the main literary genres today, reinvigorated by different aspects. At the thematic level, the reassessment of History, the representation of racial and gender minorities, and the focus on the problems of postcolonial peoples stand out.

Faced with the vigorous diversity of the novelistic genre and the vogue of countless problems concerning contemporary life, it is hasty to suggest the exhaustion of the aesthetic-ideological project of a literature with a social emphasis (WReC 2020, 34–35). In the case of Brazil, for example, it would be more productive, in critical terms, to consider a possible unfolding and reformulation of an artistic enterprise inherited notably from the 1930s to 1940s, meeting the pressing demands of today's time, a boiling point of posteverything culture, in which a historical and civilizational phenomenon is properly identified in close connection with the general transformation that humanity is currently undergoing (Pellegrini 2018, 219).

The contemporary epoch marks an apparent political reflux: reactionary conservatism. The framework of implanting “real socialism” collapsed with the fall of the Berlin Wall, causing widespread exhaustion of great revolutionary promises (Novaes et al. 2005, 16). The massification of symbolic goods, on the other hand, has greatly intensified, homogenized by economic power (15). As classical colonialism seems to have ended, other forms of interference were put into action, mainly through unprecedented strategies of domination, which highlight the co-opting power of the culture industry (25). Thus, there seem to be no concrete conditions that indicate the possibility of an “end of History” supported by postmodern premises. The utopian impulse that underlies the ethical project of modernity to make the process of humanity's emancipation viable remains fully valid and necessary in contemporary culture (Wood and Foster 1999, 26).

The critical role of literature and art, the harmful effects of cultural and economic imperialism in a context of financial globalization, and the relevance of Marxist assumptions in the interpretation of reality and the artistic object remain polemic. These debates should be encouraged in order to enrich and deepen our understanding of current setbacks, since current theoretical responses, under the aegis of the postmodern condition, are insufficient or even negligent. They make the historical possibility of human emancipation more distant (Ahmad 2002, 50–51). It is above all a political and humanist undertaking, which never loses its value, since it opens new possibilities and requires unending radical praxis. Ultimately, everything remains eminently political (25).

Art, the novel in particular, goes beyond a mere description of reality and an unequivocal interpretation of history (WReC 2020, 43). However, when leaving the strictly artistic scope, art must provide reflection and encourage a participatory attitude towards the challenges of an age. It must not be

forgotten that, in artistic terms, engagement is an ambiguous *telos* that is at once necessary and impossible, as Benoît Denis (2002, 31) teaches. Every work of art has a point of view. It remains to be seen, however, whether this stance can be translated into terms of alienation and conformism or critical inquiry in the face of concrete political challenges (33). The engaged artist's function is not exclusively to produce an aesthetically valid art object, but also to produce a work that contains a revolutionary meaning, in a combination that intertwines aesthetic and ideological radicality (Wood and Foster 1999, 70). The required position consists in assuming not only the ideological character of the literary work, but in affirming the need for it to act as a vehicle for public awareness and enlightenment, without giving up the artistic effects (71). Thus, in a society in which almost everything is recognizably political, the promoters of literary art should not completely exempt themselves from the influxes of historical reality to the point of transforming one's intended artistic radicality into a mere exercise of formal experimentalism that ignores the world and its problems (Ahmad 2002, 51).

How do authors represent the intellectual (the professional writer and the university professor) on the periphery of capitalism between civilization and barbarism? Chico Buarque and J. M. Coetzee depict the intellectual in peripheral countries strongly affected by social and economic problems, fragmentation, and state violence (Agamben 2004, 55).

ESSA GENTE: THE INTELLECTUAL (WRITER) IN CRISIS

Buarque is a versatile Brazilian artist. In addition to international notability as a musician, he has developed a literary career over the years, being the author of plays and novels important to national literature. He received awards in music, theater, and literature. Best known as a great composer and musician, Buarque began writing novels in the 1990s (Fernandes et al. 2021, 7). In the 1970s and 1980s, he produced, in several partnerships, some theatrical and musical plays, with great success. Winner of the Camões Prize in 2019, the highest honor in Portuguese-language literature, his novel is studied widely (Calderano 2019, 12).

His last published novel, *Essa gente*, focuses on the hardships of a famous but bankrupt writer (celebrated by readers because of a conventional and popular historical novel), Manuel Duarte, who is in a deep creative crisis and desperate to finish a manuscript that is under contract (Buarque 2019, 17–19). After several failed marriages, he lives in the celebrated, unequal, and decadent city of Rio de Janeiro. He alternates between the difficulties any writer faces and wandering through the most touristy city in the country: the

well-known beaches of international reputation, the ostentatious upper-crust neighborhoods of South Rio, and the equally well-known favelas (slums) that adorn the various surrounding hills (25). A keen observer, he meditates largely on the inhabitants of the neighborhood, the infamous “good citizen” of the upper class, as well as the scheming drug dealers and the beachgoers (26).

Essa gente simulates a diary in which Buarque portrays the objective and subjective impasses of a decadent writer who faces a serious financial and emotional upheaval, residing in a city that looks like it is going to collapse, just like it was in the postdictatorship context, a moment of imminent attack on democracy, human rights, and the welfare state, as well as recent small social achievements threatened by a neoconservative wave characterized by enormous violence, brutality, and irrationality (118–19). They are chapters of a dubious diary that form a narrative puzzle for the reader to unravel about a disoriented artist in a lost and deranged nation (63). He is a best-selling but broken, lonely, and bewildered writer who comes under all sorts of pressures as a father, a lover, and witness to a crumbling urban landscape (97):

Há manhãs em que desço as persianas para não ver a cidade, tal como outrora recusava a encarar minha mãe doente. Sei que às vezes o mar acorda manchado de preto ou de um marrom espumoso, umas sombras que se alastram do pé da montanha até a praia. Sei dos meninos da favela que mergulham e se esbaldam no esgoto do canal que liga o mar à lagoa. Sei que na lagoa os peixes morrem asfixiados e seus miasmas penetram nos clubes exclusivos, nos palácios suspensos e nas narinas do prefeito. Não preciso ver para saber que pessoas se jogam de viadutos, que urubus estão à espreita, que no morro a polícia atira para matar.

(There are mornings when I pull down the blinds so I don’t see the city, just as I once refused to face my sick mother. I know that sometimes the sea wakes up stained black or foamy brown, shadows that spread from the foot of the mountain to the beach. I know of the boys from the favela who dive into and submerge themselves in the sewage of the canal that connects the sea to the lake. I know that in the lake the fish asphyxiate and their epidemics penetrate the exclusive social clubs, suspended palaces, and the mayor’s nose. I don’t need to see it to know that people jump off overpasses, that crows are lurking, that in the favela the police shoot to kill.) (Buarque 2019, 48, my translation)

Professional commitments afflict the protagonist, who cannot finish the new book he was commissioned due to writer’s block, thereby adding an inventive tension to personal tension, both growing with an unforeseen outcome (116–17). He does not have a good relationship with his only son, born of a marriage with a translator of his novels (124–25). He also has a troubled relationship with a social climber as a poseur art-snob. He ends up becoming sexually interested in a young, white European who has a relationship with a

Black lifeguard (119): the foreign woman lives in a slum (Vidigal favela) and offers tutoring and sports lessons to the very poor children on the hill located opposite the elegant neighborhood where the foolish novelist's residential building is located: Leblon (120). Her behavior is marked by a mix of volunteerism and exoticism.

The protagonist also realizes that even his ideal literary world is disappearing:

Foram necessários esses anos de bloqueio criativo para que eu enxergasse minha antiga editora com o devido distanciamento. Nosso velho Petrus, tido como um homem culto, sensível, amante extremado da boa literatura, revelou-se para mim um comerciante reles. Nada tenho contra quem faz dos livros um bom negócio, pelo contrário, mormente num país onde viceja somente o comércio de armas. O que me decepciona nele não é a desconsideração para com um autor da casa, mas uma visão imediatista que não diz bem do seu alardeado tino comercial.

(It took those years of writer's block for me to see my old publisher with the necessary detachment. Old Petrus, well reputed as a cultured, sensitive man, an extreme lover of good literature, proved to me to be a lowly merchant. I have nothing against anyone who makes books good business; quite the opposite, especially in a country where only the arms trade thrives. What disappoints me about him is not his disregard for an author who works with the publishing house, but a focus on immediate gain that does not speak well of his vaunted business acumen.) (116)

Buarque's book reflects, with a rare aesthetic and ideological density, the main mistakes of Brazilian society as a whole, which stem from the post-civil-military dictatorship. It is ravaged by historical social inequity, notably in the large metropolitan regions of the country (118). The novel is about the particularities of Brazilian necropolitics (Mbembe 2018, 9), generalized racism, which brings to light society's shameful indifference towards the extermination of Black populations in large cities, which is also related to the unfair distribution of income, correlating biopower and necropower (27–31).

Violence in Brazil is a structural problem that generates social insecurity, reduces the quality of life and longevity of the poorest strata of Afro-descendants (Souza 2021, 205). The situation is related to the bankruptcy and corruption of public institutions, especially education and security (210). It is a systemic failure that accompanies the configuration of our social organization since colonial times, with the establishment of African slavery (215). We have a social configuration marked by the concentration of land tenure, which prevents social development. Access to education and health are domains of the elite, which, for centuries, have been marginalizing a large part of the population (Buarque 2019, 50–51). Brazil's problematic economic

structure, linked to the type of colonization and predatory capitalism there, is directly related to its high rates of violence (Souza 2021, 190).

An annihilating political and economic system prospered under the Cold War military dictatorship (1964–85), upheld by the imposition of an arbitrary and bloody new order, with counterproductive repercussions over the last three decades of redemocratization (Souza, 196). The dictatorship was marked by the extreme violence with which the opponents of the installed authoritarian government were fought: arbitrary arrests, torture, rape, and murder were carried out by forces of repression with disproportionate power to act (Fico 2004, 112). Political rights were revoked, establishing rigid censorship of the different media and literary and artistic expression (87). Economically, the country experienced deceptive industrial and agricultural growth, mainly as a result of the large sum of investments made by the State in foreign companies (39). However, there was also great repression against workers' rights movements, which kept wages low, since the possibilities of dissent were negligible. Furthermore, development did not result in balanced income distribution; on the contrary, there was a greater concentration of wealth in the hands of the dominant classes (113).

Figuring national dilemmas, *Essa gente* is a literary work of thought-provoking historical reflection, which leads one to think critically about the enormous challenges of Brazilian society, which is praised for its supposed “racial democracy,” a stereotyped and mistaken notion that directly clashes with the historical roots of colonialism and slavocracy of our political, economic, and cultural origins (Freyre 1999, 160). A supposedly modern society, Brazil also needs a new, more genuine humanism, which has the responsibility to condemn the prevailing forms of barbarism and irrationalism (historical and scientific denialism, for example), as well as to combat age-old social inequalities and persistent structural racism (Souza 2021, 200). Buarque's novel demonstrates that his country still has a long way to go if it intends to stop its prevailing devolution (Buarque 2019, 69). He observes the violence and dehumanization in Brazil nowadays:

Aos hurras e aplausos, os espectadores descem dos prédios e dos carros e correm para o palco da façanha. O policial do megafone retira de um golpe o capuz ensanguentado do sujeito, e na sua cara deformada reluto em identificar meu conhecido, o passeador de cães. A polícia não consegue impedir que os presentes chutem seu corpo, e estremeço ao ver meu filho a se aproximar. Consigo desviá-lo do morto, mas ele só quer se juntar aos policiais, que posam para selfies com seus admiradores.

