

**Disencounters with *Africa* in the Portuguese language:  
Postcolonial literature and theory in the Portuguese *postempire***

De Portugese taal komt *Afrika* tegen:  
Postkoloniale literatuur en theorie in de Portugese *postempire*

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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Patricia Schor

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Promotor: Prof.dr. P.R. de Medeiros

# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Outline of the argument.....	8
Aims, method and contribution.....	9
Corpus.....	12
Cultural-historical background.....	15
The Portuguese language in the Portuguese imaginary.....	15
Africa in the Portuguese imaginary.....	21
Realm of theory.....	23
The <i>postempire</i> : racelessness and gendered anti-blackness.....	23
The postcolonial canon.....	30
Structure of the dissertation.....	32
<b>Section I.</b>	
<b>Postcolonial theories on Portuguese colonialism: <i>vigilant inhabitations</i>.....</b>	<b>34</b>
Introduction to the Section.....	35
Chapter 1. Situating Portuguese colonialism.....	36
Chapter 2. Postcolonial translation.....	55
Chapter 3. Cognitive justice.....	76
Chapter 4. Colonial violence.....	81
Chapter 5. The racial element.....	91
Chapter 6. Community of the unhomely.....	100
Chapter 7. Hospitality in language.....	106
Conclusions to the Section.....	115

## Section II.

### Postcolonial literature on Portuguese colonialism: *(in)hospitable homelands* ..... 118

Introduction to the Section..... 119

#### Chapter 8. Mia Couto's *O Último Voo do Flamingo*:

*linguagens* (dis)continuing coloniality ..... 121

Introduction..... 121

Linguistic transformation ..... 123

Displaced narrative ..... 130

Conceptions of language ..... 132

Conceptions *against* location ..... 140

Concluding remarks: emerging & submerging in the *contact zone* ..... 145

#### Chapter 9. José Eduardo Agualusa (dis)locating the Portuguese language:

*O Vendedor de Passados* trespasses the border..... 147

Introduction..... 147

Linguistic trade ..... 149

Narrative as ambiance of truth ..... 150

Conceptions of language ..... 151

Concluding remarks: common home within a bottle ..... 173

#### Chapter 10. António Lobo Antunes *after* language in the entrails of the postempire:

*O Esplendor de Portugal* ..... 177

Introduction..... 177

Narrative ..... 180

Conceptions of language ..... 185

Location: centre-home ..... 215

Cultural translation - voice..... 219

Concluding remarks:

Language conquest & occupation – the frontier of representation ..... 229

Conclusions to the Section ..... 232

### General Conclusions ..... 238

## Appendix.

Postcolonial translation studies: *translation stripped of innocence* ..... 248

Bibliography ..... 265

Summary ..... 285

Samenvatting ..... 286

Curriculum Vitae ..... 287

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# Introduction

Critique is witnessing as well as endless vigilance, interrogation and anticipation. A proper critique requires us first to dwell in the chaos of the night in order precisely to better break through into the dazzling light of the day. (Mbembe 2015a)<sup>1</sup>

## Outline of the argument

Portugal was the heir of a vast and long-lasting colonial empire stretching from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries, and encompassing territorial possessions in Africa, Asia and the Americas. In Africa, the last phase of this long-lasting period was characterised by imperial decadence amidst concerted efforts to sustain imperial rule in the Portuguese colonies. In 1975 Portugal lost its territorial claims to African countries by recognising the independence of its former colonies in the continent. Portugal's thirteen-year *colonial war* against those independence struggles was of fundamental importance for undermining the forty-eight-year Portuguese dictatorial regime of the *Estado Novo* (New State). This process contributed to the *Revolução dos Cravos* (Carnation Revolution) of April 25, 1974 and the restoration of democracy in the country.

With these momentous changes, the Portuguese language—rather than property or control of land—was turned into *the* trope whereby the empire was to be given continuity in the narratives of national identity. The imagination of Portuguese colonialism as the harmonious *encounter* with *Africa* (its *black other*) served as the basis for the construction of an alleged fraternal space of conviviality between the former metropolitan centre and former colonies around the Portuguese language. This construct typifies Portuguese imperial exceptionality, which still has a strong hold on national imagination. Postcolonial Literature and Theory on Portuguese colonialism and its aftermath, which both perform and problematize this *encounter*, attempt to question such narratives but also harbour their own reflections on/around the trope of language.<sup>2</sup>

This dissertation sets out to analyse narratives centred on the *encounter* with *Africa* (that is an imagined terrain) in and through the Portuguese language in the fields of Postcolonial Theory and Literature. I will be looking for continuities and discontinuities (or ruptures) with the imperial imagination. I will scrutinise the associations between the Portuguese language, nation and empire as they emerge in these fields in old and new ways. I will be looking in particular for the (dis)continuous exoticisation of Africa and Africans, their (in)visibilization, and the rhetorical habit of approaching Portuguese colonialism without mentioning its gendered and racialised violent foundations.

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<sup>1</sup> Achille Mbembe's new preface to the African reprint of *On the Postcolony*. Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2015b), 274.

<sup>2</sup> For the sake of simplicity and readability I am adopting the terms Literature and Theory in the singular. However both refer to several theories and literatures. Besides readability, I am opting for the singular terms in order to highlight the problematic grouping of such (national) literatures and theories from postempire and postcolonies in one single canon. The constitution of this postcolonial canon will itself be objected to scrutiny within the dissertation.

In this Introduction, I will briefly indicate the method that orients the research, its aims and contribution to the academic field of Postcolonial Studies in Portugal, and its situatedness in Portuguese Cultural Studies. I will present the choice of the corpus of postcolonial theories and literary texts that will be the object of analysis in the dissertation. I will then locate this research within the cultural historical context of narratives on the Portuguese language in the Portuguese national imagination, and of the gendered and racialised (re)presentation of Africa in the same realm. I will lay down the main theoretical concepts that position this research in the field, namely *the postempire* and the *postcolonial canon*. Finally, I will guide the reader through the chapters of the dissertation.

## Aims, method and contribution

I want to suggest a different metaphor for theoretical work: the metaphor of struggle, of wrestling with the angels. The only theory worth having is that which you have to fight off, not that which you speak with profound fluency. (Hall 1992, 280)

This study belongs in the broad field of Cultural Studies, and more narrowly to Postcolonial criticism. Here I follow Bart Moore-Gilbert's definition:

[P]ostcolonial criticism can still be seen as a more or less distinct set of reading practices, if it is understood as preoccupied principally with analysis of cultural forms which mediate, challenge or reflect upon the relations of domination and subordination --economic, cultural and political-- between (and often within) nations, races or cultures, which characteristically have their roots in the history of modern European colonialism and imperialism and which, equally characteristically, continue to be apparent in the present era of neocolonialism. (Moore-Gilbert 1997, 12)

In the last three decades, the Postcolonial field, itself a highly disputed gathering of theories, evolved through strong contestation from both the inside and the outside for reproducing the very (colonial) dynamics that it critically analyses.<sup>3</sup> I am grounding this study in the postcolonial domain in order to bring to light the ways the dynamic between incorporation, contestation or escape from (neo)colonialism and neo-liberal capitalism emerge in literature and theory. The paradoxical character of the field is well encapsulated by Graham Huggan in the theme of *the postcolonial exotic*:

[It] marks the intersection between contending regimes of value: one regime—postcolonialism—that posits itself as anti-colonial, and that works toward the dissolution of imperial epistemologies and institutional structures; and another—postcoloniality—that is more closely tied to the global market, and that capitalises both on the widespread circulation of ideas about cultural otherness and on the worldwide trafficking of culturally “othered” artifacts and goods. (Huggan 2001, 28)

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<sup>3</sup> There is an array of important criticism to Postcolonial Studies that this study will not cover. I only point here to two critical texts which had great resonance in the field, namely: Ella Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'," *Social Text*, no. 31/32 (1992), 99-113.; and Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism," *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 2, Winter (1994), 328-356. These will be dealt with in the following section of this dissertation.

Huggan posits that “postcolonialism *is bound up* with coloniality” (6) and must interrogate its own position in the global capitalist structure within which it operates.<sup>4</sup> The analysis that I will carry out will seek the moments of each of these regimes in the postcolonial grammar. I will argue for vigilance about the fact that the field is inscribed in neo-liberal capitalism and neocolonialism, which over-determines most of its possibilities. My aim hereby is critical engagement and intervention in the field of Postcolonial Studies that, in Portugal, is located within Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies.<sup>5</sup> This study contributes as well to the associated domain of Luso-Afro-Brazilian Studies, which analyses the entanglements prompted by Portuguese imperial colonialism with Brazil and African countries, giving particular attention to African Diasporas.

This is a politically informed study hosted in dialogue between the Humanities and Social Sciences, in the interdisciplinary, self-reflexive and engaged—*worldly* (after Said) or *dirty*—tradition of Cultural Studies indebted to Stuart Hall.<sup>6</sup> This critical perspective or project is attentive to theory as politics and to the politics of theory, i.e. to the production of critical knowledge—intellectual and theoretical work—as a political practice, and of the need to reflect on our own institutional position and intellectual practice (Hall 1992). Borrowing from bell hooks, this project demands awareness of the silences it imposes on “certain kinds of people” as a consequence of its ignorance of issues of gender, race and class, playing out in its very discipline, and the danger that it “appropriat[es] issues of race, gender, and sexual practice, and then continu[es] to hurt and wound in that politics of domination” (hooks quoted in Hall 1992, 294).

Postcolonial Studies on Portuguese colonialism offer an array of critical approaches to texts, artifacts and imaginations in the Portuguese language. Following this tradition of inquiry, the realm of the Portuguese language as a space of relations between Portugal and former Portuguese colonies—*Lusofonia* (Lusophony)—will be analysed in this

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<sup>4</sup> Analysis of coloniality relies mainly on Latin American(ist) criticism of modernity and globalisation. This trend of thought evidences the current continuities with structures of power established by European colonialism after its demise as a political system. (Anibal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, Maria Lugones and Walter Dignolo, among others). The concept of coloniality coined by Anibal Quijano is at the core of these reflections (Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2010), 168-178.). I will elaborate on important Decolonial insights to Postcolonial criticism in the first section of this dissertation.

<sup>5</sup> For a teasing out of the debate on the relation between Cultural Studies and Portuguese Studies and their political role, see: Paulo de Medeiros, “What’s Left? Portuguese Cultural Studies,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 39, no. 2 (2002), 1-3.

<sup>6</sup> Postcolonial Studies invite such interdisciplinarity, for it addresses cultural dynamics, objects and meanings within a consideration of their position in power configurations inherited from colonialism. This study enters the terrain of more than one academic discipline, approaching a wide range of topics such as national representations, cultural translation and cognitive justice, with a consideration of gender and race. The risk I am undertaking hereby is that this research will not explore in depth the traditions and corpus of each of the disciplines where these topics are grounded. I will rather tease out those topics that are productive for analysing the expressions of imperial (dis)continuities in the field of Postcolonial Studies on Portuguese colonialism. The consequence is that lacks and absences are inscribed in this work. I am willing to take this risk for the possibilities that emerge out of crossing disciplines and engaging in criticism. This type of academic query entails the “speculative thinking” (after Lawrence Venuti) that brings to the fore reflections on cultural, ethical and political issues. Lawrence Venuti, “Translating Derrida on Translation: Relevance and Disciplinary Resistance,” *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 16, no. 2 (2003), 249.

dissertation as a terrain crossed by power asymmetry, and moreover as a racialised and gendered terrain. The representation of this terrain as one of *encounter* hides such power relations. This (forceful) hiding will be questioned throughout the dissertation. This perspective informed the choice of corpus—canonical writers and theorists—which highlights the selectiveness of the Postcolonial field and the struggles taking place within it.

The dissertation will start with analysis of Postcolonial Theory, which focuses on productive tropes and metaphors and their historical meanings in the field. An analysis of Postcolonial Literature will follow. I have chosen to explore literary texts for they offer “a groundedness in the text, a sort of integrity” that requires close reading and careful analysis and enables “taking terms from literature to be introduced into critical thought” (Apter 2011a). This reading of literary texts in their literary quality and theoretical inclination is dear to postcolonial criticism. It gives fruition to the richness of metaphors that literature offers, as well as their meanings, from the gaze of postcolonial criticism. Specifically, I will excavate how exoticism (understood as gendered and racialised alterity) is coded and/or decoded in the text of theory and literature under the name of *Africa*.

Altogether, this research entails a critical analysis of the narratives of the Portuguese language in sites of postcolonial *encounter* with *Africa* in contemporary Portugal. This analysis will be informed by a postcolonial questioning of the ideology attached to these concepts. The analysis will entail scrutiny of the main tropes and metaphors adopted to reflect on the Portuguese language vis-à-vis the empire, namely notions of centrality, the border and violence.

The originality of this study lies in tracing the imperial hauntings in the Portuguese postcolonial field through naming the taboo and therefore unspeakable (female) phantom of race in its textual apparitions. Such *tracking and tracing* is gaining (more) currency in the postcolonial field, however race remains grossly unspeakable – with notable exceptions. The incipient postcolonial critique in Portugal exists in the context of a society swept by nostalgia about empire (and totalitarianism), which reveals “its own still unproblematized relation to the nation’s recent imperial and colonial past” (Medeiros 2011b, 195). The overreliance on the Portuguese language and the imagination of Africa as the location of the Portuguese postcolonial query operates the unspeakability and invisibility of race.

My contribution to Postcolonial Studies on Portuguese colonialism is therefore a systematic tracing of this haunting in the narratives on the Portuguese language as a *space of encounter*. The questions guiding this study are: How is the colonial (dis)encounter with *Africa* theorised in its associations with the Portuguese language? How do language metaphors perform and problematize this (dis)encounter? How do these reflections and metaphors open up and/or fixate an imperial imagination? This critical analysis sheds light into the colonial phantom of race that is the (female) black other—*Africa*—and identifies emergencies in theory and literature that give her protagonism. Following Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2000c), my aim is to indicate

respectively “uma *carência*, uma *tendência*, e uma *latência*” (“a *lack*, a *tendency* and a *latency*”) in Postcolonial theory and literature.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, this study establishes a dialogue between postcolonial criticism in the realm of Portuguese colonialism with postcolonial criticism in the realm of other European empires. This dialogue highlights the fact that these fields of inquiry have not evolved in isolation but rather in continuous conversation. However this dialogue is not always acknowledged, whereby Postcolonial Studies have tended to privilege analyses on the British empire. This chosen location “often leaves out the Americas (notably the Caribbean), as well as most of North and Sub-Saharan Africa” and “posit[s] the Enlightenment, rather than the inception of Spanish and Portuguese colonial domination in Africa, Asia and the Americas, as the chronological terminus of modernity” (Madureira 2008, 136). It produces therefore historical, epistemological and geographical absences and ignores certain subjects of colonialism. On the other hand, this dialogue is often undesired too, i.e. found improper in Postcolonial criticism to Portuguese colonialism. This position derives from a settlement in *the difference of Portuguese colonialism*, which would allegedly turn it into a historical fact (and resilience) beyond compare. It is nevertheless critical to recover these histories into the genealogy of colonialism and postcolonial critique in order to better grasp its enduring heritage in the afterlife of slavery. By foregrounding the uses and meanings of postcolonial critique on Portuguese colonialism I am also adding to the body of postcolonial literatures and theories from other geographies that aims to enlarge Postcolonial criticism to include *other* imaginations.

## Corpus

The research corpus of this study is made of texts produced by the individuals who have defined the critical realm of postcolonial theory and literature in Portugal. It includes: 1) academic literature produced by the most influential scholars on Postcolonial theories on the Portuguese empire; and 2) literary texts and commentary of two renowned African writers and one Portuguese writer who make the canon of Postcolonial literature on the Portuguese empire.

In the realm of postcolonial literature, this dissertation will analyse the writings from the late 1990s until the early 2000s. In the realm of postcolonial theory, most texts under scrutiny here were written from 2000 to 2015. This is the period when the postcolonial query has flourished in Portuguese academia and established itself as an autonomous cultural and literary field. At the same time this is the period of effervescence of an otherwise always-present query in Portugal about its place in the world between Europe and the Atlantic, following its joining the European Union (1986)<sup>8</sup> and the institution of the *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa* (*Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries*) (1996), comprising countries in

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<sup>7</sup> Unless otherwise mentioned, all translations are mine.

<sup>8</sup> Portugal joined the European Economic Community in 1986, which would later turn into the European Community, and was incorporated into the European Union.

Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia.<sup>9</sup> These events had great impact in the query on nationhood and the empire associated with the Portuguese language in the years and decades that followed. This geopolitics plays out and informs the questioning taking place within the Postcolonial realm.

In the field of Postcolonial Theory, I will begin the analysis with the writings of Boaventura de Sousa Santos, who is the scholar at the forefront of this theorization. Santos is a postcolonial scholar of unmatched prestige in Portugal and internationally. He wrote both on Portuguese colonialism and its aftermath and developed theory on social change enacted by peripheral subjects in peripheral world regions. While his theory on Portuguese colonialism and its aftermath had a great influence in the field, his theories on social change had even greater (international) resonance. Santos' reflections have echoed both in academia and the wider Portuguese society. Further, I will highlight the writings of other postcolonial scholars who make the authoritative canon of Postcolonial Studies in Portugal—those that Ingemai Larsen (2009) terms *the Portuguese-speaking* or *Lusophone postcolonialists*. This canon is primarily male and almost exclusively non-black. Rather than providing an overview of the field, I will dedicate critical attention to these scholars' writing on postcolonial topics (in dialogue with postcolonial critique from other shores) that address and problematize the (post)colonial entanglement with Africa. Exploration of the tropes and metaphoric tools employed by these scholars will allow the residues of the empire and postcolonial emergences to be revealed, in particular in the narratives of the Portuguese language.

In the field of Postcolonial Literature, I selected three writers and focused the analyses on three of their novels and their public opinions on the same query on language, nation and the Portuguese empire in Africa. I selected one author from Mozambique, one from Angola and one from Portugal in order to express the postcolonial *encounter* with *Africa* that is both enacted and problematized from these three different *locations*. They stand here as exemplary for the African postcolonies and the Portuguese postempire. This section of the dissertation (also) does not aim to give an overview of postcolonial literature in Portuguese. Rather, it explores selected texts of selected authors that make the postcolonial canon in Portugal. As in the analysis of postcolonial theory, scrutiny of the metaphors employed by these writers through their texts will facilitate an unearthing of the residues of the empire and postcolonial emergences, in particular in the narratives of the Portuguese language.