(With hurras and applause, the spectators come down from the buildings and cars and run to the stage of the deed. The cop with the megaphone swipes the

guy's bloodied hood off, and in his misshapen face I'm reluctant to identify my acquaintance, the dog walker. The police can't stop those present from kicking his body, and I shudder to see my son approaching. I manage to divert him from the dead man, but he just wants to join the police, who pose for selfies with their admirers.) (70)

The novel in question is a realistic expression of a social, cultural, and economic torrent that highlights the challenges of a Brazilian intellectual's life (191). The narrative is an apocalyptic staging of Brazil's historical processes. It is a "country in a trance," to quote the Brazilian filmmaker Glauber Rocha, torn apart by stubborn impasses that have not been overcome during centuries of social exclusion and the subordination of intellectuals dedicated to literary life. Brazil is a nation-state where culture is a commodity exclusively for the elite, a trait of social distinction and not a challenging factor that calls for greater commitment to transforming a terrifying reality (Fernandes et al. 2021, 208). As in Buarque's novel, dilemmas about the role of the peripheral intellectual in a traumatized society can be seen in Coetzee's.

DISGRACE: THE INTELLECTUAL (PROFESSOR) IN DECLINE

Coetzee is an outstanding but controversial South African writer (Poyner 2006, 4). He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003, being the fourth African writer to receive this honor and the second in his country (Rosenfield; Pereira et al. 2015, 12). His literary career began in 1969, but his first book, *Dusklands*, was not published in South Africa until 1974 (9). Coetzee was the first author to receive the Booker Prize twice: *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) and *Disgrace* (1999) (Poyner 2006, 5).

The protagonist of *Disgrace* is David Lurie, a white South African professor who experiences repeated losses: his reputation, a job, the dream of artistic success, and, worst of all, the safety of his beloved lesbian daughter (Coetzee 2000, 60). The aforementioned professor was divorced twice and was dissatisfied with his work at the educational institution where he worked almost mechanically, teaching literature and communication at a fictitious technical university in Cape Town, in the immediate postapartheid era (4–5). After being fired from his long-term job in connection with a case of sexual harassment of a young Black student, he takes refuge on his daughter's small farm in the Eastern Cape province (59). The university investigates him for misconduct:

“Committee tight-lipped on verdict,” reads the headline. “The disciplinary committee investigating charges of harassment and misconduct against Communications Professor David Lurie was tight-lipped yesterday on its verdict. Chair Manas Mathabena would say only that its findings have been forwarded to the Rector for action.

“Sparring verbally with members of WAR after the hearing, Lurie (53) said he had found his experiences with women students ‘enriching.’

“Trouble first erupted when complaints against Lurie, an expert on romantic poetry, were filed by students in his classes.” (56–57)

For a while, life in the countryside seems to give his life balance (68). But the historical moment is one of profound political transformation in South Africa due to the fierce ethnic and racial disputes following apartheid (75). Thus, despite the expected harmony of rural life, he is forced to live with the unsuspected long-term consequences of a brutal attack on the property, in which three unknown Black men gang-rape his daughter and viciously attack him (94–95).

The novel is a controversial realist portrait of South Africa in the very recent postapartheid period (Poyner 2006, 11). In a territory in transformation, this violence presents challenging configurations: David and his daughter are and are not victims of a new emerging order, since the main character is not a typical novelistic hero; on the contrary, he is also a subject characterized by reprehensible actions (Rosenfield; Pereira et al. 2015, 103–5). These scenes express the zeitgeist of postapartheid South Africa, a nation searching for reconciliation, in which misfortune creates desire for another reality (306–7).

The novel evokes the conflicts that define the new South Africa, representing a tense historical moment in its transition to a democratic regime of racial equality (Poyner 2006, 12). This praxis of transformation is represented in various ways throughout the book, such as David’s loss of patriarchal authority, the replacement of the power dynamics of ethnic groups between dominant and subordinate, the eventual transfer of material wealth from wealthy classes, among many other political, economic, social, and cultural factors (Coetzee 2000, 36). Thus, both the ideological setting of profound changes in universities (struggles for gender and racial equality) and the fierce dispute for land in the countryside between whites and Blacks are evident in the work (37).

The central character is an ambiguous and incongruous man. He is arrogant and disdains his colleagues (Coetzee 2000, 40). He is also a white South African citizen from a segregated world that is on the verge of disappearing (41). He is thus forced to rethink his surroundings at an age when he considers himself too old for profound changes (70–71). He is pushed to the limit of

human tolerance before finding the tiniest spark of redemption in his forced acceptance of the new South Africa (42).

Apartheid was legalized in 1948, with the arrival of the New National Party (NNP) to power (Macedo et al. 2008, 142). The system did not allow the Black majority to vote, it prohibited them from acquiring land in a large part of the country, and it forced them to live in confinement zones called “bantustans” (148). Marriages and sexual relations between people of different ethnicities were also legally prohibited (152). Opposition to apartheid separatism began more intensely in the 1950s, when the African National Congress (ANC) protested the brutal regime (150). With the end of the Portuguese empire in Africa (1975) and the fall of the white minority government in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe (1980), white rule in South Africa went into a slow convulsion (128). Such factors encouraged demonstrators. In 1990, the main historical opposition leader, Nelson Mandela, was released and the ANC regained legality. In 1994, Mandela was elected president in the country’s first multiracial elections (14–48).

According to Coetzee’s novel, Africa has several social problems: ethnic conflicts, hunger, and disease (Coetzee 2000, 108). Africa’s numerous problems have historical roots in colonization. The territorial division of the continent was based solely on the interests of European colonizers, disregarding the ethnic and cultural differences of the local population (Macedo et al. 2008, 112). This arbitrary procedure was marked by violence and intense exploitation of the wealth of African countries that, after gaining independence, were politically and economically unstable (113). Coetzee dramatizes the colonial mentality:

A new day. Ettinger telephones, offering to lend them a gun “for the meanwhile.” “Thank you,” he replies. “We’ll think about it.”

He gets out Lucy’s tools and repairs the kitchen door as well as he is able. They ought to install bars, security gates, a perimeter fence, as Ettinger has done. They ought to turn the farmhouse into a fortress. Lucy ought to buy a pistol and a two-way radio, and take shooting lessons. But will she ever consent? She is here because she loves the land and the old *landliche* way of life. If that way of life is doomed, what is left for her to love? (Coetzee 2000, 113)

Especially in the twentieth century, South Africa went through an intense process of modernization from above that intensified conflicts marked by social and racial tensions: oppression of Blacks in order to maintain white privilege (Macedo et al. 2008, 145). The white minority knew how to exploit the intertribal clashes that emerged between the different ethnic groups, which in a way facilitated the exercise of full domination (124). Thus, South

African structural violence is part of a historical process marked by inequality in access to health, education, housing, and employment (125).

The novel *Disgrace* seems to demonstrate too that there are other types of conflict that affect women (Poyner 2006, 3). Melanie's harassment and Lucy's rape are troublesome parts of the same conflicted, racist society (Coetzee 2000, 109). Lucy's rape by Black men was very controversial in the time of postapartheid transition (Poyner 2006, 3):

"Nothing could be further from my thoughts. This has nothing to do with you, David. You want to know why I have not laid a particular charge with the police. I will tell you, as long as you agree not to raise the subject again. The reason is that, as far as I am concerned, what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, in another place, at this time, it is not. It is my business, mine alone."

"This place being what?"

"This place being South Africa." (Coetzee 2000, 112)

Coetzee's work portrays a society shattered by apartheid in which the suffocating and numbing atmosphere does not seem to pave the way for fuller and more consequential social and affective relationships (176). The barbarism marked by decades of racial segregation provides a conviviality characterized by a kind of daily cataclysm, a veiled and insistent war (177). South Africa has yet to find deep solutions to the overwhelming poverty of the Black majority, extremely high criminality, and the collapse of ethical and moral values in a postapartheid period (Rosenfield; Pereira et al. 2015, 124–25).

CONCLUSION: CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE TWO NOVELS

After approaching the novels in question separately we can establish some aesthetic and ideological correlations between the authors studied here. The question of the peripheral realism (WReC 2020, 128) in Buarque's and Coetzee's novels can be comparatively observed in contemporaneity, since it seems to be a transnational artistic project of a literary production that identifies big social clashes with the aim of inquiring about the conditions of freedom and autonomy of the citizen, of the intellectual nowadays in the third world societies (43).

Essa gente and *Disgrace* are not anthropological research disguised as literature. The composition of the characters is marked by an unusual psychological density (sense of failure and frustration of both protagonists), the configuration of spaces is delimited by the insistent presence of delay and the

archaic, the orchestration of the narrative voices is marked by different and complementary points of view on the dilemmas of an outdated temporality that insists on remaining, and even the interweaving of the plot is regulated by a crushing daily life that advances in the sense of extracting from daily labor the epic marks of a secular battle for the right to life and human dignity.

Here we have contemporary literary production that paradoxically obliges the respective nations to look to the past to understand the present: colonialism, the elitist constitution of the nation, and the obstacles to progress. Slavery's legacy, patriarchy, and incomplete modernization are characteristic marks of diverse and authoritarian societies in search of self-understanding in a long process of failed integration marked by seemingly insurmountable inequality and weakness.

The protagonists of these novels are characterized by being peripheral intellectuals (a professional writer and a university professor) who find themselves in a nonconforming role on the periphery of the global capitalist system, experiencing the hardships of a chaotic social order. Temporality is one of significant historical change between resistance and assent: the mishaps of Brazilian redemocratization and the obstacles of postapartheid South Africa. The demands of contemporary times are stamped in these narratives, such as the controversial role of the intellectual (between engagement and alienation) and its correlation with the social and racial demands in force in both countries mentioned. A new social contract in Brazil and South Africa must be formed, which requires another form of commitment from the intellectual.

This critical essay has created a political-cultural dialogue between Buarque and Coetzee. The trajectory of the protagonists of *Essa gente* and *Disgrace* makes elicit a recurring question in the literary project of both authors concerning the meaning and the relevance of literature in such an unstable and contradictory present. In the case of Buarque, it is mainly to highlight the genealogy of Brazilian reactionism; in the case of Coetzee, it is to interrogate South African systemic racism.

Both novels unveil societies convulsed by striking conflicts of late capitalism, in which violence, racism, and neofascism put developing democracies at risk, in which subordinated social groups struggle for autonomy and emancipation. The novels, ultimately, reveal the failure of multiracial societies characterized by constant crisis without a concrete horizon of overcoming their divisions in the short term because there are deep historical obstacles that are extremely difficult to eliminate permanently.

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Chapter Eight

Dissident Authorship in Post-colonial Mozambique and Postapartheid South Africa

The Cases of António Quadros and J. M. Coetzee

Tom Stennett

In *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988), J. M. Coetzee defines “white writing” in South Africa as a phenomenon characterized by its ambiguous identity: “White writing is white only insofar as it is generated by the concerns of people no longer European, not yet African” (Coetzee 2007, 12). According to Coetzee’s framing, this ambiguous quality of white writing in South Africa has a spatial and temporal dimension; he suggests that had the writers that he analyzes in his study been born in an earlier or later epoch, or somewhere else, they could have claimed a European or an African identity. Coetzee’s attribution of an anachronistic, rather than geographically dislocated, quality to white writing in South Africa informs my comparison of Coetzee’s 1999 novel *Disgrace* and the didactic ode *Pressaga* published in 1974 in Mozambique under the name “João Pedro Grabato Dias,” one of the three pen names of Portuguese painter and poet António Quadros (1933–1994) (Williams 2003, 192).

The texts that I will analyze were published in periods of great political change. *Pressaga* appeared shortly after the Carnation Revolution (April 25, 1974), which put an end to Portugal’s dictatorship, the Estado Novo (New State), and set in motion the decolonization of Mozambique. *Disgrace* was published five years after the South African elections of 1994, which brought Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress to power. During the

colonial period, Coetzee and Quadros had occupied peculiar positions of dissident authorship, as writers who produced texts that contained elusive critiques of colonialism that nevertheless did not fit into the mold of anticolonial writings. In *Pressaga* and *Disgrace*, we see a persistence of the position of the (white) writer as a dissident after empire and after apartheid. How can we account for the continuation of this position in the period after the end of the political regimes that Coetzee and Grabato Dias had opposed? What can the writings of dissident authors such as Coetzee and Grabato Dias tell us about the place of writers in the highly politicized contexts of Mozambique and South Africa immediately after white minority rule?

In this chapter, I contend that Grabato Dias and Coetzee, in *Pressaga* and *Disgrace* respectively, deploy subversive discursive strategies honed under the distinct censorship contexts of colonial Mozambique and apartheid South Africa to raise inconvenient questions over the place of the white populations in those countries. Reading *Pressaga* and *Disgrace* in the light of the authors' dissident writings produced during the colonial period is suggestive of how the place of dissident anticolonial literature became suddenly altered after the end of colonialism and apartheid, and points to how the works' authors adapted or not to the change in political and literary landscape.

TRANSNATIONAL APPROACHES TO DISSIDENT AUTHORSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICA AND MOZAMBIQUE

South Africa and southern and central Mozambique share similar but unique histories of colonial exploitation, authoritarian white minority rule, censorship, and labor migration. The south of Mozambique became an active arena for jockeying between British and Portuguese colonial interests at the end of the nineteenth century following the Berlin Conference, at which Portugal's claims to a land empire stretching from Angola to Mozambique were rejected by the British (Isaacman and Isaacman 1983, 21; Newitt 2009, 186–93). Portugal's low-cost approach to establishing a colony led to much of Mozambican territory being owned by British and South African chartered companies until World War Two (Newitt 2017, 95–100; 109–12; 119–20). In the 1960s and 1970s, against the backdrop of decolonization in southern Africa, South Africa, Rhodesia, Angola, and Mozambique were the last bastions of white minority rule. Mozambique's and Angola's independence from Portugal in 1975 and the end of Ian Smith's regime in Rhodesia left South Africa further regionally isolated (Schmidt 2018, 127–28). Leftist nationalists in Mozambique (FRELIMO) and Angola (MPLA) became the targets of South African aggression, with the South African Defense Force playing

crucial roles in Mozambique's and Angola's so-called post-colonial "Civil" Wars (Newitt 2017, 160–62).

Despite the close historical connections between Portuguese-speaking African countries and their Anglophone neighbors, there have been few cross-linguistic comparative studies of southern African literatures. In his pioneering comparative study of the literatures of South Africa, Mozambique, and Angola, Stefan Helgesson observes that this lack is owing to the historically one-way nature of cultural exchanges between Portuguese-speaking African writers and their English-speaking contemporaries, with the former being highly literate in Anglophone cultures and the latter being largely ignorant of their Lusophone peers—a fact that has been “duplicated in the current academic formation of postcolonialism” (Helgesson 2009, 10). Lusophone African writers are generally less known than their Anglophone peers. My comparison is an especially extreme case. An author who mostly self-published his works in small print runs, Quadros is an obscure writer who wrote and published in a marginal literary context. Whereas *Pressaga*, like Quadros's writings more generally, has been almost totally ignored by critics, *Disgrace* has provoked a substantial body of critical responses in South Africa and internationally.¹

A striking and compelling similarity between Quadros's and Coetzee's cases is that they both self-consciously and obsessively grapple with the question of authorship. Critics that have addressed authorship in Coetzee's works have been oriented by the author's intellectualizing of his own position—set out in essays and interviews collected in *Doubling the Point* (1992) and *Giving Offence* (1996). Coetzee's comments on authorship have focused on the imbrication of authorship and authority. Jane Poyner describes this bind as the “paradox of postcolonial authorship,” which, she argues, is dramatized in Coetzee's novels as “writer-characters typically agonize over the ways in which the authority authorship engenders will always compromise their ethico-political conviction because authorship, for Coetzee, is always already imbued with power, mastery and colonization” (Poyner 2009, 2). Coetzee's strong aversion to authoritative discourses is articulated in a speech of 1987 titled “The Novel Today,” in which he evokes the place of authors and of literature under apartheid as a double bind whereby both are subject to censorship and—for books such as those that Coetzee wrote, of enigmatic politics—to the contempt of the antiapartheid movement (Coetzee 1988). Coetzee has strategically accounted for his authorial position in relation to this problem in his proposal of a “nonposition”: “the possibility of a position . . . not simply impartial between the rivals but also, by self-definition, off the stage of rivalry altogether, a nonposition” (Coetzee 1996, 83–84). In contrast to the notion of a nonpositional authorial strategy, David Attwell argues in his literary biography of Coetzee that we can productively focus on

“how the self is written into the work and then written out, leaving its imprint as a shadowy presence” (Attwell 2016, 3).

Like Coetzee, Quadros’s author constructs, including Grabato Dias, insistently and consciously grapple with the paradoxes of being an author in colonial and post-colonial contexts. Although in many ways similar cases—white authors, occupying privileged positions in colonial/apartheid and postindependence/postapartheid societies, who challenged the colonial/apartheid regimes with obliquely dissident literary texts—there are significant differences in the authors’ respective strategies for navigating the paradox(es) of post-colonial authorship. Where Coetzee has recourse to a modernist-inflected impersonality, whereby the author paradoxically writes fiction that is necessarily autobiographical (Coetzee 1992, 391) while absconding himself from the text, Quadros—in a postcolonial spin on the heteronyms of Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa—consciously positions himself through the creation of Luso-Mozambican authorial constructs.² Quadros’s accounts of his own position as an author in colonial Mozambique stand as a fruitful counterpoint to Coetzee’s commentary on his authorship.

In her introduction to Grabato Dias’s 1971 collection *Laurentinas*, Maria Lourdes Cortez proposes a useful way of considering the authorial position of Grabato Dias through her emphasis on the “processos de distanciamento” (distancing processes) undertaken by Grabato Dias in the collection.³ Cortez’s introduction is prefaced by a “biography” provided by Grabato Dias and the inclusion of which she defends, perversely, by alluding to Roland Barthes’s complete rejection of biography in literary analysis (Barthes 1984). Cortez knowingly participates in Quadros’s in-joke (Quadros’s name is not mentioned, and she places the word *biografia* in quotation marks). In a challenge to the Barthesian notion of the “dead author,” she suggests that Grabato Dias’s works can be most productively read as consciously coy responses to the contexts out of which the author writes:

Ponhamos . . . a tónica no Verbo. O que não significa que consideremos o autor . . . situado nos limites do conforto intelectual, instalado na ambiguidade da palavra, acoitado densamente na linguagem . . .

Grabato Dias é profundamente penetrado pelo espectáculo que o envolve, mas, ao criar, em prolongado ceremonial linguístico, os processos de distanciamento . . . transforma em voz aquilo que apenas poderia ter sido acto-reflexo, tradução imediata.

(We will . . . emphasize the Word, which does not mean that we will consider the author as situated in the confines of intellectual comfort, installed in the ambiguity of words, hiding in language’s density.

Grabato Dias is profoundly penetrated by the spectacle that surrounds him, but, in creating—in a prolonged linguistic ceremony—distancing processes, he voices that which otherwise could only have been expressed as a knee-jerk reaction or an immediate translation.) (Cortez 1971, 8)

Cortez confers on Grabato Dias's distancing processes a political function that serves to forestall critiques of political aloofness or apathy: his humor is accusatory and prophetic (Cortez 1971, 12). The poet's truculence is identified as a "virile" and "audacious" strategy, as it casts the poet as an outsider who refuses to accede to the "normas que se tornaram uma segunda natureza para a sensibilidade e pensamento dos homens" (norms which have become second nature for men's sensibilities and thinking) (Cortez 1971, 13).

Writing in the same context of political repression as the author she prefaces, Cortez's theorizing is oblique: she does not openly state that *Laurentinas* and its introduction were published in a context of colonial censorship, nor does she identify the targets of Grabato Dias's humor. In this way, Cortez's introduction is a call to read Grabato Dias's works (and her own essay) in context and as a thoughtful response—rather than an "acto-reflexo," a knee-jerk reaction—to that same context (Cortez 1971, 13). In emphasizing that Grabato Dias obscures himself behind a fog of ambiguous and alienating language, Cortez's nuanced proposed mode of reading is—in a striking reflection of Grabato Dias's poetry—both empowering and disheartening for readers:

A existência subjacente de uma situação histórica, se a quisermos abordar, terá de ser de forma menos simplista, abandonados todos os esquemas ingênuos de relação causa-efeito, tendo sempre presentes os processos de distanciamento que o autor estabelece face ao que o rodeia, e não esquecendo também que uma possível intenção não abarca o todo das significações entregues ao leitor e que a totalidade do sentido fica em suspenso, pela própria natureza ambígua da linguagem.

(Should we wish to approach the underlying historical situation, we must do so in a less simplistic way. We must abandon the naive paradigms of cause and effect, bearing in mind the distancing processes that the author establishes in relation to the context that surrounds him and not forgetting that his intention, whatever it may be, does not account for all of the meanings provided to the reader. We must also not forget that the totality of meaning is in suspense, owing to the ambiguous nature of language itself.) (Cortez 1971, 7)

Such a framing acknowledges the difficulty of the writer's texts while also charging readers with making sense of them given that authorial intention cannot account for all possible meanings. Her analysis encourages us to

analyze Grabato Dias's (and Quadros's) tendency to dramatize authorial self-effacement as a conscious authorial strategy that is both literary and political. Self-effacement, such as that enacted at the end of Grabato Dias's 1971 ode *A Arca* (*The Ark*) and the 1975 collection *Eu, o Povo* (*I, the People*), attributed to a FRELIMO guerrilla soldier of Quadros's invention called Mutimati Barnabé João, entails the transfer of the author's authority onto his readers ("Venceremos") (João 1975). At the end of *A Arca*, in which Grabato Dias dramatizes his leading a rebellion as Noah against a tyrannical god, calls on his readers to reject all forms of authority—even his own (Grabato Dias 1971, CCC). In this way, Grabato Dias limits his authority by transferring it to his readers.