African fiction written in Portuguese problematizes the centrality of the empire in the construction of postcolonial identities. This query is indebted to African anticolonial literature in the former Portuguese colonies in dialogue with other anticolonial struggles. Mainly Angolan, Mozambican and Cape Verdean authors have a “highly developed consideration” of questions of high currency in postcolonial criticism (Fonseca 2007, 46). In the Postcolonial field in Portugal, Angola and Mozambique have a privileged position in comparison to other African former colonies. Within this

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<sup>9</sup> The original members of the *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa* (CPLP) are: Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and São Tomé and Príncipe. In 2002 East Timor became a member, after its independence from Indonesia. In 2014 Equatorial Guinea became a member, but not without public criticism, due to its appalling human rights record and the insignificance of the Portuguese language in that country. The head office of the CPLP is located in Lisbon.

terrain, the Mozambican Mia Couto and the Angolan José Eduardo Agualusa are the most prominent of such African writers who have been problematizing Portuguese colonialism and its current resiliencies. Within Portuguese literature, Lobo Antunes (together with Lídia Jorge) represents and problematizes the insidious and resilient denied/silenced problems of race in Portuguese colonial history and contemporary society (Medeiros 2008). Their writing is indebted to the “anti-canonical questions of margin and center, high and low, elite and popular culture [which] were posed with particular intensity in the immediate post-revolutionary context of the literary debate” (Owen 2002, 5). *African decolonisation* was one of the salient topics of this query that emerged out of the policed spaces of resistance to the *Estado Novo*, with the demise of state censorship.<sup>10</sup>

Mia Couto, José Eduardo Agualusa and António Lobo Antunes make therefore the canon of postcolonial literature in Portuguese. They are the most studied, read and awarded authors that thematise Portuguese colonialism in Africa and its afterlife. Their oeuvre is greatly influential for thinking about the Portuguese empire at current times. There has been consistent attention in Portugal for novels written by female writers on Portuguese colonialism, mainly by Paulina Chiziane (Mozambique) and Lídia Jorge (Portugal). Still, the bulk of secondary literature and in particular that which approaches these texts through a postcolonial lenses focuses on the postcolonial non-black male triad: Couto, Agualusa and Antunes.

The three novels that will be the object of analysis in the section on Postcolonial Literature either thematise language explicitly or offer a richness of metaphors that enable such thematisation within a broader reflection on the Portuguese empire in Africa, and its contemporary debris in former colonies and the former metropolitan centre. They take place just before or in the aftermath of imperial demise in Africa. *O Último Voo do Flamingo* (2000) by Mia Couto takes place in current Mozambique and highlights the problematic entanglements of that postcolony with *the West*. *O Vendedor de Passados* (2004b) by José Eduardo Agualusa takes place in current Angola in the place of *encounter* of Angola, Brazil and Portugal. *O Esplendor de Portugal* (1997d) by António Lobo Antunes takes place in Portugal and Angola in the period between the final days of the empire until the present day.

It is unavoidable and essential to identify the traces of gender and race hierarchy in the selected realm of the postcolonial literary and theoretical canon in Portugal. Said traces are consistently overlooked in the postcolonial analyses that aim to detect and question these very imperial continuities. Focus on the writings and public opinions of postcolonial canonical figures will also attend to and problematize this position. Their writings establish a symbolic dialogue with the hegemonic narrative of the Portuguese language, confirming its canonical condition. The texts chosen—academic, literary and opinion pieces—represent and perform the encounter between Portugal and Africa. They are *implicated objects* (alluding to Michael Rothberg’s terminology) for they tell the story of the Portuguese empire and its aftermath in different geographies and play a role of (to different extents subversive) heirs to the imperial imagination. These

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<sup>10</sup> All the national literatures to which I am referring have nevertheless a rich and complex genealogy far beyond the one I am highlighting. However, their examination is beyond the scope of this study.

ambiguous dynamics of settlement in the imperial centre and its overcoming requires an analysis devoid of naivety, which will permeate this dissertation.

## Cultural-historical background

The point of departure of this dissertation and thus the context within which it must be placed is the history of the narratives of the Portuguese language and of Africa linked to empire and nation in Portugal.

### The Portuguese language in the Portuguese imaginary

The Portuguese language had a marginal role in the conduct of Portuguese imperial colonialism in Africa. The language was purposefully relegated to the margins as the African colonial subject was deemed object of manual labour, apt for enslavement. Proficiency in Portuguese became however, or rather therefore, a requirement for citizenship and for the status of civilised person in the late phase of the Portuguese empire in Africa. At the time that Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe achieved independence, illiteracy in Portuguese was the rule in these new nation-states. Yet, the language, which has occupied a fundamental role in the narratives of Portuguese national identity, was then turned into the cultural motor of the imagined space of *encounter* between former metropolis and former empire (the *Lusofonia*). The *postcolonial encounter* reasserts and disturbs important conceptions of the Portuguese language that have been articulated and had high currency in Portugal at the beginning of the twentieth century. These conceptions were marked by the perception of the loss of imperial hegemony and the denigration of the image of Portugal as imperial heir in the aftermath of the forceful retreat from African areas claimed by the Portuguese, as a response to British demand (the 1890 British Ultimatum).

I will briefly introduce selective narratives on the Portuguese empire, nation and language of the beginnings of the twentieth century, namely *Renascença Portuguesa* (Portuguese Renaissance), *Filosofia Portuguesa* (Portuguese Philosophy) and *Modernismo* (Modernism), through the *Lusotropicalismo* of the last decades of Portuguese colonialism in Africa until the *Revolução dos Cravos*, and the surfacing of anticolonial criticism.<sup>11</sup> In all the cultural traditions that follow, a language narrative

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<sup>11</sup> It is beyond the scope of this research to make a comprehensive historical overview of all the cultural traditions that shaped the imagination of the Portuguese language. The study will instead identify twentieth century influences relevant to contemporary narratives. This period is important for this research for, as argued, it is marked by the decadence of Portuguese imperial rule in Africa. A thorough investigation of language narratives should look further into the past, including names and movements such as from the 1820s, with Almeida Garret's ideas on the Portuguese language and the untranslatability of particular terms in times of crisis; and the *Geração de 1870* (Generation of 1870) for their profound questioning of Portuguese identity and its perceived peripheral condition and the language aspect of this inquiry. Moreover, all narratives on the Portuguese nation, empire and language resonate the founding text of empire that is Luis Vaz de Camões' *Os Lusíadas* (1572) (The Lusiads), which narrates the *Voyages* of Portuguese *Discovery* in epic fashion. Calafate Ribeiro posits that, in *Os Lusíadas*, Portugal is depicted as God's chosen land with a pioneering role as mediator between worlds. Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, "Empire, Colonial Wars and Post-Colonialism in the Portuguese Contemporary Imagination," *Portuguese Studies* 18 (2002a), 137-142.

gains shape within a broader typology of the Portuguese linked to empire. These narratives resonate in the imagination of the Portuguese language in the current *postcolonial encounter* that gained prominence in the context of joining the EU and of the institution of the CPLP. The utterance of these narratives by authoritative voices and their recurrence establish them as part of the settled common sense of the national imaginary.

Awareness of this cultural heritage will support an understanding of the tropes and metaphors associated with the Portuguese language in the postcolonial field. The chapters of the dissertation will problematize the centrality of Portugal in the narratives of the *encounter* associated with the Portuguese language. Hereby I will critically unravel the negotiations established by postcolonial literature and theory with the hegemonic narrative of *Lusofonia*. This historical perspective allows a reflection on the continuities and reconfigurations, to use Feldman-Bianco's (2001) terminology, of the imperial into the *postempire*.

The *Renascença Portuguesa* was a cultural movement complementary to the revolutionary changes at the political sphere at the time, namely the institution of the Republic in 1910.<sup>12</sup> The writer Teixeira de Pascoaes presented in *Renascença Portuguesa* an influential narrative of imperial recovery, whereby language was synonymous with the professed personality of the Portuguese in its unique and exclusive fashion. For him, language was archetypal to "the Portuguese being" and its universalism, making it a precious and original good. These concepts, attached to the word *saudade* and its alleged all-encompassing meaning (missing, nostalgia), have a strong relation to what was perceived as the Portuguese role in the world, namely its imperial mission. Paramount to this concept is Pascoaes' conviction that *saudade* is exclusive, particular and original to the Portuguese imperial experience and especially to the experience of losing the greatness of empire. It is thus "purely Lusitanian." This was a holistic gaze to language as an equal to "the Portuguese spirit" (Samuel 1990). These concepts and mainly the Portuguese exclusivity of the word and feelings of *saudade* were subjected to debate within the major polemic of the movement, namely between Teixeira de Pascoaes and António Sérgio (in 1913 and 1914).<sup>13</sup> According to Sérgio, the conception that *saudade* is a word unique to the Portuguese language, therefore untranslatable, is old (he goes back to Almeida Garrett in the 1820s) but ungrounded, as it is the *Renascença's* new myth that *saudade* is exclusive to the universe of feelings of the Portuguese. He identifies in Portugal's isolationism the condition of emergence of *Saudosismo*.

*Filosofia Portuguesa* followed from the *Renascença Lusitana* strand of Teixeira de Pascoaes.<sup>14</sup> The *Filosofia* by António Quadros, literary scholar, writer and translator, elaborated and furthered Pascoaes' concept of *saudade*. The literary scholar and writer

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<sup>12</sup> *Renascença* housed a great heterogeneity of intellectuals and ideas, which gained evidence in the main polemics in its journal *A Águia*. Important names in this movement were Teixeira de Pascoaes, Leonardo Coimbra and Jaime Cortesão. Fernando Pessoa is also associated with the movement.

<sup>13</sup> See: José Gama, "A Polémica Saudosista: Teixeira de Pascoaes e António Sérgio," *Brotéria* 114 (1982), 185-193.

<sup>14</sup> *Filosofia's* main personality is Agostinho da Silva. It gained prominence through the production of individuals of renown in Portuguese culture, namely: Fernando Pessoa, Teixeira de Pascoaes, Leonardo Coimbra, Álvaro Ribeiro, Sampaio Bruno and António Quadros.

Onésimo Teotónio Almeida's (1985) contemporary criticism deconstructed its linguistic basis. He reveals the mythologies that became important references for narratives on the language, namely the conceptions that language conditions our whole view of reality, that languages are untranslatable and that personality is in a language. Similarly to the *Renascença*, *Filosofia* forwarded the conception of superiority of Portuguese culture reflected in the language. Language was here too identified as a carrier of what is unique and exclusive to "the Portuguese being." The empire is an important reference to this national universal character. Particularly on the belief in the untranslatability of the word *saudade*, it created roots in the Portuguese imaginary. It is one of the resilient myths about the Portuguese language, which ties to imperial exceptionalism, and narrates a longing for the lost empire.

In the late decades of Portuguese colonisation, from the 1950s on, *the Estado Novo* appropriated the Brazilian doctrine of *Lusotropicalismo* in an attempt to counter colonial criticism from within the colonies as well as from the outside.<sup>15</sup> This was however a highly nationalistic and simplified version of the Brazilian influential sociologist and writer Gilberto Freyre's doctrine. *Lusotropicalismo* had a great impact in Portuguese intellectual circles across the political spectrum (Castelo 1998) and, beyond Brazil, in some of the colonies in Africa too.<sup>16</sup> Freyre (1953b) argued that Portuguese colonisation was carried out through peaceful assimilation rather than violence. It entailed the dissemination of faith and culture. Friendly "*miscigenação*" (racial mixture) overruled domination in racial lines. Freyre posited that the Portuguese became successful in their colonial enterprise because they related to "tropical populations" even in very intimate ways, namely sexually. According to him this is illustrative of the genuine interest that Portugal had in "tropical people," which surpassed the purely commercial goals of typical European expansion. Further, Freyre posits that, besides civilising indigenous populations through Christianisation, the Portuguese also assimilated "tropical aspects" into their own culture and later transmitted such values into the wider European culture, contributing to a great improvement in habits and lifestyles. *Lusotropicalismo* gave emergence to a language narrative centred on the Portuguese heritage but appreciative of its "varied expressions." According to this conception, in its "universal quality," the Portuguese language is superior for it does not host a tendency to subsume difference into a uniform whole. This moral element that supposedly characterizes Portuguese culture is applied to the language too. This is a language with ecumenical qualities found in the values at the core of Portuguese culture and religion. It is a "language of Christianity" carrying a *mission civilisatrice*.

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<sup>15</sup> *Lusotropicalismo* conflates the Portuguese words *Luso*, meaning "of Portuguese origin," and *Tropicalismo*, meaning a doctrine or set of beliefs associated with "the tropics."

<sup>16</sup> The birth of Freyre's *Lusotropicalismo* is the publication of *Casa-grande & senzala* in 1933: Gilberto Freyre, *Casa Grande & Senzala*, 45<sup>th</sup> ed. (Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo: Record, 2001). It ends with the book *O Luso e o Trópico* in 1961, where the doctrine appears in its finished version: Gilberto Freyre, *O Luso e o Trópico: Sugestões em Torno dos Métodos Portugueses de Integração de Povos Autóctones e de Culturas Diferentes da Europeia num Complexo Novo de Civilização: O Luso-Tropical* (Lisbon: Comissão Executiva das Comemorações do V Centenário da Morte do Infante D. Henrique, 1961a). Both books have been published in English, see: Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization* [Casa-grande & senzala], trans. Samuel Putnam (New York: Knopf, 1946).; and Gilberto Freyre, *The Portuguese in the Tropics* [O Luso e o Trópico] (Lisbon: The Executive Committee for the Commemoration of the Vth Centenary of the Death of Prince Henry the Navigator, 1961b).

The law scholar, politician and critic Adriano Moreira was the main person responsible for narratives of *Lusotropical* inspiration in Portugal for half a century.<sup>17</sup> He relied on this universe of reference to elaborate the concept of multicultural “*espaços*” (spaces) where horizontal solidarity overcomes the hurdles of the colonial past, for the sake of the preservation of what he coined “a common heritage of Portuguese origin.” This concept traverses his ideas about a language community, which is centred on his “*Portugalidade*” (Portugueseness) (Moreira 1960). The term stood for “the Portuguese way to be in the world,” accompanied by the corresponding set of values and norms of behaviour. Valentin Alexandre (cited in Castelo 1998, 5-6) argues that the idea of Portugal’s particularity in its colonialism dates back to the eighteenth century and gains consistency in the 1800s. Omar Ribeiro Thomaz (2007) contends that *Lusotropicalismo* carries representations already settled in the mythology of the Portuguese spirit of conquest and its civilising mission. However, Alexandre (ibid.) denotes that the value *the Black and the Indian* gained with *Lusotropicalismo* (the natives’ contribution to culture and society of metropolitan making) made it a radically new set of ideas. The Portuguese language was instrumental in this construction for it is a “language of the people,” and a vehicle for the transmission of Lusitanian values (Moreira 1960; 1970). These ideas have had a great influence in shaping the Portuguese national imaginary until the current day.

The most notorious source of inspiration for contemporary narratives on the Portuguese language, in Portugal and beyond, is “*Minha patria é minha língua*” (“My nation is my language” or “My homeland is my language”) (Pessoa 1961, part 259). This phrase figured originally in *Livro do Desassossego* (*The Book of Disquiet*) authored by Fernando Pessoa’s heteronym Bernardo Soares. The Portuguese Modernist Pessoa, writer and (literary) critic, gives continuity to this spiritual revisitation of the empire carried out by *Renascença Portuguesa* and *Filosofia Portuguesa*.<sup>18</sup> Pessoa’s *Modernismo* is eminent in the unsettled character of his writing and his innovative poetic. He posthumously gained the status of icon of Portuguese language and culture. Most of his books were published after his death. Onésimo Teotónio Almeida (1987) argues that *Minha patria é minha língua* has been extensively quoted in the most different contexts, also to embellish political (nationalist) discourse. The literary critic, writer and Pessoa translator António Tabucchi follows and extrapolates this criticism, affirming that this phrase has been used as “uma marca dentrífica para conquistar o mercado” (Coelho 2000).<sup>19</sup> In fact Bernardo Soares’ utterance is followed by another one that evidently brings into question those nationalist interpretations, namely: “Nada

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<sup>17</sup> Adriano Moreira had an important role in attempting to change colonial practice to conform to *Lusotropical* rhetoric in his brief participation in the *Estado Novo*’s government as Minister of the Overseas (in 1959 as Sub-Secretary and in the period 1961-1963 as Minister). As Francisco Bethencourt states, it is mainly in Moreira’s writings that the *Estado Novo* regime’s ideological shift is noticeable towards a dialogue with *Lusotropicalismo* including its praise for ethnical (racial) miscegenation. Francisco Bethencourt, “A Memória da Expansão,” in *História da Expansão Portuguesa: Último Império e Recentramento (1930-1998)*, eds. Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti N. Chaudhuri, Vol. V (Lisbon: Circulo de Leitores, 1999), 444-480.

<sup>18</sup> In Portugal, besides Pessoa, Modernism is associated with Mário de Sá-Carneiro and Almada Negreiros, amongst others. *Modernismo*’s main vehicle was the journal *Orpheu*, first published in 1915. *Modernismo* is considered an umbrella for a great diversity of aesthetics and other vanguard movements.

<sup>19</sup> Transl.: “a toothpaste brand to conquer the market.”

me pesaria que invadissem ou tomassem Portugal, desde que não me incomodassem pessoalmente” (Pessoa 1961, part 259).<sup>20</sup>

After the demise of Portuguese colonialism in Africa, the Portuguese national imaginary kept its association with the empire, albeit a reshaped empire. While the *Lusotropical* narrative lived through this period of critical debate on nationhood, a whole range of anticolonial accounts broke into the public arena. The empire was problematized, namely in the field of literature and its criticism. Only later did this questioning reach the field of historiography as well (Bethencourt 1999). Alfredo Margarido, literary scholar, writer and artist, became one of the most prolific critics in Portugal on issues pertinent to Portuguese colonialism in Africa.<sup>21</sup> In approaching Angolan literature in Portuguese, Margarido (1980) argues that it is paramount to consider it within the context of colonial history, slavery, school deficit and scarce access to books. He posits that African languages had a low status during colonial rule—they were considered “*línguas de pretos*” (“*languages of blacks*”)<sup>22</sup>—but that Angolans had no incentives to learn Portuguese, facing instead punishment for trying to use it (381). Portuguese is then a language that carries the burden of this heritage, and is therefore a language of Portuguese ownership. For Margarido, transforming this language, in the fashion done by Brazil and Angola, represents a subversion of the norms of the oppressor.