Quadros's adoption of pseudo-anonymous pen names, which only half hide his identity, points to a central paradox of Coetzee's conception of ethical authorship and a fundamental failing of Barthes's notion of the "dead author": no matter how much authors may wish to abscond themselves, total disappearance is never possible. Authors cannot help but have authority conferred upon them; authors cannot help but take positions. Coetzee's Barthesian strategy aspires to the author's being out of the picture (paradoxically, in essays and interviews complementing his fiction) (1996, 83–84). In contrast, Cortez's (1971, 8) analysis of Grabato Dias's authorship accounts for the author's lingering presence.

Along with his authorial position, Coetzee's critics have grappled with the author's textualizing bent, with negative appraisals censuring the postmodern features of his work, such as his allegorizing (Gordimer 1984) and ahistorical style (Watson 1986). In contrast to these analyses and in a similar way to Cortez, Attwell advocates modes of reading that assert the "historicity of storytelling" and which "read . . . the novels back into their context" (Attwell 1993, 7). Likewise, in a recent comparative study of *Disgrace* and *Crónica da Rua 513.2* (*Chronicle of 513.2 Street*) (2006), by the white Mozambican novelist João Paulo Borges Coelho, Marta Banasiak argues that the authors put forward contrarian protagonists as the "Outro interno da nação" (the nation's internal Other) in order to criticize state rewritings of the colonial past and its bearing on the post-colonial societies of South Africa and Mozambique (Banasiak 2021, 79).⁴ Where Banasiak and Attwell read history back into Coetzee's works, my analysis bears on how Coetzee's and Quadros's/Grabato Dias's strategies of oblique criticism and authorial detachment were confronted by the new, literary and political environments of postapartheid South Africa and post-colonial Mozambique. What happens when writers concerned with criticizing, if obliquely and cryptically, colonial authority and authoritative discourses find that the object of their criticisms is replaced by new forms of power? How able were Quadros and Coetzee to adapt their authorial strategies to those new contexts?

PRESSAGA

In a note that precedes *Pressaga*, Grabato Dias's name (abbreviated to "João Grabato") features on the eclectic list of "99 autores de algum modo moçambicanos" (99 authors, who are, in one way or another, Mozambican) (Grabato Dias 1974, n.p.). That Grabato Dias qualifies the listed authors as being "de algum modo moçambicanos" (somehow Mozambican) points to the presence of individuals whose Mozambican identity was questioned at that time, such as the white poets Glória de Sant'Anna and Rui Knopfli, who belong to the group of writers whose members were diversely labeled "Euro-African" (Hamilton 1975, 178–94), "Euro-Mozambican" (Hamilton 1984, 19), "European" (Margarido 1962, 13–14), "white" (Margarido 1962, 4; Ferreira 1977, 2: 110), or "Portuguese" (Ferreira 1977, 2: 69–70) by critics. The note's hesitant designation anticipates a question that runs throughout the ode: who counts as Mozambican?

The question of identity has dominated discussions of the interlinked themes of authorship and canonicity in Mozambique. For Fátima Mendonça, the predominance of identity in literary debates is owing to the specific historical (colonial) conditions under which Mozambican literature emerged as a category set against, but also intertwined with, Portuguese colonial rule (Mendonça 2008, 31). In the post-colonial context, she argues, the fluidity concerning who counts ("o próprio") and who does not ("o outro") as Mozambican has resulted in an unstable canon whose members are contested (31). The case study analyzed by Mendonça—the debate over the representation of marginalized characters in white author Mia Couto's début literary collection *Vozes Anotecidas* (*Voices Made Night*) (1986)—corroborates Nelson Saúte's contention that race has been a fundamental unstated criterion in debates over the formation of the Mozambican canon (Saúte 1998, 88). Paradoxically, debates over the place of white writers in the Mozambican canon, focused on cases such as the white poet Knopfli, have guaranteed their inclusion in discussions of the national canon and, in turn, their inclusion in the canon itself.⁵ Attendant framings of *moçambicanidade* (Mozambican identity), as well as of Mozambican literature and the national canon, as complex, ambiguous, uncertain, or incipient phenomena has functioned to justify the place of white writers or writers of European heritage, with critics focusing on the confluence of European and African traditions in the works of Mozambican authors. Ana Mafalda Leite identifies José Craveirinha and Knopfli as the most important "interpreters" of *moçambicanidade*, which she frames as the "confluência de temáticas sociais esteticamente orientadas por uma dinâmica intertextual *simultaneamente endógena e exógena*" (confluence of social topics that are esthetically oriented by an intertextual

dynamic that is *simultaneously endogenous and exogenous*) (Leite 2008, 72, my emphasis). Similarly, Gilberto Matusse argues that *moçambicanidade* is the result of the interplay of authors who distance themselves from inherited literary models—with the Portuguese literary traditions standing as a significant cultural frame—and readers who recognize that distancing (Matusse 1998, 191).

However, although *moçambicanidade* has been characterized by its flexibility, Mozambican civic identity after independence had a rigid framing. According to the Lei da Nacionalidade (Nationality Law) of 1975, in order to qualify as Mozambican, citizens had to renounce any other nationalities that they held. Furthermore, according to Malyn Newitt, Mozambique's ruling party after independence, FRELIMO, created an unwelcoming environment for the settler population by refusing to give safety guarantees during the period between the Carnation Revolution of April 1974 and the implementation of FRELIMO's transitional government in September 1974—a period of four and a half months during which the colonial war dragged on (Newitt 1995, 539).⁶

It is in this fraught context that the poet, in *Pressaga*, registers the unease of a settler writer after the end of empire. The poem begins with the expression of Grabato Dias's jubilation at the end of the dictatorship (Grabato Dias 1974, 1–24). An early episode describes him arriving at the customs post of a new nation, presumably Mozambique, where he brandishes his brand-new passport to the border officer. The self-professed stateless poet (“definitiva, definidamente sem lugar,” Grabato Dias 1974, 10) declares that he identifies with the photograph in his new passport and with the “rigorosamente daltónico” (rigorously color-blind) (Grabato Dias 1974, 11) African officer that checks his document. His enthusiasm at the prospect of being reborn in post-colonial Mozambique soon gives way to an interrogation of his complicity with the dictatorship in a sequence of vignettes of the poet's childhood in Portugal (25–59). In the second half of the poem, which I will analyze, Grabato Dias agonizes over his uncertain future in Mozambique (60–119). He subtly critiques Mozambican nationalist politics through the juxtaposition of overt criticism of colonial Portuguese nationalism with his personal concerns over his uncertain future in Mozambique. In this way, Grabato Dias masks his dissident politics using techniques honed under Portuguese colonial censorship.

The poet's explicit critique of the nationalist ideology of the Portuguese Estado Novo focuses on the dictatorship's appropriation of the works of Portuguese poet Luís de Camões, whom Grabato Dias reframes as a global writer.⁷ Later in the poem, Grabato Dias expands his critique of nationalism by drawing implicit associations between the Estado Novo's ideological

project and Mozambican nationalism. Grabato Dias cryptically makes this connection in a passage where he expresses his fear that he will not have a place in Mozambique:

Vem frio de muito longe na minha vida. Desconfortável mas familiar
 . . . um frio
 da pressaga traição que nos fará a vida, um arripio [*sic*] um mio
 de vento rasgando-se nas folhas das bananeiras que nós dois
 plantámos
 pensando saber que já não comeríamos o fruto.

(The cold returns from far away in my life. Uncomfortable, yet familiar . . .
 a cold
 of a foreshadowed betrayal that life will deal us, a shiver, a meow
 of wind tearing through the leaves of the banana trees that we two
 planted
 thinking that we knew that we would never eat their fruit.) (Grabato
 Dias 1974, 81)

In the childhood memories evoked by the poet, “o frio” (the cold) mentioned in the quoted passage is an ambiguous, doubled signifier that registers Grabato Dias’s historic unease under the dictatorship and the poet’s sense of guilt in the present for his complicity with the colonial regime. It first appears in a central episode from the ode, in which the poet recalls his encounter with a Guinean child on display in the Portuguese World Exhibition of 1940 (37–39). Grabato Dias dramatizes his thwarted attempt to “voar” (fly) towards the child, who is imprisoned in a wooden cage (39). In the quoted text, the cold is associated with the poet’s feared exclusion from post-colonial Mozambique, which he codes as a betrayal. That the only mention of the poem’s title—“Pressaga,” derived from *presságio* (presage)—in the text appears in this passage suggests that the poet’s jubilation at the end of colonialism, expressed in the poem’s opening, belies a fundamental unease: the poet’s prophetic poem is one of trepidation rather than celebration (81). That the poet associates himself with the cold felt by the imprisoned Guinean boy entails the drawing of a crude equivalence between his sense of unease at the end of empire and the historic plight of colonized subjects.⁸ Later in the poem, in a characteristic discursive maneuver, Grabato Dias archly associates his unease about his future in Mozambique to his status as a minor poet.⁹ The poet’s knowingly ironic connotations function to support and undermine his claim that as a settler on the historic threshold of the end of Portuguese Empire and the beginnings of Mozambican nationhood he finds himself in a parlous situation.

As a counterpoint to the exclusionary nationalism that Grabato Dias associates explicitly with the Estado Novo and implicitly with FRELIMO, the poet describes a globalized world, rid of nationalism, that he situates in a distant future inhabited by his “tetraneto” (great-great-great-grandson) (117–18). His proposal is framed as being out-of-kilter with the context in which he finds himself:

Se fizesse a loucura de ter juízo ficava cá com a malta
a gentalha com juízo lançando o papagaio dos mitos
até o dia em que uma bonita loucura nos dê razão
à boa fé [*sic*] de acreditar na boa-fé como arma derradeira
e os passaportes sejam peças de museu inexplicáveis.

(Were I mad enough to be sensible, I would stay here with the gang,
the sensible guys flying a mythical kite,
until the day when a pretty madness will lend credence
to our good faith in believing in good faith as the ultimate weapon,
and passports are inexplicable museum pieces.) (Grabato Dias
1974, 118)

The poet draws a link between his poetry’s supposed out-of-place-ness, identified by the notion that the poet would be “mad” to stay in Mozambique, and his hope for an internationalized world. Thus, in *Pressaga* there are two distinct futures: the near future, which corresponds to the place of Grabato Dias/António Quadros in Mozambique after empire and the poet’s quixotic vision of a world in which there are no longer borders between nations—a world in which Grabato Dias/Quadros can be Portuguese and Mozambican at the same time, or neither. Whereas *Pressaga* begins with the poet identifying with the photograph in his new passport, the ode ends with the poet desiring a world in which passports, and the concept of the nation, are redundant. For Grabato Dias, who had parodied the Estado Novo’s nationalist ideology in *As Quibyrycas* (*The Quibyricans*, 1972), the construction of nationhood on the basis of identity necessarily entails a repetition—differentiated, in a post-colonial context—of the exclusionary framing of Portuguese colonial identity.