This anticolonial perspective inspired later approaches to the language as a carrier of exclusionary politics. Narratives with such a strong anticolonial character had a marked influence in the national imaginary after the *Revolução dos Cravos*. Anticolonial criticism fed the public sphere up to the 1980s, when it lost prominence. Then a new nationalist discourse flourished, harboured in Europe. In the narratives that position Portugal in Europe, a dialogue is again established with the long lineage of thought on the empire or “the epic of Portuguese discovery.”<sup>23</sup> In the 1980s and 1990s, Fernando Pessoa was (re)published.<sup>24</sup>

In *A Língua Portuguesa* (The Portuguese Language) (Pessoa 1997), the author’s loose texts on language and on the Portuguese language are collected. Pessoa’s intricate linguistic concepts have a strong spiritual and ethereal meaning. Here the language belongs to this wider “spirituality of Portugal.” For Pessoa, the Portuguese language is a manifestation of a superior culture of western values. The universality of Portuguese culture is found in the language that carries the imperial experience. It is a language that integrates variation and allows shared ownership. Portuguese is here one of the “imperial languages.” Amongst these he foresees a quantitative future for English as a

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<sup>20</sup> Transl.: “It wouldn’t trouble me at all if Portugal were invaded or occupied, as long as I was left in peace.” Fernando Pessoa, *Livro do Desassossego: Páginas Escolhidas* (Porto: Arte e Cultura, 1961), part 259. I am indebted to Paulo de Medeiros for this important remark.

<sup>21</sup> Alfredo Margarido had strong ties with *Lusophone countries*, having worked and lived in São Tomé and Príncipe, Angola and Brazil, beside Portugal.

<sup>22</sup> The term *preto*, when uttered by non-blacks, is a pejorative term.

<sup>23</sup> In the words of Calafate Ribeiro: “Camões, the poet of the Portuguese language ..., could be the patron of a culture and language that was scattered over the globe as a result of the voyages. He attains this status under the auspices of the other patron of the Portuguese language, Pessoa.” Ribeiro, *Empire, Colonial Wars and Post-Colonialism in the Portuguese Contemporary Imagination*, 184-185.

<sup>24</sup> In 1982 *Livro do Desassossego* was published, and was republished in 1986, re-edited by António Quadros.

scientific language and for Portuguese as it is “the language of the soul.” This language carries an imperial mission where the empire has a spiritual meaning, and the role of civilisation and assimilation, “converting others into our substance” (68). Pessoa’s narrative is patriotic or as self-defined mystic nationalistic. This is a narrative that resonates in the *Lusotropical* construct of the language community, the *Lusofonia*.

Eduardo Lourenço, renowned literary scholar and critic, had been engaged in the production of an influential narrative both commemorative of the language and also validating its variety through “*creolização*” (Creolization) (Lourenço 1992, 13). He borrowed several *Lusotropical* themes to qualify the language of a plural community (Lourenço 1978; 1999a; 1999b). Lourenço reflected on the language dispersedly but more explicitly in *Atlas da Língua Portuguesa (Atlas of the Portuguese Language)* (Lourenço 1992). This work is published by the *Comissão Nacional para os Descobrimentos Portugueses (National Commission for the Portuguese Discoveries)* that was set up to prepare the grand celebration of 500 years of Portuguese *Discoveries* in the 1998 Lisbon World Exposition. Lourenço’s publication (as several by the same Commission) fits into the imaginaries of the Portuguese empire as an adventurous endeavour to “give new worlds to the world,” which fed nouveau national narratives.<sup>25</sup> This is even more markedly the universe of reference of Adriano Moreira’s post-*Revolução dos Cravos* commentary, where the language figures as instrumental in the making of a space of *Lusotropical* shapes.

These narratives shared the cultural sphere with narratives of a less celebratory nature, such as that of the Portuguese Nobel prize-winning writer and national icon José Saramago. His consideration of a language in war and under threat by (European) hegemonic languages—both in Portugal and in Africa—belongs to an imaginary of a peripheral country with a culture on the verge of extinction (Saramago 1987). António Lobo Antunes, the other weighty figure of Portuguese literature, whose writing will be analysed in this research, settles in the Portuguese language as his own territory of experimentation and exposure of the Portuguese empire in Africa as an enterprise dipped in blood.

From the 1990s on, criticism of the imperial language as a form of domination, which was inspired in anticolonial accounts, resurfaces as an argument about the exclusionary character of the Portuguese language. It is argued that this heritage is set forth after colonisation. In this fashion, the Angolan historian and journalist Carlos Pacheco (2000) will posit that the Portuguese language is the project of postcolonial elites (he focuses in particular in Mozambican and Angolan elites) that directly benefit from their liaison with Portugal. As such the Portuguese language discards a wide range of peoples who find themselves in the margins of this privileged relationship and whose cultures were not strongly influenced by the Portuguese. This gaze to language as exclusion becomes a core element in a strand of postcolonial criticism, namely under the authorship of the African Diaspora. This narrative contributed to shaping the

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<sup>25</sup> The term *Descobrimento* (Discovery) in the context of imperial colonialism is highly problematic. It infers the *encounter* with virgin territory—described in fifteenth-century cartography as *Terra Incognita* (Unknown Land)—open for cognition through penetration and exploitation. This is a metaphorical gendered and raced universe materialised in historical experiences of subjugation of non-European peoples. The narration of this history as one’s adventurous encounter with *the unknown* suggests a locus of utterance that is European, white and male.

imaginary of the nation with an awareness of the imperial burden. In 2000, Alfredo Margarido published a compelling critique of the space or community of the Portuguese Language. He posits that after 1974-1975 the language (falsely represented as Lusitanian) assumed the role of former colonial territories as an agent for the reestablishment of “Portuguese greatness”: “Trata-se de uma prótese singular, mas que começa a revelar-se eficaz, permitindo recuperar – de maneira quase glotofágica – as culturas dos Outros” (Margarido 2000, 28).<sup>26</sup>

In recent decades, a selective row of African writers gained prominence in the evolving field of *Lusofonia*, and gained visibility in former metropolitan territory with the use and thematisation of the Portuguese language. The Mozambican Mia Couto and the Angolan José Eduardo Agualusa, whose writing will be analysed in this dissertation, occupy the position of most prominence and authority in the field. They rely on an anticolonialist perspective to language hegemony though dissociate from it, embracing the language to claim their entitlement to it. They rescue the element of language transformation as it is appropriated in the speech of Africans but also in the creative production of its writers. This complexity inhabits narratives about the Portuguese language that merge with culture and the imagination of a postcolonial community.<sup>27</sup>

The demise of the Portuguese empire in Africa and of its dictatorship gave rise to a re-narration of Portuguese nationhood facing Europe, where the Portuguese language kept prominence and gained new shapes. This new imagination of Portugal in (the periphery of) Europe foregrounds the treasure of its connection with its former empire through the *language community*. This narrative, which is produced in Portugal and the space of its entanglement with Africa, the Americas and Asia, departs from and settles in the imagination of Portugal as an imperial nation. And as any other attempted departure, it takes this heritage in the luggage.

### **Africa in the Portuguese imaginary**<sup>28</sup>

“Africa” is still a site of contention. (Said 1994, 288)

Africans have been in the Iberian Peninsula since the tenth century. This presence has been narrated since the thirteenth century, when *the black* African was associated with violence and animality (Henriques 2009). Africa has a distinctive and sustained place in Portuguese colonialism and (Africans) in Portuguese metropolitan territory from the fifteenth century on. Isabel Ferreira Gould (2008, 183) contends that: “Africa and the colonial question constitute central themes in the history of modern Portugal.”

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<sup>26</sup> Transl.: “This [The Portuguese language] is a unique prosthesis, but one which begins to prove itself effective, allowing the recovery - in an almost glotophagic manner - of the cultures of the Others.”

<sup>27</sup> Another development of the recent decades worthy of mention here is the 1990 Orthographic Agreement of the Portuguese language, ratified by Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and São Tomé and Príncipe (and in 2004 by East Timor). This is a common normative document regulating the orthography of the Portuguese language across its different geographies. The document has been highly contested in Portugal since the first decade of 2000. It gave rise to a multitude of narratives on language ownership, the threat to language diversity and language hegemony.

<sup>28</sup> Part of this analysis of *Africa* in the Portuguese imaginary was published in: Patricia Schor, “Language as Art Object: Africa in the Museums of the Portuguese Language-Brazil and Portugal,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 53, no. 1 (2016), 1-38.

Borrowing from Luís de Sousa Rebelo, Gould (ibid.) posits that: “Key moments in the last hundred years of Portuguese history, such as the regicide in 1908, the First Republic, Portugal’s participation in the First World War, the establishment of Salazar’s dictatorial New State, the colonial wars of 1961-1974, and the Revolution of 1974, are all directly or indirectly associated with the presence of the Portuguese in the African colonies.” In consequence, the imaginary of the Portuguese empire is present in the most important reflections on Portuguese national identity (Leal 2006).

*Africa* is not only inscribed in the narrative of Portuguese nationality, but, as argued by Manuela Mourão (2011), the very emergence of the concept of race (conceived as cultural hierarchy attached to skin colour) was facilitated by the fifteenth-sixteenth century early *encounters* between the Portuguese and those non-western peoples who were turned into their colonial subjects. The modern imagination of Africa is therefore a racialised construct shaped in the context of imperial conquest. The *black uncivilised*—later legally classified “*indigenas*” (indigenous peoples)—were represented as uncouth and inferior, apt for hard labour, and exposed as exotic, in need of civilising (mainly through evangelization). This representation supported and accompanied the enslavement and commercialization of Africans by the Portuguese from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries.<sup>29</sup> In Portugal, up until the mid-twentieth century, blood purity remained the hegemonic national model (Matos 2006). It was only in the post-war period that the *Estado Novo* embraced *Lusotropicalismo*’s positive gaze towards miscegenation (Castelo 1998). The genealogy of *Africa* in Portugal therefore comprises colonialism and the building of a national community inclusive of the empire, which is dependent on the subjugation of the racialised subject from *the overseas*. The *black colonial other* became a defining element of Portuguese nationality and remains so in the *postempire*.

As previously argued, with the socialist *Revolução dos Cravos* of 1974 and the demise of the Portuguese *Terceiro Império* (Third Empire) in Africa, there has been an explicit rupture with the colonial narrative, though strong colonial continuities were also carried into the national imagination (Ribeiro 2002a). A self-narrated imperial benevolence persists in Portuguese culture in apparent contrast to, but actually in consonance with, the subalternity of the Afro-Portuguese.

In contemporary Portuguese society, manifestations ranging from ambivalence and resistance to intolerance and racism towards sub-Saharan Africans (and their descendants) stand in sharp contrast with the deep seated national myths of Portuguese cultural exceptionalism such as Lusotropicalism, that are rooted in the perception or the interpretation of the Portuguese colonial enterprise as having been more “benign” and more open towards cultural and racial intermingling than that of other former colonial European nations. As pointed out by Inocência Mata, more than 30 years after the dismantling of the Portuguese colonial empire the discourse of the nation still “textualizes” Africans and their descendants as “the others.” (Arenas 2012, 171)

Moreover, hiding behind the narrative of national hybridity is a normative white male citizen. The white male subject is the heir of the empire conceived as an erotic endeavour wherein the virile Portuguese settler penetrates African women, as a

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<sup>29</sup> Slavery was officially abolished in Portugal in 1761, and the transatlantic slave trade was officially abolished in 1836.

metaphor for exploitation of the feminised African colony (Vicente 2013). Manuela Mourão (2011, 94) posits that the Portuguese have constructed their national identity around their imperial colonialist role in the world of having “created mulattoes.” However, they have built their racial identity as white; an imagination to which they continue to hold on.

This memory is haunted by the colonial ghost of *Africa* as a token of female racialised alterity, of *Africa* as mirror image to an aspired Portuguese masculine whiteness. This allegory has a strong presence within the imagination of the Portuguese language, an actual stand-in for the *Great Portugal* that is *not a small country*, the reimagined transnational empire.<sup>30</sup>

## Realm of theory

This study is located in the field of criticism to colonial resiliences; a field located in the former metropolitan space that I term the *postempire*. It focuses on texts produced by the selective postcolonial canon. Both these field and these texts replicate and disrupt colonial resiliences to different extents.

### **The *postempire*: racelessness and gendered anti-blackness**

This dissertation contemplates and analyses the postcolonial query in contemporary Portugal. I am naming this location the *postempire*, in the wake of Paulo de Medeiros. Medeiros (2011b) departed from Renato Rosaldo’s (1989) reflections on “imperialist nostalgia” to theorise the “postimperial condition” that is imagined after/through the refusal of that nostalgia. Rosaldo’s essay deals with the enthusiastic reception that western audiences have given to films that portray imperialism with nostalgia, while eliding its constitutive racial violence.

Even politically progressive North American audiences have enjoyed the elegance of manners governing relations of dominance and subordination between the “races.” Evidently, a mood of nostalgia makes racial domination appear innocent and pure. ...The peculiarity of their yearning, of course, is that agents of colonialism long for the very forms of life they intentionally altered or destroyed. ... Imperialist nostalgia thus revolves around a paradox: a person kills somebody and then mourns his or her victim. ... [I]mperialist nostalgia uses a pose of “innocent yearning” both to capture people’s imaginations and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination. (Rosaldo 1989, 107, 108)

This innocence is therefore carefully and forcefully crafted through silencing of *others’* voices and the denial of colonial violence. The remembering of the empire is a problematic enterprise populated by the colonial ghost of race. Critical reflections on the empire—usually of progressive postcolonial inspiration—often take along this

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<sup>30</sup> The slogan *Portugal não é um país pequeno* belongs to the Exposição Colonial do Porto (Colonial Exposition of Porto) in 1934. It was used as a title to an image showing *the surface of the Portuguese Colonial Empire* upon the map of Europe as a “symbolic cartography” of the *Estado Novo*’s ambition to hold onto its colonial territories as a way out of the status of a peripheric nation. Manuela Ribeiro Sanches, “Introdução,” in *Portugal não é Um País Pequeno: Contar o Império na Pós-Colonialidade*, ed. Manuela Ribeiro Sanches (Lisbon: Livros Cotovia, 2006), 7-21.

disposition of nostalgic remembering. They make use of the vocabulary, the habits and epistemologies of high currency in the West. It is this *colonial grammar* that (re)presents imperial colonialism as an *encounter* devoid of racial violence and forcefully denies the debris of *the afterlife of slavery* (Hartman 2007, 6) that is contemporary racism.

The unspeakability of race and the invisibility of black subjects are not particular to Portugal or to its postcolonial field. These are phantoms that haunt the postcolonies as well, and that place Portugal in dialogue with other European *postempires* in contemporary neo-liberal times. David Theo Goldberg (2009) characterised this *condition* harboured in denial as European *postraciality*. This concept articulates with Fatima El-Tayeb's (2011) analysis of European *racelessness* as disavowal of racism in a continent haunted by the ghost of race. El-Tayeb posits that this "racialized understanding of proper Europeaness" externalises "Europeans possessing the (visual) markers of Otherness" from contemporary Europe, rendering them with the permanent status of "aliens from elsewhere." (xii, xiv, xxv).

Race remains a taboo in official Portuguese discourse. Furthermore, despite the substantial numbers of Afro-Portuguese in Portugal, they continue to be represented as immigrants, textualized as others, as posited by Mata. National identity has not been challenged in its hegemonic narratives of whiteness and cultural homogeneity.

[T]he most recent wave of sub-Saharan African immigrants since the 1980s and 90s has led to the leveling of differences between previous Afro-Portuguese and current African immigrants together with their respective progeny (many of them born and raised in Portugal), becoming all subsumed by the Portuguese populace in conjunction with the media under the labels of "Africans", "African immigrants", "second or third generation children of immigrants", or "blacks" (either the more neutral term *negros* or the traditionally derisive term, *pretos*). (Arenas 2012, 173)

Similarly, analysing the contemporary Netherlands, Gloria Wekker (2016) coined "white innocence," the process of fabricating the metropolitan self-image of purity (which is both ethical and allegedly biological) within the context of colonial violence coexisting with contemporary racism and xenophobia. She borrowed from Avtar Brah's *Cartographies of Diaspora* to unmask the constitutive colonial violence of Europeaness:

[T]he construction of the European self and its Others took place in the force fields of "conquest, colonization, empire formation, permanent settlement by Europeans of other parts of the globe, nationalist struggles by the colonized, and selective decolonization." (Wekker 2009, 283)

Alluding to Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics*, Medeiros (2012) indicates that notions of sovereignty in Europe are identified with violence, with death, and with the power to inflict death (336). In *Necropolitics*, Mbembe (2003) "outline[s] some of the repressed topographies of cruelty (the plantation and the colony in particular) ... suggest[ing that they function] under conditions of necropower" (40). He builds from Giorgio Agamben's rewriting of Michel Foucault's notion of the economy of biopower, where "the function of racism is to regulate the distribution of death and to make possible the murderous functions of the state" and Hanna Arendt's thoughts on "the phantomlike

world of race” to characterise the functions and technologies of state power in modernity (ibid., 17).

Medeiros (2012) hopes for a reflection upon and refusal of the imagination of Europe built on this construction. He proposes a postimperial condition pointing to a Europe “que celebre a vida e afirmasse o futuro, seria uma Europa a devir” (336).<sup>31</sup> This requires however moving beyond Europe’s very ontology harboured in anti-blackness and (social) death, on the celebration of some-*body*’s lives predicated on the death of *other*—racialised—bodies. Mbembe lays bare the racial violence that constituted Europe and endures:

Any historical account of the rise of modern terror needs to address slavery, which could be considered one of the first instances of biopolitical experimentation. In many respects, the very structure of the plantation system and its aftermath manifests the emblematic and paradoxical figure of the state of exception.... This figure is paradoxical here for two reasons. First, in the context of the plantation, the humanity of the slave appears as the perfect figure of a shadow. Indeed, the slave condition results from a triple loss: loss of a “home,” loss of rights over his or her body, and loss of political status. This triple loss is identical with absolute domination, natal alienation, and social death (expulsion from humanity altogether). (Mbembe 21)

It is only attending to the slave condition, that imperialist nostalgia’s yearning for the colony can be fathomed. The postimperial subject is in fact not mourning *that* some-*body* who the empire killed, as the empire annihilated *savage life* that is black property devoid of humanity. The refusal of imperialist nostalgia would demand rehabilitating *the Black* into humanity so that any nostalgic yearning would be unimaginable, let alone pleasurable. Yet this very separation between *the Black* and civilisation is the constitutional moment of Europe and its sovereign nations.

Race is an important topic that runs across the analysis in this dissertation. Here I start from Achille Mbembe’s perspective on race and rely further on Afro-Pessimism—a critical trend that enters dialogue with Critical Ethnic Studies’ paradigms associated with Black Studies.<sup>32</sup> Afro-Pessimism supports thinking about the violent racialised order which constitutes the *postempire*. It forces the demystification of Europe and the confrontation of its limits to rethink and reconfigure itself, as aspired by the postimperial condition. This current of thought and scholarship positions the black subject as the ontological slave, a *not being*, while positing the condition of black life in social death in the continuum from slavery through our current days. Blacks are therefore in a structural relationship of antagonism with humanity. Frank B. Wilderson III inaugurated this current, which is indebted to the theorisation of “the fact of

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<sup>31</sup> Transl.: “that celebrates life and affirms the future, a Europe still to become.”

<sup>32</sup> In *People of Colour Blindness: Notes on the Afterlife of Slavery*, Jared Sexton offers an important critique to Mbembe’s *Necropolitics*, arguing that Mbembe departed from an engagement with Saidiya Hartman on crucial aspects of “the peculiar terror formation” and then expands it to characterise all forms of existence under modern terror (32). Hereby Mbembe “loses track of the *singular commodification of human existence* (not simply its labor power) under racial slavery, that structure of gratuitous violence in which a body is rendered as flesh to be accumulated and exchanged” (38). I only partly agree with Sexton’s critique, as I read Mbembe’s text as a reminder of the resilience of anti-blackness from colonial enslavement until contemporary forms of racial violence. I deem it therefore appropriate to borrow from Mbembe’s argument as well as from the main premises of Afro-Pessimism. It is worth pointing out that both Mbembe and Afro-Pessimists depart from and rely on the work of Frantz Fanon.

blackness” by Frantz Fanon ([1952] 2008, 82-108). In the following I briefly outline reflections posited by Afro-Pessimism that inform the perspective on race in this dissertation.

On his website *Incognegro*, Wilderson (n.d.) defines this current in a nutshell: “Rather than celebrate Blackness as a cultural identity, Afro-Pessimism theorizes it as a position of accumulation and fungibility (Saidiya Hartman); that is, as condition-- or relation of ontological death.” He further posits that:

Afro-Pessimists are framed as such ... because they theorize an antagonism, rather than a conflict -- i.e. they perform a kind of “work of understanding” rather than that of liberation, refusing to posit seemingly untenable solutions to the problems they raise. (Wilderson n.d.)

The imperial racialised order was effectively founded upon ejecting the blackened subject from the realm of humanity. Jared Sexton (2012) explores the on-going condition of blackness as non-human, across different histories and geographies of racialisation through a common notion. He observes that:

In recent years, social death has emerged from a period of latency as a notion useful for the critical theory of racial slavery as a matrix of social, political, and economic relations surviving the era of abolition in the nineteenth century ... This “afterlife of slavery,” as Saidiya Hartman terms it, challenges practitioners in the field to question the prevailing understanding of a post-emancipation society and to revisit the most basic questions about the structural conditions of anti-blackness in the modern world. ... For [Frank] Wilderson, the principal implication of slavery's afterlife is to warrant an intellectual disposition of “afro-pessimism,” ... that posits a political ontology dividing the Slave from the world of the Human in a constitutive way. (Sexton 2012)

There is perhaps no place that better embodies this division than *slave breeding farms*. In *A Herança Africana em Portugal (The African Heritage in Portugal)* Isabel Castro Henriques (2009) described such farms that operated in Portuguese metropolitan territory since the sixteenth century. In this necropolitical machinery, the black body is interchangeably animal and thing. In the words of Giovanni Battista Venturino, Italian envoy of Pope Pio V to Portugal, in 1571:

Há (na região de Vila Viçosa ...) *raça de escravos negros*, alguns dos quais são reservados somente para *emprenhadores* de muitas mulheres, como *garanhões*, fazendo-se exactamente com eles, como (se faz) com as *raças de cavalos* em Itália. Deixam-se *cavalgar estas mulheres* para que possam parir, porque o *produto* é sempre do patrão destas escravas, e digo, que são *servas prenhas (reprodutoras)*. Não é permitido aos *garanhões negros* cavalgar as prenhas sob a pena de 50 chicotadas, mas cavalgar somente as não prenhas, porque se vendem as *crias* a 30 ou 40 escudos cada uma; e destes *rebanhos de fêmeas* há muitos em Portugal e nas Índias (certamente o Brasil), só para venderem as *crias*, como disse. (Henriques 2009, 132, my emphasis)<sup>33 34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Transl.: “There is a *race of black slaves*, some of which are reserved only for impregnating several women, as stallions, doing with them exactly as it is done with the breeds (*races*) of horses in Italy. They are allowed to *ride these women* so that they can give birth, because *the product* is always for the boss of these slaves, and I say, these are *pregnant servants (breeders)*. It is not allowed for the *black stallions* to ride those who are pregnant, under the penalty of 50 lashes, but only to ride those not pregnant, because they sell the *foals* to 30 or 40 *escudos* each; and there are several of these *herds of females* in Portugal and in the Indies (certainly Brazil), just to sell *the foals*, as I said.” (my emphasis)

Black bodies were property under colonialism. They fulfilled roles assigned to bodies without personhood within a regime that subjected them to ontological and gratuitous (as opposed to merely ideological and contingent) violence (Wilderson 2003, 229). Borrowing from Hartman, Sexton (2010) explains that “the captive *female* ... is paradigmatic for ‘the (re)production of enslavement,’ in which the ‘normativity of sexual violence ... establishes an inextricable link between racial formation and sexual subjection’” (33). Black women served as wet nurses to white children, sexual labourers to white males and bodies for the production of new black enslaved bodies. Hereby they were also fundamental for guaranteeing the constructions of virtuous white womanhood. These constructs subsist in the afterlife of slavery, also in the Portuguese postempire.

The alleged animalistic nature of black bodies is a resilient colonial idea that houses on both sides of the Atlantic. Sabine Broeck (2014) addresses the *humiliate-ability*, the *enslave-ability*, the *rape-ability*, the *abuse-ability*, and the *ship-ability* of black people in the discourses and practices that shape European white collective memory as well as in the contemporary repertoire of thinking blackness in the white European mind. “These discourses and practices add up to a *longue durée* of white abjectorship and un-humanization of Black being dating from the early modern period, through Enlightenment modernity into the postmodern moment” (Broeck and Junker 2014). It is evident here that the black subject, who effectively does not exist as a subject, has been constructed and theorised upon the eviction of *the Black* out of humanity. Broeck observes on this mirroring process that:

To come into being, the European subject needed its underside, as it were: the crucially integral but invisible part of the human has been his/her *abject*, created in the European mind by way of racialized thingification: the African enslaved, an un-humaned species tied by property rights to the emerging subject so tightly that they could—structurally speaking—never occupy the position of the dialectical Hegelian object as other, has thus remained therefore outside the dynamics of the human. (Broeck 2014, 10)

The meta-narrative of Portuguese imperial colonialism that gained shape along history ignores this fundamental condition of (gendered) blackness as non-human that operated in the contact with and in relation to the white colonial settler. Instead the narrative of Portuguese colonial exceptionalism relies heavily on the rhetoric of the *loving encounter*.

*Lusotropicalismo* had a paramount role in shaping the Portuguese colonial enterprise qua *civilisational process* as the maker of (the Brazilian) *miscegenated* national identity. This identity was supposedly exportable to the African colonies (Freyre

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<sup>34</sup> Saidiya Hartman refuses to describe such “sceneries” for they reinforce and naturalise “the spectacular character of black suffering” (Scenes, 3). She chooses instead to approach “mundane” scenes and practices under racial slavery, where terror operates but is not easily discernible—such as “slaves dancing in the quarter, the outrageous darky antics of the minstrel stage, the constitution of humanity in slave law, and the fashioning of the self-possessed individual” (4). I recognise the importance of the argument but believe that, at this juncture of racial denial and imperialist nostalgia in the Portuguese postempire, it is important to analyse terror at both such sites. I expressly opt to foreground such accounts in the same fashion of the work of scholars such as Christen A. Smith. See, for instance: Christen A. Smith, “For Cláudia Silva Ferreira: Death and the Collective Black Female Body,” *The Feminist Wire*, May 5, 2014a. <http://thefeministwire.com/2014/05/for-claudia-silva-ferreira-death-black-female-body/>.

1953b). As previously argued, this doctrine stated the malleability and *adaptability* of the Portuguese male to *the tropics* in their imperial enterprise, and their specific type of *benign colonisation* based on their *inclination* to sexual intermixing with African and other indigenous women. Christen Smith offers a rigorous critique to this doctrine, interlacing its raced and gendered dimensions:

The argument [feeding the] myth of racial democracy [outlined in] Freyre's *Masters and Slaves* (1973 [1933]) has three key postulates. The first is the predominance of white heteropatriarchy in Brazilian society. The world that Freyre describes is a social and cultural system in which white (Portuguese) heterosexual men dominate and African (black) and indigenous enslaved/colonized women serve and obey. The second assumption is that the black/indigenous/female is always already scripted as slave/colonized/subordinate, with all of the economic and social implications of class and proper social place that this entails. The third is that this "harmonious" system of dominance is explicitly tied to practices of violence, implying that both the dominant and the dominated derive pleasure from the pain of their relationship. Freyre claims that the sadism of the white Portuguese slaver and the masochism of the enslaved African and colonized indigenous woman are the cornerstones of miscegenation and racial harmony in Brazil. (Smith 2014b, 113)

In *Scenes of Subjection* Saidiya Hartman (1997) discussed the settlers' pleasure in violating the enslaved, observing the attributed limited sentience of the latter. It follows then that "the happiness of the slave" is established due to her *very limited capacity to feel*. This same construction of subjugation as consent operates in *Lusotropicalismo* as the motor of a *happy colonial enterprise*. Hartman lays bare the sexual economy of slavery made by "the bestializing display of black bodies in the market, the sexual violation of slave women, and the intersection of enjoyment and terror" (41). The fantasy of consent lives through in the imagination of the *encounter*.

Despite sustained critique, *Lusotropicalismo* endures in the Portuguese postempire (and the postcolonies) and resonates strongly in the narratives of the Portuguese language. The association between the *exotic other*, race and gender is a fundamental aspect of this narration in its insidious colonial continuities. Herein *Africa* stands for the (female) non-European, where the European subject is the (male) host in a position of definition by default. *Africa* and the empire emerge in the (post)colonial narratives as the locus of raced and gendered desire and abjection.

In his seminal work *The Invention of Africa*, Valentin-Yves Mudimbe (1988, 1-23) discusses the representations of Africa in the West that took place within epistemological *europocentrism* in the context of the violent exchanges of (late) European imperial colonialism. He posits that this *power-knowledge* system instituted an (discursive) order that assimilates *exotic bodies* and creates cultural difference as abnormal. It shapes alterity, under the sign of (*savage*) *Africa*, as a negative category of "the Same."<sup>35</sup>

Paulo de Medeiros' (2016, 204) "postimperial condition" is an aspiration for a locus, both historical and conceptual, where imperial colonialism has been worked through

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<sup>35</sup> In this dissertation, I subscribe to this analysis but depart from a longer genealogy of the *racial other* that took place under Portuguese imperial colonialism from the fifteenth century on. I highlighted this genealogy above (under the heading of *Africa* in the Portuguese imaginary). In the first section of the dissertation I further discuss this regime of racial alterity under Portuguese colonialism.

and dealt with. It expresses a hope for a European future other than regression or obsolescence.<sup>36</sup> It is an ambitious task to imagine another Europe, while attending to the actuality of Europe. In Portugal this task is daunting.

Besides the almost uninterrupted celebration of its glorious heroic past – the surge of nationalistic propaganda in the nineteenth century having been reinforced under the dictatorship through a teleology of the nation as civilizing and Christianizing agent – at present there is an unmitigated wave of nostalgia in the country that threatens to drown attempts at the critical reassessment of the ghosts of the past. (Medeiros 2011a, 97)

But beyond presenting itself as a task of considerable dimension, a more fundamental issue is that, as I have argued, “the postimperial condition” might be an intrinsically unattainable enterprise.<sup>37</sup> I carry out a *disobedient appropriation* of this condition to define *the postempire* as the actual hegemonic locus of enunciation of this (self-) critique and aspiration. While I acknowledge the pressing need and importance of imagining other futures and *another Europe* imbued in such an aspired condition, I deem that it is fundamental to analyse the ways in which a centuries-old raced and gendered imperial archive lives on in the very grammar and economy of this imagination.

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<sup>36</sup> For an elaboration of the “postimperial condition” as “a different imagination of Europe” after the “imperative” to confront Europe’s imperial ghosts, see: Paulo de Medeiros, “A Failure of the Imagination? Questions for a Post-Imperial Europe,” *Moving Worlds A Journal of Transcultural Writings* 11, no. 2 (2011a), 91-101.; and Paulo de Medeiros, “7 Passos (Para Pensar uma Europa Pós-Imperial),” in *Nação e Narrativa Pós-Colonial I: Angola e Moçambique - Ensaios*, ed. Ana Mafalda Leite and others, Vol. I (Lisbon: Edições Colibri, 2012), 323-338.

<sup>37</sup> This position might invite criticism for a lack or failure of imagination. My working with and on “the postimperial condition” carries a challenge offered by the tradition of radical Black thought, mainly from the Diaspora. It is not to be conflated or confused with the defeatism of neoliberal conservatism. Jared Sexton analysed this order of criticism (geared to Afro-Pessimism): “I cannot help but notice that the skepticism expressed toward Afro-Pessimism takes forms bearing uncanny resemblance to the hostile reception of other critical discourses assumed to disable thought and action.” Sexton illustrates this trend of criticism by observing “a recent debate [2015] between two mid-career black political scientists in the pages of Dissent magazine over the political orientation of Atlantic columnist [sic] Ta-Nehisi Coates’ 2015 epistolary essay, *Between the World and Me*.” And he offers an important riposte: “One could commit an article to just these two presumptions ...—that imagination requires possibility in order to flourish (does it not flourish precisely in the face of impossibility?) and that agency suffers from inescapable constraint (is constraint not rather a precondition of agency?) ...The impulse to struggle, perhaps at its most genuine, need not speculate upon its prospects.” Jared Sexton, “Afro-Pessimism: The Unclear Word,” *Rhizomes. Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge*, no. 29 (2016). <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue29/sexton.html>. In analogous fashion, I recall here Stuart Hall’s contentions about Cultural Studies’ project to shape “organic intellectuals,” departing from Gramsci: “The problem about the concept of an organic intellectual is that it appears to align intellectuals with an emerging historic movement and we couldn’t tell then, and can hardly tell now, where that emerging historical movement was to be found. We were organic intellectuals without any organic point of reference; organic intellectuals with a nostalgia or will or hope (to use Gramsci’s phrase from another context) that at some point we would be prepared in intellectual work for that kind of relationship, if such a conjuncture ever appeared. More truthfully, we were prepared to imagine or model or simulate such a relationship in its absence: ‘pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will.’” Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies,” in *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 281.

## The postcolonial canon

This study will analyse the postcolonial canon on Portuguese colonialism, in theory and literature. A critical consideration of this location entails questions exogenous to the discipline of literature but which are constitutive of the postcolonial field. These are political questions about the regimes of value that inform the election of texts and authors to a position of exemplary texts of a discipline, such as: what is the locus of enunciation of this regime; and who are its legitimate enunciators. The analysis of postcolonial texts that will be carried out in this dissertation will problematize the postcolonial authors' position within the postimperial centre. This exercise of contextualisation and location will enable an understanding of how their writing overcomes and/or asserts the empire as centre and reference to the *encounter*.

João Ferreira Duarte (2006) defines the canon as a “conjunto de objectos cujo valor serve de medida.”<sup>38</sup> It is therefore a “sintaxe, isto é, [um] discurso pelo qual os sujeitos são *interpelados* por um Sujeito em nome de uma ideologia com a qual se identificam, num processo de construção de identidade” (17).<sup>39</sup> Canonisation of the postcolonial entails a process of turning texts into “ambassadors of identity, nationhood and cosmopolitanism” and their writers into “spokespeople for their nations” (Ponzanesi 2014, 3, 4). The opposition between centre and periphery constitutes the canon. It has a legitimating role to a particular regime of truth and order. This system is therefore put in motion by and reproduces hegemony. However, the canon is not entirely ruled by hegemony. To question the canon is a postcolonial practice that disrupts the distinction between the knowing subject (the Subject) and the object of text and theory. Here the knowing subject is turned into an object of analysis. My intention is thus to harbour in the canon with critical awareness of the politics of canonisation in order to highlight the instances of consolidation of hegemony, and of disobedience and disruption. The postcolonial is a field that thinks about itself and understands itself as self-reflexive. This study will both make use of the fruits of this practice and posit the limits of its own criticality, with an eye on the economy of the postcolonial.

This entails considering that the canon has also been shaped to attend market demands fed by lingering colonial regimes. The postcolonial not only questions but also performs the (post)colonial *encounter* between West and non-West, and in the case of this study, between Portugal and *Africa*. Following Ponzanesi (2014), the field itself became a commodity in the *postcolonial cultural industry*. It is an industry run through symbolic power (prestige) and material power (jobs and sales). Postcolonial texts are in different measures in *productive conflict* and complicity with this economy (ibid.). *Africa* stands here for the code of the exotic colonial difference, which is commodified to serve as exchange currency in the cultural industry. Kwame Anthony Appiah (1991) made a sharp analysis of these dynamics (the postcoloniality within), in particular in the domain of African writing in western languages (347).

Postcoloniality is the condition of what we might ungenerously call a *comprador* intelligentsia: a relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery.

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<sup>38</sup> Transl.: “set of objects whose value serves as reference.”

<sup>39</sup> Transl.: “syntax, that is, a discourse by which subjects are *interpellated* by a Subject in the name of an ideology with which they identify, in a process of identity construction.”

In the West they are known through the Africa they offer; their compatriots know them both through the West they present to Africa and through an Africa they have invented for the world, for each other, and for Africa. (Appiah 1991, 348)

This commodified *Africa* is the imagination of Africa prevalent in the West. In Appiah's (1991, 347) words, it is "something called 'Africa'" produced through "incorporation as official Other." Fernando Arenas highlights how this imagination is present in Portuguese cultural circuits and how it shapes them:

Africa has been for some time a popular "cultural commodity" among Portuguese, most notably its music, literature, cuisine, and dance clubs. In fact, Lisbon has become one of the most African cities in Europe boasting a significantly rich and dynamic cultural scene. Lisbon is doubtlessly the musical and literary capital of Lusophone Africa. Not only does Lisbon remain arguably the symbolic and cultural axis of a now postcolonial Lusophone world at large, but it has also become more so than ever in its history a nodal point, albeit peripheral, both within an Afro-diasporic Europe and within the Black Atlantic. (Arenas 2012, 173)

This construction (*Africa*) serves writers and others in different ways, as they negotiate with market demands while impinging their mark of disruption in culture. Appiah (1991, 338) had already argued the possibility of marginalised groups manipulating "commodified artifacts in culturally novel and expressive ways." However not all (every-body) have equal access to choices and an equal standing at the negotiating table. Moreover, the very selectivity of the canon presents an already delimited field. Also borrowing from classical Marxian theory, Huggan (2001, 18) posits that commodity fetishism glosses over the material circumstances under which commodities are produced and consumed. This economy—its currencies, its routes, rules and narratives—is regulated by the former metropolis, as noticeable in Lisbon.