Pressaga ends with Grabato Dias relinquishing his authority to others. Unlike *A Arca* (1971) and *Eu, o Povo* (1975), where the poet’s authority is transferred to his subjects (*A Arca*), his comrades (*Eu, o Povo*), and to his readers, *Pressaga* dramatizes the poet’s investing his hopes in a figure of authority: the leader of a developing nation, probably Mozambique—described as a “tio pequenino” (tiny uncle, 117)—whom the poet implores to convince powerful nations (the “grandes tios,” 117) at a UN summit to put an end to the “tribalismo inter nações” (inter-national tribalism, 117). Realizing the quixotism of his proposal, the poet ironically contrasts the sad fate of his

poems, which he fears will be neglected by posterity, with that of the “tio pequenino,” who will earn himself a “dúzia de linhas nos livros da história pátria / que não é de modo algum a história do ascender do humano” (a dozen lines in the fatherland’s history books / which, in no way, is the history of humanity’s ascension, 118). The poet, for his part, limits his role to waiting for posterity to recognize that he was right all along.

Grabato Dias’s anxieties over his place in post-colonial Mozambique in *Pressaga* notwithstanding, his creator, Quadros, continued to benefit, along with the majority of the settler population that decided to remain in Mozambique after independence, from the social, economic, and political privileges that he had enjoyed under colonial rule. Quadros was not excluded from the project of Mozambican nation building. In the late 1970s and the early 1980s, he led the TBARN project, which he first ran at the Eduardo Mondlane University and subsequently co-led with José Forjaz in the Direção Nacional da Habitação (Housing Ministry).¹⁰ Quadros became disillusioned with FRELIMO’s authoritarian tendencies and left the country in the mid-1980s (Williams 2003, 190–91). Quadros’s biographical trajectory reveals that the anxieties expressed in *Pressaga* are as fanciful—and perverse—as they are legitimate. If Grabato Dias detects, correctly, FRELIMO’s latent authoritarianism he also mischaracterizes his discomfort with the suspected repetition of some of the authoritarian tendencies of the colonial state by FRELIMO as an anxiety over his own place in post-colonial Mozambique and his inability to assume a Mozambican identity—an identity that, it should be noted, Quadros never adopted. Where the poet’s analysis of his own situation is inaccurate, the questions raised by him concerning FRELIMO’s ideological project are perspicacious.

DISGRACE

Like Grabato Dias, *Disgrace*’s protagonist David Lurie stands as an anachronism. In the novel’s first chapter, Coetzee sketches the protagonist’s incipient literary project: a chamber opera about Lord Byron’s affair with Teresa Guiccioli (Coetzee 2008, 4). Lurie’s project is the fruit of his dissatisfaction with his work at the university where he is an associate professor of Communication—formerly of English within the Modern Languages department—before a change of name brought about by the “great rationalization” of the institution (3). Lurie despises the overhaul and finds in his literary project a refuge in the canonical works of English literature that he continues to teach in the one specialized course that he is “allowed” to deliver each year, no matter how unpopular it is (3). Having resigned from his university post after he rapes one of his students, Lurie flees Cape Town, where he has

become a social pariah, to stay with his daughter, Lucy, on her farm in Eastern Cape (57). While on Lucy's farm, Lurie busies himself with the frustrated and obsessive composition of his opera (119) and with his voluntary work in an animal shelter (83). One afternoon, he and Lucy are assaulted by three Black men, who rape Lucy (89–95). Lurie recognizes one of the assailants in a party hosted by Petrus, one of Lucy's neighbors (128–29). Lurie later discovers that the man he identified is a relation of Pollux's wife (196) and that Lucy is pregnant (192). *Disgrace* ends with Lurie still in Eastern Cape, awaiting the birth of his grandson (211).

In contrast to his works published under apartheid, which were largely ignored by the censors, there was a robust response to *Disgrace* and the novel's politics. Simone Drichel sees a continuity in *Disgrace*'s political reception with the response from critics such as Gordimer (1984) during apartheid, arguing that Coetzee "was once again perceived to be out of step" (Drichel 2011, 150). The controversy *Disgrace* sparked in South Africa contrasted with its positive international reception. One of the episodes that has proven highly controversial is Lucy's rape and her and Lurie's comments on the assault (Coetzee 2008, 153–61). In the exchange, Lurie rejects Lucy's absurd claim that the white population in South Africa should submit to a process of historic vengeance for the evils of apartheid without refuting the premise that his daughter's rapists are the agents of this process to which Petrus—who, along with his family, protect Pollux—is actively complicit (157). Lurie and Lucy are incapable of escaping a paradigm of colonial power relations according to which a loss of privilege for the white population in South Africa necessarily entails an overturning of the colonizer/colonized binary.

Benita Parry has argued that Coetzee's subtle critiques of colonialist discourses in his early fiction function to reproduce the very discourses that he challenges as his position as critic rests on the very authority that he seeks to challenge (Parry 1996, 164). In contrast, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues, in relation to *Disgrace*, that Coetzee's insistent focalizing the narrative through Lurie calls for readers to provide a counternarrative by reconstructing Lucy's voice—mediated by her father—through the reading strategy of intertextuality (Spivak 2002, 22–23). Indeed, Spivak argues that Coetzee's work calls for its own "displacement": ". . . literature, insofar as it is in the service of the emergence of the critical, must also displace itself. . . . Its task is to foster yet another displacement: into a work for the remote possibility of the precarious production of an infrastructure that can in turn produce a Lucy or her focalizer, figuring forth an equality that takes disgrace in its stride" (Spivak 2002, 30). In casting Coetzee's "ethical" strategy as one that calls on sophisticated readings of Lucy's silences, Spivak ignores the fact that Coetzee's subtle interrogations of Lucy's and Lurie's racist, paranoid discourses are compromised by the events of the narrative, which do not

refute—and arguably serve to support—the characters’ underlying anxieties. Where Spivak is concerned with perspective (focalization), voice, and the author’s limiting of his own authority (Spivak 2002, 22), she does not account for diegesis—the realm of the author-as-God. Although Coetzee’s position is not openly stated, and he may arguably limit himself to the dissimilar (and certainly not identical) perspective of Lurie, his concerns are betrayed by the ways in which a certain discourse of colonial reversal is mutually reinforced by the novel’s plot.

Lurie’s framing as a dislocated individual has an interesting parallel with the comments made by Coetzee in essays on the place of literature during the period of late apartheid analyzed in the introduction to this chapter. Coetzee conceived of authors under the brutal system as being caught in a dilemma whereby there was an expectation that authors with anticolonial politics should mobilize literature to critique its injustice openly. Literature, he laments, is appropriated by ideologically motivated readers, in a binary politicized context, as proof or refutation of given ideological representations or declarations; in such a context, literary texts perform a function of “supplementarity” or “rivalry” with other kinds of discourses (Coetzee 1988, 3). A writer like Coetzee, who has recourse to so-called “postmodern authorial strategies” (Coetzee is widely credited with bringing postmodernism to South African literature in his debut, *Dusklands*, 1974) (Head 2009, 38), is perceived as turning away from history in favor of textuality.

Lurie is one of several constructs through which Coetzee rewrites himself in his fiction. Contradicting Coetzee’s notion of the nonposition, Attwell argues that Coetzee’s implied narrators lie—like the “shadowy presence” that he invokes in his literary biography of the author—“behind the narrative subjects” and “shift stance with and against the play of forces in South African culture” (Attwell 1993, 3). Similarly, Dominic Head observes that Coetzee’s characters are, at times, mouthpieces for the author without the latter being reducible to the other (Head 2009, 3). Like Quadros, Coetzee’s characters and narrative subjects insistently point back to their creator. In Coetzee’s fiction, the blurring of the line between the absented author and his narrative constructs contributes to the recurring theme of complicity in his work. One of the most striking examples of Coetzee’s peculiar treatment of this theme is *Dusklands* (1974), which features four characters who carry the name Coetzee and all of whom are agents of or complicit with colonial or neocolonial power.¹¹ In *Disgrace*, the theme of complicity is treated in such a way as to highlight the differences between protagonist and author. Although Lurie’s biography has some superficial similarities with that of Coetzee, both being authors and university professors, the former is a failed writer and a disgraced academic.

Lurie's incompatibility with postapartheid society has a parallel with his fruitless literary activities. The protagonist's anachronism is highlighted by the theme of the opera that he tries, unsuccessfully, to compose—Byron, an English canonical writer, whose Romantic contemporaries Lurie continues to teach after the radical institutional change that consigns studies of the canon to irrelevance (3). The anachronism of the opera and its author is double, corresponding to their relationship to the past and to the future: Lurie fears that his opera may not even be appreciated by posterity (209). In a passage that dramatizes Lurie's final attempt to compose *Byron in Italy*, the protagonist's frustrated authorship is painted in histrionic terms. Lurie laments that "his eccentric little chamber opera" is "going nowhere" because the "lyric impulse in him [. . .] can crawl forth from its cave only pinched, stunted, deformed" (209). *Byron in Italy* has "no action, no development" and instead involves its author, playing the role of Byron's spurned lover Teresa, strumming a plastic banjo and "hurl[ing]" a "long, halting cantilena [. . .] into the empty air" (209). The discourse of victimization that underpins his complaints of creative impotence and his dependence on posterity for recognition is laced with Lurie's disdain for the perceived decline in standards at his university: "[Lurie] will leave [recognition of his opera] to the scholars of the future, *if there are still scholars by then*" (my emphasis, 209). If, on the one hand, Coetzee ridicules Lurie, the protagonist's concerns over his lack of fit after apartheid, read in the light of Coetzee's extratextual comments on literature's place in South Africa, betrays a concern, on the other, that obsolescence is the fate of white writers postapartheid.

In contrast to Lurie, who ends *Disgrace* in the eponymous state of ignominy, his masterpiece unfinished and with little hope that posterity—his only readership—will redeem him, Coetzee's book was a great commercial and critical success, notwithstanding the polemic that the novel caused in South Africa.¹² Through the ambiguous characterization of Lurie, Coetzee raises inconvenient questions around the place of the white minority in postapartheid South Africa and, simultaneously, forestalls critiques of his treatment of the subject through his authorial distancing from his repugnant protagonist. Although Coetzee's characterization of his protagonist appears to void Lurie, the failed author, of any kind of authorial authority, Coetzee's narrative serves to legitimize the protagonist's racist anxieties.

CONCLUSION

The persistence of the framing of the (white) author as a dissident voice in the post-colonial and postapartheid periods represents, to a certain extent, a continuation of the critical function of the oblique anticolonial literature to

which Coetzee and Quadros contributed. Such a function was incompatible with FRELIMO's nationalist project, which mobilized anticolonial texts in the cementing of its hegemony, and with the jubilation that accompanied South Africa's 1994 elections. Quadros and Coetzee responded to this change in political climate in distinct ways. The Carnation Revolution and the subsequent independence of Mozambique marked a new phase in Quadros's career in which he barely published. Quadros put his writing to one side in order to participate in the project of nation building. Coetzee, on the other hand, left South Africa shortly after the publication of *Disgrace* to emigrate to Australia (Head 2009, 2). Coetzee's leaving South Africa has been accompanied by his no longer writing novels set in the country, even if it can be argued that he still writes about South Africa. Thus, in different ways, Quadros and Coetzee carried out a kind of self-silencing: where Quadros put down his pen to concentrate on other projects, Coetzee has refused to participate in the public debate on the knotty issues raised by his novel.