There have been important reflections about the postcolonial canon in Portugal. Several of the most solid analyses were gathered in the recent International Seminar *Cânone, Margem e Periferia nos Espaços de Língua Portuguesa (Canon, Margin and Periphery in the Spaces of the Portuguese Language)* (2012). The array of interventions makes clear that the field, however incipient, is both thriving and remains highly contested for, despite its emancipatory promise, it reproduces colonial exclusions that are raced, gendered and classed, beside the explicit preference for literary modes and aesthetics that are familiar and palatable to western audiences. In the Portuguese postcolonial this translates into a field that is mostly male and non-black, that prefers novels to poetry and written to oral narratives, meaning that most of the literary artifacts crafted in African countries are discarded. The disciplinary categorization of *Literaturas em Língua Portuguesa* (Literatures in the Portuguese Language), which includes African literary production, is itself problematic, for the suspect coincidence between literatures and (Portuguese) culture. Yet this terrain houses (dis)encounters and confrontations, opening it up to negotiation of meanings that leads to creative outcomes (Mendes, Medeiros, and Ornelas 1998). As posited by Inocência Mata (2001), it is however crucial to attend to the lower position occupied by the so-called "Literaturas Africanas de Expressão Portuguesa" ("African Literatures of Portuguese Expression") in the scale of literary value, and to the fact that they hardly escape the Portuguese/western grid of interpretation. The politics of marketability and reception of texts in Portugal are

fundamental for the constitution of this field of authority and for its economy. This order of reflections will emerge further down in the sections of the dissertation.

This reflection on the postcolonial canon tempers the celebratory mood often found in postcolonial analyses. It works as a reminder that the postcolonial is (also) constituted through exclusion and hosts a discrepancy between its promised progressiveness and its statute of commodity in contemporary capitalist economies. Mata (2006) argued that this performance of consumer multiculturalism keeps asymmetrical power relations and social positions in place. The selective visibility of the postcolonial canon resonates with Portugal's colonial assimilationist policies and practices that are still operative in a field where the metropolis is *great* and central. The field requires questioning its own location.

While making this location explicit and its contradictions visible, I will analyse how those postcolonial texts from Mozambique and Angola offer important reflections on the Portuguese *postempire*, alongside a Portuguese text. Apart from the important role each of these pieces of literature has on their national constituencies, they also enter the analytical and literary field of the *postempire*.

## Structure of the dissertation

The first section of the dissertation on Postcolonial Theory opens a scrutiny of sites of Portuguese culture that both perform and problematize encounters with Africa by zeroing in on aspects of Postcolonial theory on Portuguese colonialism with high currency in the field. The focus will fall upon the most productive tropes for critical thinking about imperial continuities and reconfigurations that catalyse around the Portuguese language.

The chapters in this section focus on the field of Postcolonial Studies, from its early departure of the characterization of the national subject, through the definition of a specific mode of colonisation, towards novel reflections on the workings of technologies of otherisation. It then explores the gendered and racial encoding in the construction of the Portuguese *language space* and the categorisation of *Africa*. The associated colonial memory system is highlighted, and the section addresses the notion of a postcolonial community harboured in language. Finally it confronts colonial violence and explores possibilities of restoring cognitive justice in a terrain of postcolonial relations. This entails engaging with the concept of cultural translation within and beyond the Portuguese language. For the critical role of translation in the postcolonial analysis of language, I will dedicate a brief overview of the field in an appendix to the body of the dissertation. This section closes with the critical scrutiny of the notion of hospitality towards the *other*.

The second section of the dissertation on Postcolonial literature presents the analysis of three novels by canonical writers, respectively Mia Couto, José Eduardo Agualusa and António Lobo Antunes. The chapters in this section investigate the linguistic use and the concepts of language offered in the novels and a sample of the authors' commentary on language. I will identify how language operates in/for this reflection on the empire

and reveal the actual possibilities of such a critique hosted in the *postempire*. The chapters of this section carry out the scrutiny of language metaphors having recourse to core themes from Postcolonial and Decolonial Studies—namely centre, border and periphery—and introduce additional ones associated with the *topos* of violence, which are borrowed from Anticolonial Critique, Critical Race Studies and Holocaust Studies. Finally these metaphors are associated with the context of the Portuguese *postempire* and the authors' canonical location within this realm, to forward an understanding of how their writing creatively overcomes and/or asserts the Portuguese empire at current times.

In the Conclusion to the dissertation I will recover the questions that guided this investigation, illuminate important topics dealt with, briefly forward *inconclusive* remarks about the field under study and suggest new or underexplored lines of inquiry.

## **Section I.**

**Postcolonial theories on Portuguese colonialism:**

***vigilant inhabitations***

## Introduction to the Section<sup>40</sup>

It is radical perversity, not sage political wisdom, that drives the intriguing will to knowledge of postcolonial discourse. (Bhabha 1994b, 212)

This study scrutinises sites of Portuguese culture that both perform and problematize encounters with *Africa*, which is a particular imagination of Africa. This encounter is hosted in the realm of the Portuguese language. I open this dissertation with an inquiry into the field of Postcolonial theories. This section will zero in on aspects of Postcolonial theories on Portuguese colonialism with high currency in the field that touch upon those encounters. Rather than producing an overview of the field, I will concentrate on its salient tropes that support a critical reflection on the Postcolonial canon. This reflection seeks imperial continuities and reconfigurations that catalyse around the Portuguese language. Throughout the section I will foster a topical dialogue between this body of theories and their homologous theories shaped in other (post-)imperial centres, mainly the Anglophone but at times the Francophone as well. A secondary aim is to reveal a mostly silenced conversation with anti- and postcolonial African scholarship and the foregrounding scholarship of the African diaspora.

The main objective of this section of the dissertation is to put forward a critical analysis of Portuguese metropolitan postcolonialism - drawing from critical self-reflection and from outside scrutiny - or else to excavate what Gayatri Spivak named “sanctioned ignorance” in the Preface to *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Spivak 1999, x). Of course my focus is narrower and my goal much more modest, but it still concerns the same “examinat[ion of] the structures of the production of postcolonial reason” (ibid., xii). This inquiry targets the Portuguese postcolonial canon, which I will term *postimperial*.

The chapters in this section focus on the field of Portuguese-speaking Postcolonial Studies, from its early departure of the characterization of the national subject, through the definition of a specific mode of colonisation, towards novel reflections on the workings of technologies of otherisation. I will then explore the racial encoding in the construction of the Portuguese *language space* and the categorisation of *Africa*. The associated colonial memory system will be highlighted, and the section will address the notion of a postcolonial community harboured in language. Finally I will confront colonial violence and explore possibilities of restoring cognitive justice in a terrain of postcolonial enlacements. This will entail engaging with the concept of cultural translation within and beyond the Portuguese language, and critically scrutinising the notion of hospitality towards the other.

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<sup>40</sup> Research for this section was carried out mainly at the Centre for Social Studies of the Faculty of Economy of Coimbra University, through a visit generously funded with a grant from the Stichting Jo Kolk Studiefonds. I thank the Centre for opening its doors to my research and the library staff for their friendliness and efficiency. I am also grateful to Prof. António Sousa Ribeiro for engaging in dialogue with me during that short stay. That conversation gave me important clues for constructing the argument of this section. The analytical path I took and the conclusions at which I arrived are entirely my own responsibility.

## Chapter 1. Situating Portuguese colonialism

The query on Portuguese colonialism, its lasting heritage as the afterlife of slavery and its reworkings emerged in the field of literature, in particular in African literature, in the Portuguese language. In the last twenty years this postcolonial query gained prominence in Portuguese academia. It enabled the theorization of Portuguese postcolonialism as a new prolific field.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos' writings have been pivotal in setting up the field and have remained critical for its development. This section will therefore zero in on analysis of the sociologist's theorisation. The particularities of Portugal and the specificity of Portuguese colonialism have occupied centre stage in Boaventura Santos' analysis. In his "Onze Teses por Ocasião de Mais Uma Descoberta de Portugal,"<sup>41</sup> theses reiterated in later texts, the country is said to be semi-peripheral in the modern world capitalist system (since the seventeenth century), as it partly responds to social categories of the centre and partly to those of the periphery (e.g. agricultural and textile models of development against patterns of consumption of a central country, to mention just one of such contradictions). Portuguese society, the sociologist argues, is characterised by complex articulations between discrepant social practices and symbolic universes that enable the construction of hybrid representations of national identity as both central and peripheral. The complexity of analysing this society resides, for Santos, in the fact that the most determining factor of its specificity is the dynamic co-existence of various levels of modernity, pre-modernity and post-modernity (Santos 2000a).

In his seminal text "Entre Próspero e Caliban: Colonialismo, Pós-colonialismo e Inter-identidade,"<sup>42</sup> Santos (2001) argued further that this "complex peripheral condition" has been reproduced in the colonial system and continues to be reproduced in Portugal's relation to the European Union, which it has been a member of since 1986. This argument draws from Immanuel Wallerstein's (1974) influential World-systems Theory. Santos defined Portugal as a subaltern empire (vis-à-vis the hegemonic colonial model, the British) and a peripheric colonial power (at the levels of practice and discourse). The author coined Portuguese national identity *hybrid*, and the national culture *hollow* (form without contents) as it did (and still does) not count with a strong state to enforce a notion of national homogeneity, remaining therefore a heterogeneous culture shaped as a *fronteira*/borderzone. Santos discusses the very particularity of representation of a colonial system that sees itself as subaltern; a self-representation that, he argues, fed the national imaginary in the (former) colonies. He posited that an additional aspect of Portuguese colonial specificity is that it was the longest colonialism among European colonial cycles, preceding by three centuries the central colonial

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<sup>41</sup> Transl.: "Eleven Theses for the Occasion of Another Discovery of Portugal." Originally published in Via Latina (1991), followed by publication in other journals, and later as "Onze Teses Por Ocasião De Mais Uma Descoberta De Portugal," in *Pela Mão de Alice: O Social e o Político na Pós-Modernidade* (São Paulo: Cortez, 2000a), 53-74. [first edition 1995].

<sup>42</sup> After the original publication, a shortened English version followed: Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-Identity," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 39, no. 2 (2002), 9-43. And it was published more recently reworked as book chapter: Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "Entre Próspero e Caliban: Colonialismo, Pós-Colonialismo e Inter-Identidade," in *A Gramática do Tempo: Para Uma Nova Cultura Política* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2006b), 211-255.

capitalism of the nineteenth century, to which rules Portugal attempted to adapt. The perspective towards Portuguese colonialism as deviant particularism and specificity derives therefore from this disjunction with the time and hegemony of British colonialism/capitalism (Santos 2001).

Capturing Portuguese colonialism (and its aftermath) in its *difference*, a *situated colonialism* that demands historical specificity and comparatism, Santos identifies the practices of ambivalence, interdependence and hybridity between coloniser and colonised as (post)colonialism factual experiences, beyond discursive practice. Such practices/experiences, he affirms, must not be asserted by postcolonial theory; rather they must be scrutinised, namely searching for how they worked, who they served, and at the service of which power. Another salient aspect of this difference is the interlacing of race and skin colour, which leads to a “racism of a different type” that perversely acts in the intersection with gender. And finally, according to the sociologist, this difference is based in the subaltern Portuguese identity made of a double alterity: the *self-colonised coloniser* and the *colonised other*. A critical element in Santos’ *situated colonialism* is then the scrutiny of the workings of Portuguese colonial representations still today within a context of unequal power:

As identidades são sempre relacionais mas raramente são recíprocas. A relação de diferenciação é uma relação de desigualdade que se oculta na pretensa incomensurabilidade das diferenças. Na história do capitalismo, quem tem tido poder para declarar a diferença tem tido poder para a declarar superior às outras diferenças em que se espelha. A identidade é originariamente um modo de dominação assente num modo de produção do poder que designo por diferenciação desigual. (Santos 2006b, 231)<sup>43</sup>

I would contend, however, that *that* notion of a situated colonialism can be better placed within *this* (global) political framework. It must itself be situated, which requires a continuous scrutiny of power relations in the entrails of processes of (self) representation as a coloniser-colonised hybrid. Santos identified the political economy of Portuguese colonialism (namely marked by a weak or absent colonial state) that left a mark in such processes of identity construction. For him the porosity of such identity regimes was manifested in both *cafrealização* and *miscigenação* (*cafrealization* and *miscegenation*).<sup>44</sup> He posits that the mulatto/a, as symbolic merchandise of Portuguese colonialism, has been welcomed or rejected depending on the pacts and struggles of the colonial system at different times (Santos 2006a).

Throughout colonisation, Santos points out, Portugal has been portrayed, and

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<sup>43</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Identities are always relational but seldom reciprocal. The relation of differentiation is a relation of inequality that hides behind the supposed incommensurability of differences. Whoever has the power to state difference, has the power to declare that difference superior to the other differences reflected in its mirror. Identity is originally a mode of domination based on a mode of production of power that I designate as unequal differentiation (Santos, 1995: 424-428; 2000: 264-269).” Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-Identity,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 39, no. 2 (2002), 20.

<sup>44</sup> “The two phenomena are related, although referring to distinct social processes. Cafrealization is a nineteenth-century designation used mainly in Eastern Africa to stigmatize the Portuguese men that yielded their culture and civilized status to adopt the ways of living and thinking of the ‘cafres,’ the blacks depicted as primitive savages.” Ibid. 24. *Miscigenação* stands for the “racial mixture” between the Portuguese and “the native.” The concept, which recurs in the Portuguese postcolonial, will be explored further down the section.

represented itself, as Caliban against the European Prospero, as *Calibanised Prospero* or momentarily as (Imperial) Prospero.<sup>45</sup> These configurations reveal the high level of ambiguity and reciprocity (promiscuity) in what Santos titles *the time-space of official Portuguese language*: “Nem Próspero nem Caliban, restou-lhes a limiaridade e a fronteira, a interidentidade como identidade originária” (Santos 2006a, 237).<sup>46</sup> Portugal is therefore both subject and object of colonial desire, captured in its complex mirrored images of *Caliban-Próspero* and only lately projecting a dominant identity (denying the other) (Santos 2006a). In the same way, in Santos’ eyes, the country lives its postcoloniality in an ambiguous fashion.

Drawing on Santos’ concept of Portugal as a semi-peripheral society imagining itself as central, and enriching this concept with literary criticism, Margarida Calafate Ribeiro proposes the expression “the empire as the imagination of the centre” (Ribeiro 2002a, 134-138). She intends hereby to reveal echoes of old empires in the imagination of new ones, as they resonate with and represent a longing for those older empires (ibid). Ribeiro highlights the ambiguity of an imaginary caught between the centre of a colonial empire and the semi-periphery of Europe.

[The Portuguese national imaginary] was characterized both by the construction of images of the centre which were naturally imperial, archetypes of national greatness and by images of the periphery related to a secular decadence and a style of living far from replete with richness or imagination. ... These images reflect a rarely accepted condition: Portugal is both the precarious centre of an empire and an imperial periphery, which through its empire continued to be able to imagine itself as a centre. (Ribeiro 2002a, 139)

Santos’ theory has been greatly influential in the field, as is evidenced by its ramifications such as this one by Calafate Ribeiro,<sup>47</sup> but it has also been subjected to solid criticism. João Leal (2006) found in Santos’ analysis of Portuguese national identity the echoes of the tropes associated with the Portuguese empire recurrent in every reflection on national identity since the nineteenth century. In particular, Leal refers to Santos’ definition of Portuguese culture as a “cultura de fronteira” (frontier culture) that “vividly reminds” the so-called great capacity of adaptation of the Portuguese that supposedly characterised and enabled the imperial enterprise (Leal 2006, 78). This imagination, insidiously present in the reflections on national identity and in the common sense about it, carries what Leal coined a *hidden Empire*.<sup>48</sup> Further to Santos’ reflections on the wider space born out of Portugal colonialism, Fernando Arenas found here an important resonance with the doctrine of *Lusotropicalismo*, in its trajectory from a valorisation of *the Black* towards a validation of Portuguese

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<sup>45</sup> Prospero and Caliban are the central characters in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (1623). Prospero represents the master (“the right Duke of Milan”) and Caliban his enslaved (“a salvage and deformed Slave”) (William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 22.). These *Tempest* characters, alongside Ariel [(“an Airy Spirit”)] (ibid.), have been appropriated by anticolonial and postcolonial writing, as I will point out further down.

<sup>46</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Neither Prospero nor Caliban, they were left with liminality and the borderland, and with inter-identity as original identity.” Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-Identity,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 39, no. 2 (2002), 24.

<sup>47</sup> Calafate Ribeiro’s work is also highly influenced by the work of Eduardo Lourenço.

<sup>48</sup> Santos himself forwarded criticism to such “psychoanalytical and mythical” accounts targeting the respected intellectual Eduardo Lourenço, in particular in his *Onze Teses* (Santos, *Onze Teses Por Ocasião de Mais Uma Descoberta de Portugal*, 53-74).

colonisation (Arenas 2005). Inherent to this critique is a discomfort with a certain tradition of navel gazing found in Portuguese social and human sciences. Leal (2006) has indicated how Portuguese anthropology showed a lack of interest in other peoples in Africa and Asia in the heyday of Portuguese colonisation in the nineteenth century. Instead, he argues that the field was built upon reflections on Portuguese rural/popular cultures associated with the imperial enterprise (Leal 2006). This ever-present “hidden Empire” explains how such a majestic jump could be made between the characterisation of national identity to definitions of a transnational identitarian postcolonial “space” embarking four continents: *Lusofonia*.

Important reflections on Portuguese national identity developed since the nineteenth century that still resonate in Santos’ theories are *Saudosismo* and *Filosofia Portuguesa*. *Lusotropicalismo* also borrowed critical aspects of such intellectual projects, integrating them in an analysis of the formation of the Portuguese colony (i.e. Brazil) indebted to yet other national traditions (such as the nineteenth-century “myth of the three races,” according to which Amerindians, Africans and Portuguese intermixed to create a new Brazilian race, founding a harmonious society). As previously indicated, *Lusotropicalismo* had great influence in Brazil, Portugal and the newly independent African colonies, despite its critiques, and it is at the core of the current *Lusofonia*.

Miguel Vale de Almeida (2000b) concurs already with João Leal’s earlier texts in identifying in Santos’ theses the recurrence of those settled stereotypes of the ethnical psychology associated with Portuguese culture.<sup>49</sup> However, Almeida affirms the propriety of developing original theories to deal with the historical specificities of Portuguese colonisation, attentive to *Lusotropical* resiliencies:

Por outro lado, permanecem válidas certas factuaisidades históricas e sociais que estiveram na origem do luso-tropicalismo: refiro-me ao carácter incontornável de ter havido uma expansão portuguesa, uma colonização no Brasil, uma formação brasileira, um colonialismo português em África, e um lastro material e um ideal de documentos, objectos e ideias. (Vale de Almeida 2000b, 183)<sup>50</sup>

It therefore follows that the construction of a Portuguese postcolonialism—in other words, a body of knowledge about its colonialism and its afterlife (and practices in accordance)—should be guided by a critical gaze:

[U]ma atenção crítica constante à resiliência do luso-tropicalismo sob a forma de “lusofonia”, celebrações, etc.; uma atenção pesquisadora a processos específicos de construção triangular e transatlântica de sentidos culturais; uma atenção à comparação e ao diálogo com os exemplos e teorias produzidos nos centros intelectuais predominantes. (Vale de Almeida 2000b, 183)<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> He deals with João Leal’s manuscripts from 1997: “Psicologia étnica e história da antropologia em Portugal: invenção e circulação de estereótipos,” and 1999: “A sombra esquiada dos lusitanos: exercício de etnogenealogia.”

<sup>50</sup> The translation of the text is as follows. All translations from Portuguese to English that follow are done by the author: “On the other hand, some historical and social facts of Portuguese colonialism that inspired *Lusotropicalismo* remain valid: I refer to the undoubtedly specific character of the Portuguese expansion, of the colonisation of Brazil, of the formation of Brazil, of a Portuguese colonialism in Africa, and of a material trace and an ideal of documents, objects and ideas.”

<sup>51</sup> Corresponding text in English: “[A] critical attention to the resilience of Luso-Tropicalism under the guise of Lusophony and its avatars; complex understanding of historical and cultural transits and traffics

The anthropologist tentatively coined this formulation *pós-luso-tropicalista* (*post-Lusotropicalist*) (Vale de Almeida 2000b, 183). Associating this formulation with what Almeida argues are the requirements of any postcolonialism, Portuguese postcolonialism should entail an integrated analysis of the mutual constitution of the social representations of colonisers and colonised and, above all, must be attentive to the *other's* versions (ibid.).<sup>52</sup>

In a similar vein, Ana Margarida Fonseca (2007) calls attention to the criticism targeting Boaventura Santos' writing. According to her, Santos' theories have been perceived as running the risk of celebrating Portuguese culture in a *Lusotropical* fashion—a way of reifying exceptionalism (a tendency which, she argues, has been explicitly countered by the author); and, as above, identify cultural impurity or hybridity—attached to a notion of Portuguese culture as one of the border; in other words, Portuguese uniqueness.

Without calling into question the importance of the productivity of Sousa Santos's theoretical model, we would emphasize the necessity of a contextualized critical discourse, attentive to the asymmetries of power and authority, and especially judicious with respect to the idealization of the relationships between center(s) and periphery(ies). (Fonseca 2007, 52)

Here Fonseca is also addressing Boaventura Santos' more abstract theorization of the workings of hegemony and counter-hegemonic alternatives. In *A Crítica da Razão Indolente* (*A Critique of Lazy Reason*),<sup>53</sup> Santos (2000b) explored the dynamics of *the encounter at the borders*, where the centre of power and authority has been dislocated from the West. Hereby, he argues, inventive experimentation leads to the decanonisation of cultural narratives. This analytic but also propositive reflection continues inspiring debate, for its celebratory naivety and, on the other hand, its liberating promise. Fonseca acknowledges the criticism but restates the usefulness of Santos' theoretical arsenal for identifying the destabilising potential of the borders in the relationship between Portugal and its former colonies.

Ana Paula Ferreira (2007) commented on the same paramount aspects of asymmetry and authority in the construction of the postcolonial field, drawing an elaborated critique of Boaventura Santos of great relevance for my purposes here. She departs from central concepts he foregrounded and excavates their operation through power schemes inherited from empire within the field. I will therefore draw extensively from her important insights. Ferreira applies the notion of “situated knowledge” to Santos' postcolonial theory. She makes explicit the (unacknowledged) dialogue he established

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between Europe, the Americas, and Africa, thus overcoming a Lusocentric perspective; and comparison with other colonial and postcolonial cases.” Miguel Vale de Almeida, "From Miscigenation to Creole Identity: Portuguese Colonialism, Brazil, Cape Verde," in *Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory*, ed. Charles Stewart (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2007a), 108-132.

<sup>52</sup> Almeida is here calling for a renewed inclusion of Postcolonial Studies into the anthropological tradition (Miguel Vale de Almeida, *Um Mar da Cor da Terra : Raça, Cultura e Política da Identidade* (Oeiras: Celta, 2000b), 231), which however makes demands beyond these I am appropriating for the purposes of this study.

<sup>53</sup> Originally published in English (1995) and then revised, expanded and translated into Portuguese (2000).

with Feminist Theory<sup>54</sup> and the “extensive confluence” with Latin Americanist criticism of modernity and globalization,<sup>55</sup> as Santos’ theorising and the latter tradition result to some extent from “dialogues with common interlocutors” (e.g. Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o, Homi Bhabha, Gloria Anzaldúa, Achille Mbembe) (Ferreira 2007, 25). Her point is that the discourse on postcolonialism is also situated within a particular knowledge that is its site of enunciation, which must be consciously acknowledged and subjected to scrutiny. These are the grounds I apply for explicitly opting for the term postimperial in this dissertation.

The same aspirations inform those traditions, namely to destabilise a uniform universally-construed Europe as the centre from which hegemonic knowledge emanates, and confront the reproduction of colonial power relations (linking colonialism, racism, and Eurocentrism) in the current global order. Both Santos and the Latin Americanists seek to build critical theories not subjected to “the dominant discourse of postcolonialism in Anglo-American Academia” (Ferreira 2007, 21). Santos, on his part, offers what Ferreira coins a “sly riposte to the Spanish-centrism typical of postcolonial discourses identified as Latin-American”) (Ferreira 2007, 24).<sup>56</sup> By building a new strand of postcolonial thought, Santos intends to rescue Portuguese imperial history (in particular in Africa) from absorption into other imperial models considered as standard and, consequently, recuperate the histories of people subjected to this *other* colonisation.

In Santos’ Prospero-Caliban ambiguous identity marker of a subaltern coloniser, Ferreira further identifies the resonance of “a whole genealogy of resistant and anticolonial appropriations of Shakespeare’s rendition of the coloniser/colonised dichotomy in *The Tempest* [1623],” but in particular of the Cuban Fernandez Retamar’s *Caliban* (1971) where he forwards an “aggressively anti-imperialist argument” (Ferreira 2007, 26).

One could say that Santos’ “Between Prospero and Caliban...” picks up from where the simple dichotomies of Retamar’s “Caliban” left off, appropriating the latter’s radical anti-colonialist impetus for the use of a similarly radical but much wider and culturally diverse project of emancipation for the twentieth-first century, one launched in Portuguese as an assumed postcolonial language. (Ferreira 2007, 27)

It is important to point to another fundamental reworking of *The Tempest* that shapes this genealogy, namely Aimé Césaire’s *Une Tempête* (1969) (*A Tempest* (Césaire [1985] 2002)). Césaire’s appropriation of Shakespeare’s characters—Prospero and his colonial subjects Caliban and Ariel, who becomes here a “mullato slave” (Césaire 2002) — unveiled colonial discourse’s contradiction with its claims of universal

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<sup>54</sup> Ferreira points out that “the notion of ‘situated knowledge’ ensues from Donna Haraway’s critique of the pretensions of universalism in the white, male, heterosexist constructions of knowledge which we have inherited.” Ana Paula Ferreira, “Specificity without Exceptionalism: Towards a Critical Lusophone Postcoloniality,” in *Postcolonial Theory and Lusophone Literatures*, ed. Paulo de Medeiros, Vol. 1; 1 (Utrecht: Portuguese Studies Center - Universiteit Utrecht, 2007), 24.

<sup>55</sup> Anibal Quijano, Enrique Dussel and Walter Dignolo. (Ibid.)

<sup>56</sup> Gustavo Lins Ribeiro identifies the same bias in this tradition, which he coins an “Andean (and secondarily Mexican) accent” for arguing its deficiency when applied to analysis of colonial or contemporary Brazil. Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, “Why (Post)Colonialism and (De)Coloniality are Not enough: A Post-Imperialist Perspective,” *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no. 3 (2011b), 289.

humanism in the colonial *encounter*. Césaire's anticolonial and Panafrican agenda that shaped *Negritude* influenced a whole range of anticolonial/independence intellectuals in Africa and in the diaspora, such as his contemporary Léopold Sédar Senghor and his student Franz Fanon and, as pointed out by Manuela Ribeiro Sanches, those independence intellectuals gathered around the *Casa dos Estudantes do Império* (Empire Students' House) in Lisbon (1944-1965), namely Mário Pinto de Andrade (Angola), Agostinho Neto (Angola), Amílcar Cabral (Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde) and Noémia de Sousa (Mozambique) (Sanches 2011c).<sup>57</sup> Retamar acknowledges his indebtedness to previous engagements from the Antilles with Shakespeare's characters, namely Césaire's, and affirms the *black* Caliban (rather than the *mullato* Ariel) as the symbol of Latin American historical and cultural "condition," and its solid tradition of anticolonialism criticism and practice (Retamar 1989). This choice is fundamental in highlighting what Sanches noted as Césaire's rejection of hybridisation due to the concept's indifference to the asymmetrical processes that characterise the colonial situation—as made evident in his earlier *Culture and Colonisation* (1956) (Sanches 2011c, 33). Postcolonial Studies is obliged to Césaire's critique of colonial ideology, enlacing racialisation with cultural hierarchy. Portuguese postcolonial criticism has generally failed to acknowledge its indebtedness to African and African-centered theorisations. African (diasporic) authors of relevance are usually studied within the time and scope of nation-building projects in the aftermath of colonisation. These analyses seldom resonate into the postcolonial field, and so it misses much political edge and self-critical gaze.

Santos' project, shaped through that *situated postcolonialism* (Santos 2002, 19), engages former empire and colonies, for their: "epistemological basis is the difference or specificity of Portuguese colonization" (Ferreira 2007, 27). This suggests, according to Ferreira, that "some degree of complicity would have been forged specifically through the use of the Portuguese language between the denigrated, colonized colonizer and the fragmented, shifting otherness of the colonial subject or 'other other'" (ibid.).

Santos defines *the time-space of official Portuguese language* as a "contact zone,"<sup>58</sup> which, warns Ferreira, "suggests a tacit dialogue with the controversial concept of Lusofonia," materialised in the *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa* (*Community of Portuguese Language Countries, CPLP*). Ferreira recalls the criticism targeting the CPLP, which, erected to form a common front to fight the European competitors of the Portuguese language in Africa and Latin America, has been identified with neo-colonialist policy and imperial fantasy (see Eduardo Lourenço, Alfredo Margarido and Omar Ribeiro Thomaz) (Ferreira 2007, 28).

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<sup>57</sup> For further dynamics concerning the *Casa de Estudantes do Império* see Claudia Castelo, *A Casa dos Estudantes do Império: Lugar de Memória Anticolonial*, 2010. <http://hdl.handle.net/10071/2244>; and Patrick Chabal, *Amílcar Cabral : Revolutionary Leadership and People's War* (London: Hurst & Company, 2002), 272 [first published in 1983].

<sup>58</sup> Here Santos is referring to the widely cited concept of the contact zone as defined by Mary Louise Pratt: "Contact zone [is the term] I use to refer to the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples, geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed. (London New York: Routledge, 2008), 8.

As the very ground of colonial relations and their reproducibility after political independence, the European language then and now, there and here is what can hardly be avoided: it constitutes the very fabric of (post)coloniality. (Ferreira 2007, 28-29)

Ferreira draws from the same intellectual project as Santos, borrowing from those Latin Americanist critics of modernity. According to Walter Mignolo (2000a), “[P]ostcoloniality indicates that coloniality continues under new forms.” On the other hand, the same “post”: “designates critical intellectual projects that instead of reproducing under a new guise aim at countering and superseding the underlying principles of ‘Occidental reason’” (30).

“Post-occidental reason” then is an invitation to rethink the historical articulation of Christianity (that generated the enlightenment, that generated Liberalism and Marxism) in Europe with the invention of the West, brought about by the colonization of the West Indies and, de facto, by establishing the conceptual limits of modernity/coloniality.” (ibid., 29)

This is in this same *post-* that Santos (2000b) identifies the strength of a dominant paradigm that seeks continuity, where he similarly envisions the potential for its demise. For this paradigm shift, he forwards a critique of hegemony drawing “novos campos analíticos mais vastos e mais incompletos, e, simultaneamente, menos ocidental-cêntricos e menos Norte-cêntricos” (331).<sup>59</sup> Here, the search for a centre is no longer a territorial enterprise, but a semiotic activity. Yet according to Ferreira, for Santos, the actual agent of coloniality—Prospero—and its centre is outside of the Portuguese postcolonial realm, and is manifested in other languages:

“The time-space of the official Portuguese language,” that is, a transnational language carrying the burden, or the saving grace of a peculiarly underprivileged colonialism, would theoretically, then, enable emancipatory links among those who have suffered the human, cultural, and ecological violence brought on by processes of globalization in every site where the “coloniality of power” reeks of what Achille Mbembe has called “the postcolony.” (Ferreira 2007, 29)

Santos’ concept of the “cosmopolitan contact zone” from which he derives such “time-space” is defined, he argues, in opposition to the zone constituted by western modernity, which is both epistemological and colonial: dimensions traversed by extreme disparity. It follows that this zone must be transformed into a more inclusive one (actually zones) that contains a wider circle of reciprocity. Such zones, he continues, are traversed by disparities beyond those inherited from colonialism (Santos 2006c, 120-121). The Portuguese language emerges here as one such *zone* to be built on the grounds of shared (circumscribed) struggles, ambitions, and aspirations. Not only is this concept propositive, but it also undermines the widespread nature and incisiveness of coloniality, as it enlaces the colonial empire and global capitalism or hegemonic globalisation—themes on which Santos worked extensively. And yet further and back to Ferreira, the conjunction of former metropolis and former colonies in one such zone forged as an emancipatory project is problematic. Further down I will delve into the question of reciprocity in this *zone*.

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<sup>59</sup> Translation: “new wider and more incomplete analytical fields, and simultaneously less West-centric and less North-centric.”

Ferreira (2007, 29) highlights that Santos' project is admittedly utopian. It finds its roots in the "historical denigration of Portugal as an imperial country by those commanding the process of modern, late imperialism." She finds here a mechanism of compensation for a negative national image through attaching a positive connotation to alterity. Hereby Santos "proposes a theoretically empowering condition of alterity." However, this proposition associates with settled ideas about Portuguese colonialism and the postempire:

It would seem enviable for postcolonial ends, if the exceptionality of Portuguese colonialism thereby implied did not convoke the phantasm of that other better known version, namely the absence of racism. (Ferreira 2007, 29-30)

On the critical and foundational aspect of race, Roberto Vecchi (1999) recently explored and reworked the concept of Portuguese colonial exceptionality as an unfolding of rather than a critique of Santos' theories in their departure from Eduardo Lourenço's contention on the "insólita exceção portuguesa" ("peculiar Portuguese exception"). Vecchi points to the need to distinguish between on the one hand the specificity of Portuguese rhetoric and ideology associated to *Lusotropicalismo* and on the other the exception as representation and *modus operandi* of Portuguese colonialism – in line with Giorgio Agamben (2005). Further down the section I will explore Vecchi's analysis, as it offers important insights about colonial violence. Here I follow Ferreira's argument on Portuguese colonial exceptionality and/or specificity, as she addresses a critical resonance in Santos' theory, which I deem important for reflecting on imperial continuities in the postcolonial field in Portugal.

Ferreira situates Portuguese postcolonialism within the trajectory of "social thought surrounding racial imperatives" that seeks to appropriate defamed national images (Ferreira 2007, 30). She visualises the continuities between Gilberto Freyre's *Lusotropicalismo* and Boaventura Santos' *time-space of the Portuguese language*. Although representing "two different postcolonial moments," they both respond to hegemonic epistemologies and engage with their alternatives, the former to racialisation and the debate on race, and the latter to neo-liberal globalisation and postcolonial theory (ibid.).

Here the literature scholar indicates yet another problematic aspect in Santos' theorisation. For Ferreira, Santos, who is declaredly aware of the romanticised gaze to miscegenation in *Lusotropicalismo*, develops a gender-neutral model where she reads a "specifically Lusotropical homosociability" made of ambiguous Prosperos and Calibans. Besides, Ferreira argues, Santos' model is raceless, for he extricates the "Moment of Prospero" out of *that postcolonialism* of the Portuguese language: "For Santos, the colonizer turns into a Eurocentric, racist, paternalist Prospero only beginning with late imperialism, that is, at the time of the effective colonization of the African territories beginning in the end of the nineteenth century" (Ferreira 2007, 31).

In fact, as briefly highlighted previously, Santos did touch upon the conjunction of race (as phenotype) and gender—albeit not always naming it—within the Portuguese colonial mechanism:

Importante será dilucidar as regras sexistas da sexualidade que quase sempre deitam na cama o homem branco com a mulher negra, e não a mulher branca e o homem negro. Ou seja, o pós-colonialismo português exige uma articulação densa com a questão da discriminação sexual e o feminismo. (Santos 2006b, 227)<sup>60</sup>

However, this analysis fades away in the scrutiny of a colonial relationship between *the Portuguese* and the *black African*, marked by mutual subalternity up until that late moment of *Prospero*. Ferreira wonders how this subaltern (post)coloniality anchored in the Portuguese language can be “extricated from that moment” (Ferreira 2007, 31). She rescues the historian Charles Boxer’s accounts on Portuguese colonialism to counter the widely held academic view that: “the Portuguese were less racist than other Europeans in their relations with the peoples they colonized” (Ferreira 2007, 31). In pointing to the cohabitation between “racial mix” and racism, “Boxer instantiates the enunciation of colonial difference or specificity not synonymous with exceptionalism” (ibid.). According to Ferreira, this position responds to the perceived need to denounce persistent forms of racism that led to Nazi terror in the decades following World War II. Ferreira identifies in Boxer an unspoken targeting of that version of *Lusotropicalismo* appropriated by the *Estado Novo* in the 1950s.