It is important to underline that the silencing to which Quadros and Coetzee consigned themselves was an elective process and to relativize the anxieties expressed by Grabato Dias and by Lurie concerning the place of white writers in post-colonial Mozambique and postapartheid South Africa given the distinct histories of censorship in the two countries, where to be a writer of color amounted to considerably more danger than that faced by the comfortable dissidents, Quadros and Coetzee, both during and after white minority rule. Although the continuation of the framing of white authorship as one of dissidence by these authors points to a disconnect when it comes to their own privileges, the persistence of this framing also underlines the striking continuities between the colonial and post-colonial historical moments.

That Coetzee and Grabato Dias explore settler anxieties through ambiguous author constructs—who make claims, alternately, to readers' pity and mockery—belies the political impotence of the kinds of writing practices developed in contexts of censorship after the end of empire and of apartheid. Suspicious of authority—political and authorial—Coetzee and Grabato Dias deploy distinct strategies to place limits on their own authority and to critique, obliquely, the authoritarian excesses of the postapartheid and postindependence states. In doing so, however, crude comparisons are drawn between the apartheid/colonial and postapartheid/independence. Read against their authors' previous writings, *Pressaga* and *Disgrace* point to the peril of authorial dissidence falling into mere contrariness.

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NOTES

1. Attwell notes that *Disgrace* is the South African novel that has been most written about in the country's history (Attwell 2019). *Disgrace*'s publication stimulated special issues of *Scrutiny*2 (2002, 7:1) and *Interventions* (2002, 4:3). For a bibliography of criticism on *Disgrace* and a collection of essays on the novel see McDonald (2009, 341–51). For a bibliography of recent criticism on *Disgrace*, with particular attention to scholarship concerned with the representation of animals in the novel, see Barney (2016, 526–30).

2. See Richard Zenith's introduction to the English-language anthology of Fernando Pessoa's poetry for an overview of Pessoa's heteronyms—the three fictional author constructs, Álvaro de Campos, Alberto Caeiro and Ricardo Reis, under which he published much of his prose and poetic works (Zenith 2006, xix—xxv).

3. Unless stated otherwise, all translations are mine.

4. In this article, I follow the useful distinction Jane Hiddleston (2009, 3–4) makes between the "post-colonial" and the "postcolonial," according to which the former refers to the historical periods that followed the end of European empires in different, formerly colonial, contexts and the latter to the range of concerns that inform scholarly inquiry into the histories and legacies of European colonial rule. The term "postcolonial" is apposite when discussing *Pressaga*, as the collection was published during the fraught fourteen-month period between the fall of the Portuguese dictatorship and Mozambique's independence.

5. See Alfredo Margarido's 1962 anthology *Poetas de Moçambique* (1962). In the preface, Margarido censures the majority of white Mozambican poets for their political quietism and disconnect from the realities of colonial rule (Margarido 1962, 4). His critiques notwithstanding, all the writers that he censures appear in his anthology, including Rui Knopfli, who is described as a "europeu nascido em Moçambique" (Margarido 1962, 14).

6. Isabela Figueiredo's *Caderno de Memórias Coloniais* (2015) gives an account of the fears—legitimate and paranoid—of white settlers concerning their safety during the turbulent period that followed the Carnation Revolution.

7. "o verso [de Camões] é um perpétuo emigrante / tostado ao sol de abaixo de gibraltar e não de abaixo de braga" (Grabato Dias 1974, 67).

8. See, for example, *A Arca* (1971), in which the poet—who positions himself as a privileged dissident working in the service of an authoritarian regime—claims in the ode's refrain, with a heavy dose of irony, to be a "slave" to the powers-that-be.

9. Grabato Dias ironically refers to his poetry's becoming little more than a "family curio" ("recordação de família") in the distant future (Grabato Dias 1974, 77).

10. TBARN is an acronym for *Técnicos Básicos para/no Aproveitamento de Recursos Naturais*. It was a project that sought to encourage collaboration between academics and peasants in the development of agricultural and construction practices (Borges Coelho 2008, 502–3).

11. The first Coetzee to appear is the supervisor of Eugene Dawn, protagonist of the first of *Dusklands*'s two novellas, called the "The Vietnam Project." He oversees Dawn's creation of propaganda for the US military in the context of the Vietnam War. The second Coetzee is the eighteenth-century Dutch settler Jacobus Coetzee, whose account of a hunting expedition is the second novella, titled "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee." The third Coetzee, Dr. S. J. Coetzee, is a descendant of Jacobus Coetzee and the editor of Jacobus's narrative. Dr. S. J. Coetzee's son is the Narrative's English-language translator.

12. *Disgrace* won the Booker Prize in 1999 and Coetzee was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2003. According to Herlitzius, the attribution of prestigious prizes such as the Booker are guarantees of commercial success for winners (Herlitzius 2005, 242–45).

Chapter Nine

Narrating the World from Africa

*João Paulo Borges Coelho
and J. M. Coetzee*

Marta Banasiak

The end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries are characterized by the emergence of various theories of world(-)literature, a phenomenon boosted by both the globalization process and the consolidation of several new national literatures.¹ Obviously, among these theories one can find approaches that are quite different from one another. Pascale Casanova (2007), drawing inspiration from the Bourdieuan theory of cultural goods autonomy, defines the literary world as a parallel of the political and allegedly independent World Republic of Letters. David Damrosch (2003) places particular importance on translation, circulation of the work outside its cultural context, and the ways of reading. Franco Moretti (2000), followed by members of the Warwick Research Collective (2015), builds on Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system theory, focusing either on interactions between the center and (semi-)periphery (Moretti 2000) or on (semi-)peripheral literary responses to capitalist movements.

The latter proposal presents two main keywords: *combined and uneven development* and *the world-system*. Therefore, world-literature is not conceived as a way of reading nor as a new, redesigned canon. It is a system that corresponds directly to the political-economic system, and which is characterized by its combined and uneven nature—the latter being perceived in opposition to “different.” In other words, the collective proposes a conceptualization that is defined by the triple axis of modern world-system/modernity/world-literature, in which modernity serves a double function, being “both what literature indexes or is ‘about’ and what gives world-literature

its distinguishing formal characteristics” (WReC 2015, 15). As a fundamental characteristic, it is important to underline the fact that modernity, as an equally “combined and uneven” phenomenon, is not construed in a way that begins in one place (center) and subsequently reaches other spaces (semiperiphery and periphery), but rather as something that “happens” throughout the system at the same time, whose effects and manifestations are uneven (unequal). Since the proposal is directly linked to the moment of a materialistic capitalist imposition on the world-system, the periodization chosen by the Warwick Research Collective researchers encompasses approximately the last two hundred years, that is, from the nineteenth century onwards, at a time when the expansion of capitalism became attached to the implementation of the colonial system(s). It is precisely this link that brings into focus the (semi-)peripheral spaces where the imposition of capitalism is confronted with pre-existing political and cultural systems. It also makes this proposal the most valuable one for the analysis of works from (semi-)peripheral spaces, such as those by J. M. Coetzee and João Paulo Borges Coelho, authors whose works will be analyzed in the following pages.

Regardless of the fact that WReC’s proposal will guide the following analysis, it is interesting to observe how the positions of these authors vary as representatives of world(-)literature depending on the theories used. There is not the slightest doubt that Coetzee can be considered a global author. Awarded with the most prestigious international literary awards, including the Nobel Prize, writing in English and having been translated into numerous other languages,² he is a part of all international canons, and his work has been incorporated into school and academic curricula around the world. Borges Coelho’s situation is diametrically the opposite in this aspect. Firstly, he is a Portuguese-speaking author whose work has only three translations into Italian (two novels in 2011 and 2012; and a book of short stories in 2017) and one into Spanish, published in Colombia (2019a). In this way, it becomes evident that, at an international level, the author’s work has very limited access to the reading public, and its circulation outside its cultural context is restricted, basically, to Portuguese-speaking spaces, through Mozambican, Portuguese, and, more recently, between 2019b and 2022, four Brazilian editions. However, as shown in the thorough research conducted by Nazir Can, João Paulo Borges Coelho’s books have piqued a high level of interest on the part of academic critics over the last decade, mostly in Portugal and Brazil. Nevertheless, “there is still much to be discovered about JPBC’s artistic work and the place it occupies in the social and intellectual field in Mozambique” (Can 2017, 44). Therefore, one can easily observe that Coetzee is a writer whose career transcends all political and social boundaries; he is a truly global writer. In my view, it makes his work and his person progressively less analyzed and contextualized in relation to his area of origin. One can venture

the observation that the reception and interpretation of Coetzee's work, both at the critical and popular levels, is arbitrarily centripetal (with its center being the center of the world-system.). To counter this, in keeping with the same terminology, Borges Coelho's work could be called unintentionally centrifugal. A body of work that, despite its undoubted quality, being acclaimed by academic critics, still does not attract much interest from translators and publishers outside Mozambique and Portugal. Can, in the aforementioned essay on the critical reception of the author's work, concludes that

[. . .] being one of the richest in the Portuguese language in terms of intertextuality—a dimension rarely called upon by critics, since, I believe, it fundamentally harbors a dialogue with texts and authors from other languages—, also aiming to occupy spaces (thematic, formal and critical) hitherto lacking in Mozambican literature, the work of JPBC is today one of the most fertile and demanding in Portuguese-speaking literary spaces. (Can 2017, 44)

An attentive reader will easily notice that this description could also be applied to Coetzee's work, with intertextuality also being a well-known characteristic. Moreover, as I will argue, there are other commonalities between the writings of both authors.

At this point, however, it is imperative to question the reasons for this abysmal difference in the reception and dissemination of these writers' works. Naturally, linguistic and economic issues need to be carefully addressed. On one hand, English has become a *lingua franca*, which, *a priori*, facilitates access to the large markets at the center. On the other hand, South Africa's economic power and its semiperipheral position within the world-system must be taken into account, since it clearly is privileged in comparison to Mozambique's peripherality. However, in addition to the issues related to the workings of the publishing market, a factor of a more literary nature must be considered: the expectations and stereotypes that still dominate the reception of African literature, and the ways of responding to those expectations. Obviously, I am referring to what Julien (2006) calls an "extroverted African novel," or what Huggan (2001) defines as an "ethnographic" or "anthropological exotic" counterdiscourse. Nevertheless, it is easy to notice that, in their works, both Borges Coelho and Coetzee visibly depart from this trend, distancing themselves from the exoticizing elements of linguistic and literary content, as well as from collective voices and official discourses. This is part of the process of globalization of the English-speaking writer and, at the same time, a kind of market abandonment of the Portuguese-speaking one. On the other hand, however, it allows for the formulation of a problematizing ethical discourse, woven from a (semi-)peripheral standpoint. In their ethical projects, both writers allow themselves not to take a position

on any institutionalized political side (and, therefore, collective). They also promote a very peculiar critique through the fragmentation of collective positions, always paying attention to the representation of alterity. This kind of insistence on unearthing ambiguities in the midst of the positions taken can be easily observed in three thematic lines in the work of both writers: the problematization of the colonial past; the realms of postcoloniality; and the social alienation of the individual perpetuated by the State. The comparison of works by Borges Coelho and Coetzee can be thus contextualized as a proposal for a new sociopolitical narrative of Global South (semi-)peripheral spaces. In this analysis, I will problematize national or linguistic agendas, and focus on studying these literary representations within the world-system, always keeping in focus the fact that the system is characterized by “combined and uneven development” (WReC 2015).