Boxer may be said to be here anti-colonial, hence performing the sine qua non of an ideally critical postcolonialism, not by playing up the discourse of hybridity circulating as a beyond-racism since the previous decade, but by denouncing the racism that underpins every form of colonialism and from which racial mixtures are not excluded. (Ferreira 2007, 32).

Both Portuguese colonial exceptionalism and its critique engaged with the widespread image of Brazilian society ideally perceived as racially democratic, partly corroborated by the UNESCO studies on race at the time, and the debates to which they gave rise, revealing the persistence of racism alongside the myth of racial democracy.<sup>61</sup> António de Oliveira Salazar regime’s<sup>62</sup> appropriation of this myth fits within its wide (mostly discursive) strategy to rehabilitate its colonial regime against international pressure to *decolonise*.<sup>63</sup> This strategy comprised the revision of the Portuguese constitution in

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<sup>60</sup> Corresponding text in English: “What is important is to understand the sexist rules of sexuality that usually allow the white man to sleep with the black woman, but not the white woman with the black man. In other words, Portuguese postcolonialism calls for a strong articulation with the question of sexual discrimination and feminism.” Santos, *Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-Identity*, 17.

<sup>61</sup> The first of such studies, which were carried out between 1952 and 1955, was published in 1952: Charles Wagley, ed., *Race and Class in Rural Brazil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952). Antonio Guimarães highlights some of the criticism the study was subjected to on the part of intellectuals in Brazil (namely Florestan Fernandes and Roger Bastide) targeting Wagney’s underplaying of racial prejudice and discrimination in the country. Antonio Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães, ““Racial Democracy”,” in *Imagining Brazil*, eds. Jesse Souza and Valter Sinder (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 119-140.

<sup>62</sup> Salazar assumed the post of prime minister in 1932, a position he held for 36 years. His position is indebted to the *coup d’état* of 1926. In 1933 he instituted the *Estado Novo*, which lasted until 1974. The *Revolução dos Cravos* put an end to the dictatorial regime.

<sup>63</sup> Decolonisation is a problematic term. The term gains neo-colonial shades whenever it is applied to nominate former imperial settlers’ (often supposedly voluntary) agency in withdrawing from colonised territories. This is a recurrent use in Portuguese historiography and also in some strands of Postcolonial Studies. However the very same term entails quite opposite politics as it is used by or refers to the agency of (former) colonised or colonial subjects to wipe out structures of thought or organisation inherited from colonisation. The latter fits within the definition of the term as stated in *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*: “Decolonization is the process of revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms.

1951 which included the revision of the *Acto Colonial* (*Colonial Act*) (Ferreira 2007). The *Acto Colonial* was issued with the formal process of institutionalisation of the *Estado Novo* in 1930. It outlined the *difference* between Portuguese citizens and its colonial subjects kept outside of the realm of rights and citizenship. It prescribed the civilisation and assimilation of indigenous peoples. The regime understood the need for a new legal framework ruling the empire. “In 1953 a new law renamed the Colonies as Provinces and in 1961 the laws that defined the status of indigenous peoples as non-Portuguese were abolished” (Vale de Almeida 2007a).

The changes proposed by Adriano Moreira in his short time at the *Ministério do Ultramar* (*Ministry of the Overseas*) during the final days of *Salazarismo* also fit here. According to Yves Léonard (2000b), it is only during Moreira’s ministry that *Lusotropicalismo*, which had been a fundamental aspect of the rhetoric of *Salazarismo* since 1954, had a practical application. Léonard (2000a) also points that this appropriation marked Salazar’s late reaction to an international climate strongly against Portugal’s colonialism. In addition, João Carlos Paulo (2000) notes that this reaction was precipitated by the demands of the bourgeoisie in the colonies for modernisation and decentralisation, and the anticolonial wars<sup>64</sup> emerging after World War II. Ferreira (2007) remarks that the 1951 *voyage* (my term) undertaken by Gilberto Freyre to the “Portuguese overseas territories” happened within this context, under the invitation of the then Minister of the Overseas, Sarmento Rodrigues.

The need to rehabilitate the image of Portugal as a scandalously outdated colonial empire is evidently pressing, leading the regime to endorse and further encourage the development of the suggestion advanced by Freyre as early as in *Casa Grande e Senzala* [Masters and Slaves] (1933) regarding the difference of Portuguese colonialism. (Ferreira 2007, 33)

The ideas crystallised in Freyre’s travel (or, rather, that were already crystallised beforehand) were published in his *Aventura e Rotina* (1953a) and *Um Brasileiro em Terras Portuguesas* (1953b). Here Freyre expands his thoughts about *miscigenated Brazil* as a successful outcome of Portuguese colonialism to characterise the then-Portuguese colonies in Africa. Ferreira argues that the thesis of a different Portuguese colonisation (i.e. without racism) resonates with other projects of cultural diversity circulating in the 1950s, such as the one argued by Claude Lévi-Strauss, also modelled in Brazil. Despite the striking difference with African colonies, “where the reality of cultural (and racial) mixings ... was virtually null in comparison with what had taken place in Brazil,” this *model* was considered suitable to apply in that continent as well (Ferreira 2007, 34).

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This includes dismantling the hidden aspects of those institutional and cultural forces that had maintained the colonialist power and that remain even after political independence is achieved” (Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 63). Agency is therefore critical in the application of the concept. This understanding connects with decolonisation within (Latin Americanist) Decolonial Thought that figures in this dissertation.

<sup>64</sup> Anticolonial War(s), Independence or National Liberation Struggles are terms current in the field in African countries and African Studies. The same historical events are often termed Colonial War(s) in Portugal and Portuguese and/or Lusophone (Literature) Studies. I am reproducing the terminology adopted by the authors highlighted. This difference in terminology again evidences the fact that there are different loci of utterance in the postcolonial field.

Ferreira (2007) hints at the subsistence of this “model” in the following decades. She calls attention to the fact that African independence thinkers might have looked favourably towards racial and cultural mixings in such lines, and she refers here to Leopold Senghor’s lecture *Lusitanidade e Negritude* from 1975.<sup>65</sup> Miguel Vale de Almeida briefly comments on the “father of *Negritude*” being an inveterate Lusotropicalist, and on the contrast of this position with Freyre’s antipathy to the project of *Crioulidade*<sup>66</sup> made evident with his passage through Cape Verde, which he found “too African” instead of *Lusotropically* “mixed” (Vale de Almeida 2000b, 184).<sup>67</sup> He also glimpsed at the disillusion on the part of the Cape Verde literary elites, previously enthusiastic adepts of *Lusotropicalismo* such as Baltasar Lopes, in the aftermath of Freyre’s passage through the islands (*ibid.*).

It is critical to point out though that other African independence thinkers of stature expressly refuted the model of hybridity as a way out of colonialism. The reinscription of racialised colonial and class difference was a paramount element in debunking Portuguese colonialism in Africa. Sanches notes that Mário Pinto de Andrade (Angola), Amílcar Cabral (Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde) and Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique) explicitly denounced the *mitos de mestiçagem* (*myths of mestiçagem*) and the associated rhetoric of a *soft Portuguese colonialism* actively (re)produced by Gilberto Freyre for the *Estado Novo* after the abolition of the last *Estatuto do Indígena* (*Statute of Indigenous Populations*) (Sanches 2011c, 26-27).

The first version of the collection of laws comprising the *Estatuto do Indigenato*<sup>68</sup> emerged in 1926 with the institutionalisation of the *Estado Novo* and the series of legal dispositions that preceded it, established the legal status of (savages/indigenous)

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<sup>65</sup> Lecture delivered “on the occasion of [Senghor’s] induction as corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of Lisbon, and in celebration of the upcoming independence of Angola and Mozambique that same year (Ferreira, *Specificity without Exceptionalism: Towards a Critical Lusophone Postcoloniality* 35).

<sup>66</sup> *Crioulidade* was a project of Cape Verdian national/regional identity built by its intellectual elites, namely members of the literary movement *Claridade*, who saw in *Lusotropicalismo* the explanation for the country’s “racially mixed” population and the cultural expressions to which it gave rise. As Vale de Almeida argues, Cape Verde’s elites shaped a national identity in the late-colonial period upon the image of a successful *Lusotropical* civilisation. He also develops a sharp criticism of the notion of Portuguese colonialism’s ideological motor to *miscigenation*, which occurred rather as a side effect of it (i.e. Portugal’s minute population and lack of a trading middle class). Miguel Vale de Almeida, *Crioulização e Fantasmagoria* (Brasília: Universidade de Brasília, 2004a), 14. Furthermore, *Crioulidade* fits within the contextual expressions of *Creolization*, which, as Charles Stewart indicates, is both rich and confusing, given its several variations and appropriations. For a discussion of the various meanings of the concept in different (post)colonial geographies, see Charles Stewart, ed., *Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory* (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2007). For an analysis of *Crioulidade* and its varied meanings throughout Portuguese former colonies, see Miguel Vale de Almeida’s chapter in this same collection: Miguel Vale de Almeida, “From *Miscigenation* to Creole Identity: Portuguese Colonialism, Brazil, Cape Verde,” in *Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory*, ed. Charles Stewart (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2007a), 108-132. This chapter is an English version of his earlier work of 2000.

<sup>67</sup> See: Gilberto Freyre, *Um Brasileiro em Terras Portuguesas. Introdução a Uma Possível Lusotropicalologia, Acompanhada de Conferências e Discursos Proferidos em Portugal e em Terras Lusitanas e Ex-Lusitanas da Ásia, África e do Atlântico* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1953b), 438.

<sup>68</sup> *Estatuto Político, Social e Criminal dos Indígenas de Angola e Moçambique* (1926), *Acto Colonial* (1930), *Carta Orgânica do Império Colonial Português* and *Reforma Administrativa Ultramarina* (1933), and the *Estatuto dos Indígenas Portugueses das Províncias da Guiné, Angola e Moçambique* (1954).

subjects and (civilised) citizens of the Portuguese empire. These dispositions defined that two different legal systems would be applied in the empire: the Portuguese for its citizens, and the local/colonial for its indigenous subjects. Maria Paula Meneses (2010) highlights the role of these laws and decrees in the “legal consolidation of difference” (79) in the empire. According to the anthropologist, the *Estatuto*, which was the supreme instance of the consolidation of the invented category of *the indigenous* as a legal political category, classified imperial subjects as: (European and non-European) Portuguese, indigenous, and assimilated (as in “assimilated to civilisation,” in the rare cases of former indigenous persons who acquired Portuguese citizenship, a process to which were attached a series of moral and socioeconomic requirements). This classification was geared to fulfil the need of labour force for the empire, as the Portuguese settlers were considered unsuited for hard labour. The category *indigenous* was increasingly racialised, indicating *the African*, *the Black*. These subjects had the duty to work for the empire (without legal protection) but had few to no rights. The *Estatuto*, as argued by Meneses, conjured both the civilising mission (civilising through labour) and the framework of European humanism that fed the Portuguese Republic (1910); in other words, evolution/progress through economic development. Given the continuity between the Portuguese Monarchy and the Republic, democracy and colonialism were (discursively) made compatible. They instituted a moral and sociocultural hierarchy, which was racial and geographical (the civilised white continental European against the black uncivilised African). The *Estatuto* was only revoked with the eclosion of the struggles for national liberation in the African colonies, in 1961.

Post-World War II, awareness of race and its pernicious workings that led to the Holocaust met, to some extent, western criticism to racism’s intrinsic links with colonisation. However, as time elapsed, Ferreira argues, the category of “race” progressively disappears:

By the last decades of the twentieth century, both the rhetoric and the *mise-en-scène* of multiculturalism as manifestation of ethnic and cultural differences without or, better, in a beyond “race” celebrating hybridity, in-betweenness, *métissage*, the diasporic, the exilic characterizes what are thought to be, to always have been since before European expansion, eminently mixed and dislocated peoples. (Ferreira 2007, 35)

This pernicious gaze of racist origins, argues Ferreira, was naturalised by Postcolonial theory, only to be rescued by Paul Gilroy’s denouncement in *Against Race* (2000) that points to what “refusing ‘race’ as a discreet category of analysis leads to; and it is not against racism” (Ferreira 2007, 36). This criticism associates with general scholarly mistrust in the postcolonial for what has been reiterated as the absence of attention to actual power dynamics beyond the discursive realm, and the lack of awareness regarding the position of postcolonial enunciation with its consequent privileging and erasure of subjects and historical experiences. In line with Arif Dirlik (1994), Ferreira attacks the cosmopolitan postcolonial intellectual for setting forth this construct.

In a postcolonialism of postmodern philosophical contours, emanating from multiculturalist cosmopolitan sites, historical forgetfulness or selective recreation can lead to the invention of a past not marred by racial violence that was the foundation of and accompanied histories of colonialism, including their “post” variants. An extreme case of this predicament, or of the postcolonial foreclosure of racism, is found in contemporary Portugal, in the aftermath

of a five hundred year imperial history whose confusing spectres are shored up in the former colonial metropolis. (Ferreira 2007, 36)

It is from this place that Ferreira identifies, in the “time-space of official Portuguese language,” the rhetoric of *Lusofonia* and the constitution of *CPLP*, the Expo’98 (1998 Lisbon World Exposition) and the celebration of the 500 years of the so-called *Discovery of Brazil*, “expressions of neo-imperialist fantasy in vain foiling over continuing expressions and practices of racism” (Ferreira 2007, 36). In this context she recalls Vale de Almeida’s criticism of the “unquestioned common sense rooted in nineteenth century imperialism manifested in the recurrence of Luso-tropicalist commonplaces” (Ferreira 2007, 37). Omar Ribeiro Thomaz has coined such a cultural recurrence as “Luso-tropical eschatology” (Thomaz 2007, 60). Here Ferreira identifies both the persistence and invisibility of racism inscribed in the language construct.

It is the same subtle racism that lurks behind and continues to support the idea that there is such a thing as a common, somewhat fixed ground of language, Portuguese, bringing together a myriad of temporally and locally diverse colonizers and colonized (Ferreira 2007, 37).

Ferreira then *standpoints* the location of this utopia, its acute contradictions and tentative possibilities. Hereby the scholar dextrously unravels the striking colonial resiliences in the construct of a cultural geography harboured in the Portuguese language:

Inasmuch as it is the historical product of a de-centred, economically and politically weak, arguably subaltern European colonialism and inasmuch as it is constituted by an imperial language that has had no global protagonism since the end of the sixteenth century, a Lusophone postcoloniality may be figured as an inherently appropriate platform of anti-imperialist resistance for global times. But this figuration obeys a locale of imagining and enunciation – the ex-colonial metropolis, and from the perspective of a cosmopolitan intellectual at that. To assume that this figuration, no matter how refreshingly liberating it may sound, remains constant from Lisbon to Luanda, from Rio to Maputo is, however, to impose another version of a colonial privileged vision on supposedly postcolonial peoples, telling them what Portuguese can be or do for their always already subaltern positions. Only by appropriating the conceptual platform of a Lusophone Postcoloniality to recognize what is beyond repair and perhaps reparation, that is, to confront the history of racism delivered in, with, and sometimes against the former imperial language in its most prized cultural products, literature being one of them, can one *vigilantly inhabit the postcolonial*, multicultural(ist) but, certainly not “raceless” present. (Ferreira 2007, 37-38 my emphasis).

This analysis chimes with other critical queries into *Lusophone postcoloniality*. As mentioned above, Vale de Almeida indicates that historically the term hybridity, together with miscegenation and creolisation, constituted what became a category of commonality in the processes of shaping national identities in the Portuguese postcolonial field (Vale de Almeida 2006; 2007a; 2004a). Manuela Sanches rightfully posits that rather than celebrating or rejecting the concept, it is crucial to “consider the tensions that characterize the diverse and contradictory uses to which such signifiers are subjected” (Sanches 2011b, 8). João Leal reveals the phantom in this vocabulary:

O esplendor perdido do Império pode de facto ser visto não só como um elemento importante da “literacia cultural” (Lofgren 198: 13) dos portugueses, isto é, “o tipo de

competência cultural necessária para podermos participar do discurso público” (id. *ibid.*) sobre o qual assenta uma cultura nacional, mas também, de um modo mais vago, como uma das bases fundamentais das “associações, referências, e memórias” (id: 13) implícitas que atravessam os discursos e práticas quotidianas sobre a identidade nacional portuguesa. (Leal 2006, 79)<sup>69</sup>

Inocência Mata (2011) warns, on the other side of the mirror of representations, that “certain formulae and categories - such as creolization, *créolité*, ‘postcolonial’, ‘hybridism’, ‘hybridity’, *mestizaje*, ‘borderless identities (if not *de*-identities),’ ‘universal’, ‘global/local’, ‘modernity’” are usually applied by “Third World intellectuals” (“Africanists” in particular) working in/towards the centre, to confirm their “willing theoretical dependency” on western parameters which frame their countries of origin as peripheral. She draws from Ella Shohat’s (1992) “Notes on the ‘Post-colonial’” to argue for not forgetting that “a celebration of syncretism and hybridity per se, if not articulated in conjunction with questions of hegemony and neo-colonial power relations, runs the risk of appearing to sanctify the *fait accompli* of colonial violence” (Shohat quoted in Mata 2011, 94). Vale de Almeida also draws from Shohat’s criticism of postcolonial studies for its: “ambiguidade política e teórica e pela confusão que estabelece nas distinções colonizador/colonizado, dissolvendo a política de resistência ao não apontar claramente quem exerce a dominação” (Vale de Almeida 2000b, 232).<sup>70</sup> In the same vein, Ana Paula Ferreira affirms that a series of anti-racist works and movements<sup>71</sup> emerging in Portugal in the 1990s did not receive the attention they deserved as they: “[v]ehemently contradict[ed] the Luso-tropicalist identitarian encyclopaedia or cultural common-sense” (Ferreira 2007, 37) of an old imperial metropolis turned *multicultural*.

At the same time, recent ethnographic research exposes this rhetorical construct, as it reveals the low social status of groups of “African origin” in Portugal (Cabecinhas 2003). It shows that the hegemonic culture does not translate the discourse of welcoming hybridism into a practice of interaction with the voices and cultural practices of the (racialised) *other* (Khan 2006). The work of Marta Araújo and Silvia Rodríguez Maeso about racism in the educational system (Araújo and Maeso 2012), later integrated in their recent *The Contours of Eurocentrism: Race, History and Political Texts* (2016), and this book as a whole, are other important references within this trend of research on racial discourse and racialised practice in Portugal. Lisbon is paradigmatic for this dynamic. Following Paulo de Medeiros (2009, 35), despite the visible “African presence,” the city—coined by Fernando Arenas (2012, 173) “one of the most African cities in Europe”—manifests the very drama of invisibility of these

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<sup>69</sup> Transl.: “The lost splendour of the Empire can indeed be seen not only as an important element of ‘cultural literacy’ (Lofgren 198: 13) of the Portuguese, that is, ‘the kind of cultural competence necessary to participate in the public discourse’ (id. *ibid.*) upon which a national culture rests. But it can also be considered, more vaguely, as one of the fundamental bases of implicit ‘associations, references, and memories’ (id: 13) that cross the daily discourses and practices on Portuguese national identity.”