When it comes to revisiting the colonial past, Coetzee’s *In the Heart of the Country* ([1977] 2014) and Borges Coelho’s *Rainhas da Noite (Night Queens)* (2013) reveal multiple common threads in the process of rewriting it. Both revisit national literary canons and use the white female character as the (new) key to understanding colonial society. Within the novels, both of them perform a similar immediate function at their respective times of publication: looking into the recent past for answers to solve some of the problems of today and filling the gaps in the collective memory and official national discourse.

Borges Coelho’s novel opens with the “Prologue,” and it is precisely in these opening pages that one finds a kind of statement regarding the framing of the narrative, both in terms of its formal construction and its cultural embedding, articulated through particular references to the “monuments” of Mozambican literary culture. It is in the prologue that the narrator, in search of an old edition of *Ilha de Próspero (Prospero’s Island)* by Rui Knopfli³ receives “a regular-looking notebook”⁴ (Borges Coelho 2013, 18), which turns out to be the diary of a Portuguese woman in which she reports the daily life of her stay in Moatize at the end of the colonial period. Already, through this confrontation between two texts, a shift in the space of interest/memory is announced. That is, while Knopfli’s book represents, both in literary and geographical terms, a consecrated space in Mozambican history and memory—Ilha de Moçambique (Mozambique Island)—the diary’s text concentrates on the narrator’s interest in another space (geographical and temporal). The location is one of the small settler communities in Tete, which through its limits and limitations, social and geographical, can easily be read as a space with insular characteristics. Once the narrator decides to turn the notebook into a book, he shares with the reader his first idea for the title: “Carvão” (“Coal”), inspired by the emblematic poem “Grito Negro” (“Black Shout”)⁵ by José Craveirinha,⁶ a canonical Mozambican poet. However, the

narrator gives up on this idea, as the purpose of the diary “was not reduced to denouncing racial or colonial relations, nor to talking about the coal mine” (Borges Coelho 2013, 26). It is evident that the intention is, once again, to move away from the consecrated place of Mozambican literature/culture in favor of discovering alternative places. This evocation of the two great pillars of Mozambican literature translates into a very clear statement in terms of the author’s personal literary influences or heritage. However, in the narrator/author’s refusal to use the Craveirinha-inspired title, one can interpret the refusal of a single and dominating discourse that is the founder and perpetuator of narratives based on the reductionist colonized-colonizer binomial. The renunciation of this title thus announces a possibility of expanding the identity matrix and filling the void left by the constant repetition of official discourse in national cultural expressions. In other words, the title “Carvão,” given to a text that does not correspond to the ideas expressed in the poem, would not only “betray the author’s intentions” (Borges Coelho 2013, 26), but also trivialize the importance of Craveirinha’s text. That being said, it is suggested that attempts to subjugate all possible narratives to a dominant narrative, established at a particular moment in history, turn out to be counterproductive.

In the case of *In the Heart of the Country*, this encounter with the South African literary tradition builds the entire basis for the process of problematizing colonial relations. By presenting a farm in the countryside, Coetzee creates an automatic reference to one of the most popular genres of South African prose, the *plaasroman*,⁷ or “farm novel.” Creating a network of references, the plot of the novel develops a game of mirrors with various elements that are typical of colonial period South African literature. The bucolic nature of the Boer, which justifies the presence of colonizers in the African territory and “holds up to the time of forefathers as an exemplary age when the garden of myth became actualized in history,” as Coetzee explains (1988, 4), is probably the element most clearly subverted throughout the plot, where one can observe a long and absolute decadence of pastoral life. The isolation and solitude of Magda, the protagonist and narrator, and her relationship with space, can easily be read as an allusion to another characteristic figure of white South African writing of English origin: that of the solitary poet engaging with the landscape: “[. . .] the lone poet in empty space is by no means a peripheral figure in South African writing. In the words he throws out to the landscape, in the echoes he listens for, he is seeking a dialogue with Africa, a reciprocity with Africa, that will allow him an identity better than that of visitor, stranger, transient” (8). By readapting these two literary genres, typical of the beginning of colonial literature in South Africa, Coetzee undoubtedly also bows to the antiutopian rural novel of female authorship from the end of the nineteenth century.

In this way, by framing *In the Heart of the Country* within a vast network of national literary references, Coetzee weaves a de-compositional narrative in which numerous elements that were part of the construction of South African (white) identity and legitimized its relationship with the land and its inhabitants are inverted, reconfigured, and called into question. The placement of these texts within their national referential webs performs several functions. Playing with the established forms of literary tradition(s) acts on a supertextual level as a proposal for the reconfiguration of power relations—even at the levels of cultural policies or the propagation of official discourse. The recycling of a literary scenario, filling the known form with content that deviates from the customary, allows for a deeper reflection on the distribution of power and the construction of discourses. In the case of two novels whose content aims to revise an oppressive past, this framing of form and referent is tied to national canons. The common element present in both novels is also a mimesis of the self-writing that places fiction in the field of mimetic memory. At the same time, it is also placed as an individual memory, a dialogic element in the process of supplementing the story. In the case of *Rainhas de Noite*, this type of writing is represented by the diary of the protagonist, Maria Eugénia, who portrays and comments on social and racial relations within the colonist community. The entire narrative is constructed as “a monologue moving through time” (Coetzee [1977] 2014, 77)—a set of ramblings, hallucinations, and confessions of the narrator-protagonist. By traversing time, she incorporates the entire process of construction and justification of white South African identity and the formation of its racial and class hierarchies. A crucial element is the key that the two writers choose to enter the intricacies of colonial society: colonial women. This choice, which appropriates the categories of gender and race, aims to show the new complexity of ancient stories, as it allows them to be told from the point of view of figures who “were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting” (McClintock 1995, 6). In this way, these pseudoautobiographical, or pseudodiarist narratives—mimetic memory monologues—unfold into stories about the territories of memory that, in turn, cover geographic, public, and domestic territories. They introduce an almost iconoclastic process with a *modus operandi* that is not only based on demystifying established narratives and telling an alternative (or complementary) version of the story, but also on the inclusion of new possible elements (spaces and bodies) that can participate in the construction of the vision of a nation upon itself and its new *topoi*.

A similar development, with the objective of giving nuance to the dichotomies and problematizing the process of political transition, can also be observed in the way the two writers construct the narratives that represent

the times of political transition in their respective countries, portrayed in the novels *Disgrace* (Coetzee [1999] 2000) and *Crónica da Rua 513.2* (*Chronicle of Street 513.2*) (Borges Coelho 2006). These two novels reveal themselves as texts that tend to focus on African contemporaneity, based on what Achille Mbembe (2001, 16) calls the “time of entanglement.” A phenomenon that is formulated as “an interlocking of presents, pasts, and futures that retain their depths of other presents, pasts, and futures, each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous ones” (16). In this sense, both Borges Coelho and Coetzee seem to focus their attention on showing the intersections between various modalities of the social and ideological construction of the nation. Moreover, they also focus on the impossibility of change as a linear concept of transformation that constitutes a cut and imposes the immediate implementation of a new model. It is possible to say that “the time of entanglement” is presented in these novels through the complicated relationships with the recent past and its interference in the present.

In *Crónica da Rua 513.2*, the entanglement of multiple temporal dimensions is formulated as the very basis of the narrative construction, “continually entering into polemics with the totalizing political visions highlighting the variety (and ambiguity) of views and conditions existing within the same history” (Can 2017, 57). In this way, through the superposition of settler characters (former residents) with the new Mozambican residents, the novel tells the story of one of Maputo’s streets, at the exact moment of transition. One can observe the intersections of nonlinear temporalities and transformations operated by them. The most direct representation of these intersections is precisely the presence of remnants of the past in the form of ghosts of the former residents and their relationships with the new ones. By relying on very clear binomials (e.g., the FRELIMO⁸ secretary who shares a house with the ghost of a PIDE⁹ agent), crossing various social layers, bringing together in a single street the most representative models of the citizens of the colony and the new country, Borges Coelho weaves analogies and highlights historical, political, and social (dis)continuities. Suppressing time and space, which allows the Portuguese to remain inside their old houses in the form of ghosts, he achieves a very poignant deconstruction of this type of relationship: as simple remnants of the past, the old residents completely lose any kind of privilege. They are no longer the ruling class; they are no longer able to make decisions about reality directly, be it for good or for bad. In other words, paradoxically, by ceasing to exist in a fully human way, they have the unique opportunity to experience human relationships with the new dwellers, and, logically, the new inhabitants get to know the personal, “homely” face of the former colonizers of their country. It is precisely in this framework that the old power relations are broken down and the new, different, but no less complex and revolting ones, are uncovered. One cannot fail to notice that there is meticulous work

done in the fundamental conditions of the colonial project that are being undone. The colonial agents are being stripped of what allowed them to maintain themselves in a superior position, and this is being done with the very particular objective of removing their ideological weight. This dynamic does not, at any time, aim to relativize the colonial period or excuse the actions of the Portuguese in Mozambique: this “punctual de-ideologization” and individualization of the previous Portuguese presence in the country allows historical and social continuities to be evoked in a clearer and more methodical way. In turn, it reveals the counterproductivity of the attempt to homogenize the time in which a new nation is being formed.

In the case of *Disgrace*, the complexity of the ways in which the past meets the present is represented through the unfolding of the protagonist, David Lurie, who plays various roles in social and private life: lover, teacher, father. Lurie is unable to combine these roles due to his inability to conform to the new times, mainly because of his peculiar lack of empathy. This fact is more blatant if one compares the protagonist’s attitudes towards sexual violence. Accused of sexual abuse against a Black student, he assumes that his abuse of power “rests on the rights of desire” (Coetzee [1999] 2000, 89), which prevents him from even considering the possibility of recognizing that it is a crime that is part of a “long history of exploitation” (Coetzee [1999] 2000, 53). When he finds himself in the position of father of a rape victim, Lurie cannot accept the decision of his daughter, raped by a group of Black men, to keep the matter private for the common good. Clearly, this is an extremely radical decision, dictated by a desire to mend the past, a decision that “[i]n another time, another place [. . .] might be held to a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not” (Coetzee [1999] 2000, 112). In opposition to Lucy’s stance towards violence, her father’s is “the closest we get to an expression from Lurie of discontent with the passing of apartheid and its benefits to the likes of him” (Attridge 2000, 105).

It is also noticeable that the evocation of the worldview rooted in times and ideologies that tend to be erased allows the narrative to explore the less “easy to sell” aspects of the nation-building process in the new South African nation. Unlike most nations, it is being formed not in opposition to another nation, but “in opposition between [the] present self and the past other” (Wilson 2001, 16).

In this context, the various unfoldings of the protagonist are configured precisely as this internal “other” of the nation, whose presence tends to be, if not erased, at least ignored. The insertion of this other within the narrative as a central figure seems to suggest that it is a superficial political and social movement. I do not interpret it as apartheid nostalgia, which, incidentally, does not appear either in Lurie or in the rest of the narrative. It suggests the past cannot completely be ignored, that it reveals itself in multiple aspects,

and that the present has to be built on the basis of complex responses to this intersectional past. In this context, both *Disgrace* and *Crónica da Rua 513.2* provide tools for reflection and for possible change. As Mbembe states, “to focus on time of entanglement was to repudiate not only linear models but the ignorance that they maintain and the extremism to which they have repeatedly given rise” (Mbembe 2001, 17).

While the two pairs of novels discussed so far represent concrete historical-political periods, the two remaining works, *Campo de Trânsito* (*Transitional Camp*) (Borges Coelho 2007) and *Life and Times of Michael K* (Coetzee [1983] 2004), expand the field of reflection by departing from a focus on the nation. The novels constitute a detailed sample of biopolitical mechanisms in which their protagonists, while living permanently under the rule of the “state of exception” and being isolated in concentration camps, are continuously subjected to multiple deployments of the processes of exclusion and devaluation of life. At the same time, they have their “bare life” permanently included by the machinery of the State. In this sense, the protagonists of the two novels, J. Mungau and Michael K, can easily be taken as the avatars of *homo sacer*—an obscure figure of Roman law taken up by Giorgio Agamben (1992) to analyze the biopolitical dynamics within the state of exception, in which “the order excluded and at the same time appropriated bare life” (Agamben 1998, 18). They are captured without having committed any crime, tried without knowing the charges, placed in a camp, not condemned to death, but at the same time constantly exposed to death, which can be inflicted by anyone and without being considered murderers.

Another important element that unites the two novels is a game between the local and the displaced, dribbling between various levels of historical and social references (or lack thereof) of the respective countries. It is precisely in this game that the main elements of the novels are revealed: allegory and politics. In the case of *Campo de Trânsito*, from the first pages one can see the effort to exclude the possibility of any type of concrete geographical identification of the spaces present in the diegesis. Throughout the plot, there is no direct reference that could place the setting in a defined geographical space, be it Mozambique or any other. However, it is not the absence of topographical references that is the most striking in this novel, but rather the absence of cultural and linguistic references. Borges Coelho carefully avoids the use of expressions and terms characteristic of the oral Portuguese of Mozambique, always opting for the most neutral form of the language, thus deceiving the reader at every step. It is clearly through this neutralization of geographic, temporal, and cultural frameworks that the author operates at the allegorical level of the narrative, giving it universal contours and framing it as a broader and more general critique of modern societies. However, given the fact that “as readers we are equipped with the prejudice that the space of the narrative

is the space of origin of the author” (Mendonça 2007), there is a tendency to interpret *Campo* within the space of Mozambican collective memory. This mainly equates the camps represented in the novel with the re-education camps that existed in Mozambique in the early years of independence. Imre Szeman states that this type of narrative “foregrounds (metacritically) the cultural/social situation of the reader of the text . . .” (Szeman 2001, 812). In this way, it is understood that the possibility of a localized interpretation of the novel comes from the relationship between the factual situation and the knowledge that the informed reader has about the history of independent Mozambique. Thus, perhaps the most viable localized interpretation is the one that is not directly related to the re-education camps, but to the set of social transformation policies introduced by FRELIMO. As I argue in an article (2020), the timelessness and topography of the text allow for the relocation of the situation described to other times and spaces. Borges Coelho’s text is not a generalized reflection on the human condition or the criticism of a decontextualized Mozambique, cut off from the map of world events. The mystery is revealed only at the moment when the two elements come together. That is, using the resource of the relocation of diegesis, the author manages to gradually reduce the field of vision in which the particular political processes occurring in his country of origin can be placed without losing the notion of universality of the story told.

In the case of *Life*, the situation is slightly different. Due to the fact that the novel makes topographical references, there is no doubt that it is set in South Africa. Furthermore, together with few but clear indications of race as an element that leads to social division and oppression within the narrative, there are no doubts that the time of the diegesis is under the apartheid regime, and that its atrocities are being denounced.

However, despite the absence of militancy or revolt on the part of the protagonist (and the other characters)—a lack that must have had a more immediate meaning in political terms at the time of the novel’s publication—the localized political side of the narrative can be found in the apparent moments it escapes from direct enunciation, being transferred to the private and hidden sphere. In other words, through the indirect form that translates into various allegorical configurations, Coetzee meticulously analyzes the local system of oppression and goes beyond the denunciation of atrocities committed during apartheid. The novel inscribes it in a scheme of deconstruction of the origins of the system and questions the most expected forms of resistance.

Michael’s constant refusal to recognize and, consequently, to oppose the oppressor, and the refusal to hand his story over to the oppressor—even if that could save him—can be read as a declaration of a very clear policy on the author’s part. Therefore, the silence of the Other, of the oppressed, reveals itself as a strength, not a weakness. It is a conscious choice of those

who choose the path of resistance, and not of those who have been silenced. And, I believe, resistance understood in this way is directed not only against the State as a political system and tool of oppression, but also against the discourses that make this oppression possible, of which the protagonist ends up being a victim. It is precisely this dual game between local and universal registers that allows the plot to address political issues of denunciation and social concern, simultaneously placing them within the more generalized perspective of the experience of human suffering.

The same game, when repeated at the critical level, as an analytical tool and mode of interpretation, allows the reader to associate the (semi-)peripheral literary modalities and their languages of communication with their extraliterary contexts. From this “leveling work,” we see that, given local issues, the two authors establish a clear reciprocity in ways of reflection, ways of positioning themselves relative to history, politics, and society, and ways of underlining the inseparability of these elements. Taking into account the extraliterary differences in the writers’ receptions, my comparison between these two authors is driven by the desire to overcome the gap resulting from pre-established ways of reading and poor reception habits determined by market rules. That is, this work was based on two opposing vectors. The analysis of Coetzee’s work was “returned” to the African context by linking his reflection to the South African territory; on the other hand, in the case of Borges Coelho, the emphasis was placed on the originality of his voice, within the national context, proving that his literary reflection is far from being confined to the borders of the so-called Portuguese-speaking world.

What stands out most throughout this comparative reading is the fact that the novels present a kind of internal centrality, a criticism that comes from within. In other words, it is a matter of weaving the narrative from the point where the historical-political process is recognized entirely as its own, incorporated. In this way, the criticism developed and the change eventually proposed dialogue with or invert the intrinsically local and national elements. When reflecting on the power relations in force during multiple epochs, as well as on the effects that the historical distribution of power have on present-day societies, the two writers take internal reference points. The manifestations of this centrality impact several levels of the novels. By rethinking colonial history and its role in the present, national literary canons are challenged with highlighting the vivacity and creativity of transforming the national body, that is, the ability to bring about change from within. When establishing the critique of postcolonial times, the two authors incorporate in their reflection the elements rejected by the official discourses of nation-states, highlighting the dangers of these omissions and embarking on the process of demystification and demythologization of the utopian characteristics of national projects. Finally, by addressing issues as universal as

the dynamics of biopolitics, the authors develop the narratives from a broad perspective that establishes the connection between local elements and their dialogue with the global dimension. This is achieved through the gaze of the autonomous intelligentsia, which marks a very clear political vision, but at the same time never commits itself to the official policies of their respective States. On the contrary, it always puts them in question.

Through a theoretical perspective that starts from the principle of unity in the world-system and focuses on (semi-)peripheral territories, my comparative analysis permits a different interpretation of literary texts from the Global South, writing that allows commentary on the world from Africa and with Africa as a point of reference, without explaining or describing it. It is writing that, by making Africa both the center of enunciation and the referent, manages to elevate it to the same level as any other part of the world. By narrating about Africa, these authors comment on the world.

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NOTES

1. Grant #2020/03902–9, São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP).
2. See Hollington (2018).
3. Rui Knopfli (1932–1997) was a Luso-Mozambican poet. *A Ilha do Próspero (Prospero’s Island)* (1972) is a book of poems and photographs that pays homage to the Island of Mozambique.
4. All the translations from Portuguese are mine.
5. See *Karingana Ua Karingana* (1982).

6. José Craveirinha (1922–2003) was a Mozambican poet, writer, and journalist, considered today to be the greatest poet of Mozambique.

7. Type of Afrikaans novel that “concerned itself almost exclusively with the farm and platteland (rural society) and with the Afrikaner’s painful transition from farmer to townsman” (Coetzee 1988, 63).

8. Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Mozambique Liberation Front), founded in 1962 as a nationalist movement fighting for independence. It has been the ruling party since 1975.

9. Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado Novo (International and State Defense Police), a Portuguese security agency that existed during the Estado Novo regime.

Afterword

In 2021, South Africa's former first lady and Mozambican humanitarian Graça Machel (b. 1945), speaking at a memorial service for "South Africa's moral conscience," the antiapartheid human rights activist Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1931–2021), reflected on his work towards African democracy, which led him to speak out against his country's ally, the conservative Mozambican militant organization RENAMO, during that country's bloody Sixteen Years' War (discussed in this volume). Tutu's passing marked the end of an era in African thought and leadership but also a new beginning. Machel reflected on what, she specified, was an exemplary life, a true gift to humanity. She proposed that future generations take inspiration from Tutu's legacy by working to tear down the walls that separate us:

Ever since he left, the reflection is, what now? Personally, who do I turn to? The question we have now is, there is no apartheid institutionalized . . . but we do have our own worlds which are separating us, in this country, on the continent, in the world. There are walls which are separating us as human beings, and we get used to liv[ing] with them. . . . We know, we talk, but we don't feel the responsibility of [it] being "I" and "you" to remove those walls. . . . We celebrate, we all are celebrating, but I want to add something, let's take inspiration . . . because with that goodness he taught me—and I'm sharing with you—which exists in each one of us here, if we really bring up that goodness in thousands, in millions . . . we have the capacity to remove the walls. (Machel 2021)

In a metaphorical sense, we imagine that this volume "knocks" tiny holes in the wall between South Africa and the Lusophone world. We no longer face the question of *what* world literature is but, instead, *how* to study it (Moretti 2000), and the chapters gathered in this collection, each employing different intellectual perspectives, have located some of the cultural and literary connections between South Africa and Portuguese-speaking countries. These chapters combined theory and methodology in a way that challenges hegemonic views, usually imposed from the Global North, that are employed to study literatures written in so-called periphery countries. In this sense, the chapters of this volume have demonstrated *how* to study world literature

today. Each chapter has contributed to current debates on the theories and methodologies of comparative literature as well as to Global South literary criticism, demonstrating the similarities and diversity of aesthetic and politically-charged writing from this region. Evidently, this approach is still at the beginning of its journey, with yet unexplored subdivisions in methodology and theory that will contribute to future research on similar issues. We wish for South Africa and the Lusophone world to continue working to understand one another and build a better future. Let us tear down the walls!

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