<sup>70</sup> Corresponding text in English: “The field was criticized for its political and theoretical ambiguity, the confusion established in the distinction between colonizers and colonized, thus dissolving the politics of resistance as a consequence of not pointing out who exercises domination.” Miguel Vale de Almeida, *The Brown Atlantic. Anthropology, Postcolonialism, and the Portuguese-Speaking World*, March 11, 2006. <http://miguelvaledealmeida.net/wp-content/uploads/2008/05/the-brown-atlantic-2005.pdf>.

<sup>71</sup> See the work of Gonzaga Lambo, João Paulo N’Ganga and the collection edited by Teresa Castro d’Aire titled *O Racismo* (cited in Ferreira, *Specificity without Exceptionalism: Towards a Critical Lusophone Postcoloniality*, 37).

postcolonial others, while exoticising them. The city is covered by what Medeiros characterises a “nevoeiro branco” (white fog) which reveals the blind aspects and whitening of its imperial memory.

Current postcolonial trends further scrutinise the dissociation between this particular and ambiguous symbolic universe and the actual experiences of African postcolonial subjects (either recent emigrés or African descendents) in Portugal. Manuela Ribeiro Sanches argues that the national imaginary still portrays Portugal as a:

Lusotropical paradise, ... identified with postcolonial hybridity, implicitly evoking the disavowal of the colonial past, present in less confrontational, though no less aggressive, forms of racism that make it all the more difficult for blacks to frame their claims against discriminatory racial practices. (Sanches 2007, 141)

Inocência Mata denounces the continuation of the imperial assimilationist ideology, which acts to erase *the African* element from Portuguese culture. She argues that Africans are denied full citizenship, and are portrayed in public space as folkloristic cultural objects. For the literature scholar, Portugal has a lack of zones of symbolic intersection where the perceptions of different subjects of this nationality can meet and confront each other (Mata 2006). José António Fernandes Dias follows from here, contending that in the visual arts in particular, efforts to rethink Portuguese colonial history and its postcolonialism are incipient, and “o silêncio e a invisibilidade sobre o não-ocidental ainda são dominantes” (Dias, José António B. Fernandes 2006, 317-337).<sup>72 73</sup>

This insidious silence and invisibility are actively produced. João Leal argues that the selective process of building national memory rests upon a consensus about what to remember and what to forget. As for Portugal, this consensus is established upon a *hypermnnesia* (from Michael Roth) regarding the time of national greatness, i.e. the *Discoveries* (Leal 2006, 79). *Lusotropicalismo* was then the last (or most recent) trope in a history of quest for a lost imperial grandeur.

Recently some of the erasures made by that hypermnnesia of the empire are being rescued into national memory. Paulo de Medeiros (2007b) notes that the *colonial wars* represent a national trauma that took three decades to become an object of scrutiny beyond the realm of literature.<sup>74</sup> Roberto Vecchi (2010a) examines this literature, which he named residual and spectral; an imperial phantom that enacts a tension between the loss of the empire and its salvation (Vecchi 2003, 188, 190, 193). Vecchi proposes gazing at this corpus through the metaphor of the art object as its artist’s crypt, her/his inner place of hiding, where s/he both loses something and enables its emergence as representation (ibid., 196). Hereby, “o resgate das contramemórias mais marginalizadas ou singulares de experiências colectivas traumáticas resiste à amnesia do mundo da

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<sup>72</sup> Transl.: “the silence and invisibility of the non-western [subject] are still dominant.”

<sup>73</sup> These dynamics are further elaborated in the article: Patricia Schor, *Language as Art Object: Africa in the Museums of the Portuguese Language-Brazil and Portugal*, 1-38.

<sup>74</sup> Medeiros refers here in particular to: Margarida Calafate Ribeiro and Ana Paula Ferreira, *Fantasmata e Fantasias Imperiais no Imaginário Português Contemporâneo* (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2003), 310.; and Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, *Uma História de Regressos: Império, Guerra Colonial e Pós-Colonialismo* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2004a), 464.

técnica” (ibid., 202).<sup>75</sup> However, this recovery of the voices and experiences of those who fought for the empire incurs the erasure of yet other marginalised counter-memories notoriously phantasmagorical in the postcolonial canon.

In a recent interview, Margarida Paredes argues for the importance of the main subjects of her recent book *Combater duas Vezes, Mulheres na Luta Armada em Angola (Fighting Twice, Women in the Armed Struggle in Angola)* (2015). The book, the result of anthropological research, is built upon the testimonies of female fighters in the independence war in Angola, and attempts to revert the current trend. The journalist notices about Paredes that: “Espera que por essas vozes se perceba que é preciso olhar para o que se está a escrever da parte de Portugal sobre essa história recente.”<sup>76</sup> According to Paredes herself:

Estamos habituados aos testemunhos dos homens militares das Forças Armadas Portuguesas e à história colonial que se construiu à volta disso. Falam muito das terroristas ou das “putas”, que é como muitos se referem às nacionalistas. Tratam-nas como se fossem umas selvagens, atrasadas, primitivas. ... Este livro é a versão africana [dos...] factos a partir dos quais Portugal faz a leitura colonial. É o outro lado da História, para mais através de mulheres. (Lucas 2016)<sup>77</sup>

The anthropologist, who is not alone in those targeting the testimony of *others*, goes nevertheless against the canon that privileges the subject of the empire as first voice of testimony that is, above all, male. Moreover, in the context of the recent world crisis, Sanches (2011a) identifies the revival of *Lusotropical* representations that are reawakening imperial nostalgia. This imaginary is associated with that notion of Portuguese subalternity and depends on such selective historical silencing. It is a silencing that targets or, rather, avoids particular subjects and specific historical periods, namely enslaved black people up until the early nineteenth century:

[O] que também parece ser, mais uma vez, adiado é a necessidade de um debate sobre o passado colonial - não só sobre a memória mais recente da guerra –tópico cada vez mais recorrente-, mas também a mais longínqua, mas não menos relevante, história da escravatura, história essa silenciada sob a ideia de uma natural bonomia lusa, de eternos brandos costumes, patentes no modo aquiescente com que a população portuguesa parece empenhada em evitar tumultos .... Isto de par com uma outra noção, a da subalternidade de Portugal, em contextos imperiais - nação tardia, não em termos de unidade nacional, mas de “desenvolvimento” e da sua incapacidade de se afirmar face a outros herdeiros de impérios mais poderosos. (Sanches 2011a)<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Transl.: “the recovery of the most marginalised or singular counter-memories of traumatic collective experiences resists the amnesia of the world of technique.”

<sup>76</sup> Transl.: “She hopes that through these voices one realizes that one must look at what is being written, on the part of Portugal, about this recent history.”

<sup>77</sup> Transl.: “We are used to the testimonies of military men of the Portuguese Armed Forces and to the colonial history that was built around it. They talk a lot of terrorists or ‘sluts,’ which is how many refer to the [female] nationalists. They treat [these women] as if they were wild, backward, primitive. ... This book is the African version [of ...] facts of which Portugal does a colonial reading. It’s the other side of History, moreover through the women[’s gaze].”

<sup>78</sup> Transl.: “[That] which also seems to be postponed, once again, is the need for a debate on the colonial past, not only about the most recent memory of the war—an increasingly recurrent topic—but also the most distant but not least relevant history of slavery, a history that is silenced under the idea of a natural Lusitanian bonhomie, of eternal mild customs, evident in the acquiescent way the Portuguese population appears keen to avoid disturbances ... . This is paired with another notion, of the subordination of

Sanches (2011a) denotes the ambiguity of Portugal's desire of belonging to the row of European multicultural societies, with the advantage of a greater degree of *mestiçagem*, which purportedly allows dissociation from Europe and the establishment of other enclaves. However, this desire and imagination excludes the questioning of the imperial past, which determined this "multicultural" condition.

The formation of the Portuguese postcolonial canon reflects these sensibilities and to a certain extent replicates historical silencing, (gendered and racialised) hierarchisation of historical experience and imperial gazing generally. This emergent canon is constituted through the selective establishment of scientific authority and legitimacy and therefore of irrelevance of *other* perspectives. Luis Madureira's (2008) important remark on the absence of anticolonial literature in the postcolonial canon associates with Mata's contentions on the conditioned position of African literature to a western/Lusitanian centre. This literature is the very cradle of postcolonial critique, and its status of subservience to the centre, and epistemological dependency on it (Mata 2011) is given continuity in other strands of postcolonial criticism, despite robust dissidence, as highlighted here. These dynamics are tensely present in other postcolonial geographies, as evident in Bhabha's inquiry on the forms privileged in the transcendence of the unrepresentable, which ensure that historical subjects remain unrepresented in a vaster invisibility (Bhabha 1994).

Following Sanches (2011a), the recent economic crisis illuminated the unquestioned consensus around Portuguese national identity indebted to empire as a way out of Europe. She notes that while in other European countries (e.g. Germany, France and Great Britain) historical memory has been subjected to criticism and the marginalisation of migrants has ignited social mobilisation, Portugal remains engulfed in an imperial imagination (*Portugalidade* – "Portugality") informed by a representation of subalternity. It is important not to overlook the enduring work of antiracist organisations in Portugal such as *SOS Racismo*, *Plataforma Gueto*, and *Djass – Associação de Afrodescendentes*. However, it is a fact that no matter how relevant their interventions are for subaltern racialised persons and communities, they remain marginal in the public sphere and in the public debate, and scarcely influence the academic debate.

Aparentemente afastados dos centros e dos ventos da história, os portugueses persistem em embalar-se com narrativas mais suaves que pouco ajudam a que uma autodefinição mais conforme com o seu passado e presente se torne possível. Mais, na ausência de um debate e de uma mobilização efectiva da sociedade portuguesa para esses temas, é como se o presente existisse suspenso no tempo. (Sanches 2011a)<sup>79</sup>

This fixation on the *excepcionalidade no modo de colonizar* (*exceptionality in the way to colonise*) occludes colonial violence and contemporary forms of exclusion and violence indebted to it. Sanches (2011a) coins these *tempos de penúria económica e*

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Portugal in imperial contexts—belated nation, not in terms of national unity, but of 'development' and of its inability to assert itself against other heirs of more powerful empires."

<sup>79</sup> Transl.: "Seemingly remote from the centres and the winds of history, the Portuguese persist in comforting themselves with softer narratives that do not help in making possible a self-definition in accordance with its past and present. Furthermore, in the absence of a debate and an effective mobilisation of Portuguese society around these issues, it is as if the present exists suspended in time."

*intellectual (times of economic and intellectual penury)* and demands the daring act of political correction, i.e. postcolonial reflection, and debate for social mobilisation.

The trope of translation is a productive metaphor for such audacious postcolonial interrogation into the postempire. In the next chapter, I will explore its possibilities, though being aware of the phantoms that haunt the field.

## Chapter 2. Postcolonial translation

If, in every epoch, there are concepts that at a certain point in time achieve such a broad circulation that they seem able to name just by themselves the main determinants of the epoch, one such concept, nowadays, is the concept of translation. It can, in fact, be said without reservation that translation has become a central metaphor of our time. (Ribeiro 2004b, 2)

The field of Translation Studies has developed swiftly over the last two decades in western academia, since its “cultural turn” (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990) in the 1990s. As Postcolonial Studies evolved from literature into other areas within the humanities and the social sciences, it picked up topics of translation and inscribed colonial difference, or the power asymmetries inherited from colonialism, into its core.<sup>80</sup> In the Portuguese academia this movement is also noticeable.<sup>81</sup>

Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006b) selected core elements of Postcolonialism in order to critically evaluate its contributions to his counter-hegemonic project. This evaluation highlights his dissociation from postcolonial trends akin to what he coined *celebratory postmodernism*, marked by an exclusively discursive and performative analysis blind to actual power. On the other hand, Santos argues that this same evaluation points to postcolonial trends supportive of critically analysing and countering such postmodernism, for it centres analysis on the power asymmetry characteristic of the colonial relationship. This, Santos indicates, offers instruments for reflecting on other asymmetrical relationships outside of the constraints of the modernist analytical canon. It is with this aim that he chooses the topic of translation within the postcolonial canon.

Santos (2006b) refers to the translation of discursive elements and practices as a mark of the postcolonial intellectual’s craft in her/his struggle to interrupt western hegemonic discourses, in charge of rationalising and normalising inequalities both at the material as the epistemological levels (following Bhabha 1994). Still drawing from Bhabha’s theorising, Santos identifies here a *third way/space*, namely culture, where the intellectual supports the subaltern in recovering speech, which literally means uttering her/his voice, but also exercising her/his citizenship in a broader sense.<sup>82</sup> Expanding further on Bhabha, Santos sheds light into the concept of cultural hybridity in order to counter essentialist conceptions of cultures as pure/original.<sup>83</sup> Here translation emerges with a critical role for enabling cultural communication. The trope, he posits, supports an understanding of the dynamics of contact particular to Portuguese colonialism. Santos explores the ambivalence and hybridity he deems characteristic of the identity

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<sup>80</sup> For a brief overview of developments in the field of relevance for this analysis, see Appendix.

<sup>81</sup> Translation Studies in Portugal will not however be considered in this chapter, as I chose to focus on the particular appropriation of the topic of translation inside the Postcolonial field.

<sup>82</sup> Drawing from Toni Morrison, Bhabha argues for the “political responsibility of the critic”: “For the critic must attempt to fully realize, and take responsibility for the unspoken, unrepresented pasts that haunt the historical present.” Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 12.

<sup>83</sup> Although Santos indicates that the concept has a much longer genealogy, starting with Mahatma Gandhi. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “Entre Próspero e Caliban: Colonialismo, Pós-Colonialismo e Inter-Identidade,” in *A Gramática do Tempo: Para Uma Nova Cultura Política* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2006b), 218.

regimes in colonialism, associated with Postcolonial theories. His analysis of Portuguese colonialism as expression of a particular mix of the stereotypical Prospero and Caliban characters, addressed above, reveals the strong links between the representation of coloniser and colonised and of the very shaping of their roles in the colonial system. Racism becomes, in this dynamic, the link between such positions, and race the *symbol of difference*. Assimilation, as *unaccomplished imitation*, reveals the actual impossibility of bridging difference that has been essentialised. According to Santos, the postcolonial unveiling of hybridity mines the reproduction of such hegemonic representations, so it calls for *postcolonial translation*.

A diferença cultural subverte as ideias de homogeneidade e uniformidade culturais na medida em que se afirma através de práticas enunciativas que são vorazes em relação aos diferentes universos culturais de que se servem. ... A enunciação cultural cria uma temporalidade própria, e é ela que torna possível a emergência de modernidades alternativas à modernidade ocidental, precisamente através de “traduções pós-coloniais.” (Santos 2006b, 220)<sup>84</sup>

As pointed out above, Santos (2006b, 223-224) explicitly warned against the propensity found in Postcolonial Studies to “disregard questions of power,” asserting a “celebratory post-modernism” blind to the material conditions of the life of diasporic subjects, whose hybridity is commemorated. This stated awareness might however be undermined by the recurrence of that notion of hybridity to characterise Portuguese national culture and social experiences and its particular colonialism. Hybridity, as previously argued, is intimately associated with the meta-narrative of Portuguese imperialism, blurring hereby the distinctive positions of power in the (post)colonial relationship. This criticism is present in the Portuguese postcolonial field, as indicated above. Santos insists on the use of postcolonial tropes such as frontier and border in a way to mark the movement of the centre (of power) towards the margins, and has recourse to the frontier (Portuguese) culture in the sense of a *contact zone* or *borderland*. Hereby he does mark a distinction with a celebratory postcolonial. However, at the same time, he rescues Lusophone tropes such as fluidity, ambivalence and promiscuity to characterise a Portuguese colonialism where a different racial regime creates a universe where the *other does not exist* (Santos 2006b, 228). A genuine Portuguese postcolonial (and for that matter postimperial) critique requires first of all a recovery of raced and gendered alterity in this *space of (dis)encounter* with Africa, and an identification of that which distinguishes imperial power from colonial oppression, namely racialised biopower (a theme elaborated by Robert Vecchi, as will be discussed below).

António Sousa Ribeiro engages with the same contemporary streams in translation and with Santos to argue for the core role of this metaphor for conceiving a new *conviviality* respectful of difference and devoid of assimilation. He points to hegemonic globalisation, which is homogenising in its cultural and linguistic fashion, English

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<sup>84</sup> Transl.: “Cultural difference undermines ideas of cultural homogeneity and uniformity as it affirms itself through enunciative practices that are voracious in relation to different cultural universes of which they are served.” Further corresponding extract in English: “Cultural enunciation creates its own temporality. This specific temporality is what renders possible the emergence of alternative modernities to western modernity, precisely by means of ‘postcolonial translation.’” Santos, *Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-Identity*, 14.

being the lingua franca worldwide. This is “the language of the empire,” geared towards “total assimilation” to an “all-encompassing centre,” whose unique logic is monolingual. It follows that “one possible definition for hegemonic globalization is that of globalization without translation” (Ribeiro 2004b, 2). This view, according to Ribeiro, draws from the insistence of globalisation on “the appearance of homogeneity” (ibid.) and on the construction of borders separating a substantial universal core from otherness, found outside of the realm of culture.

Thus, the illusion of homogeneity is simply a fiction through which hegemonic globalization renders invisible those differences, inequalities, and contradictions that counter-hegemonic globalization strives to expose. In this way, if we can think of hegemonic globalization as globalization without translation, the very idea of a counter-hegemonic globalization is totally dependent of a notion of translation. (Ribeiro 2004b, 3)

This critique is accurate and compelling but also reveals a repeated erasure in the postcolonial in Portugal, where hegemony is found outside of the Portuguese language—in the Anglophone realm—and only seldom within it. This postimperial idiosyncrasy is what Ferreira challenged in Santos’ accounts that dissociated the moment of Prospero from Portuguese colonisation. The trope of translation serves to undo this erasure, but then it must also be situated in the *postempire*.

Ribeiro associates translation with a perspective towards culture that rejects “the border as a dividing line” and rather relies on the space of culture as “a space of meeting and articulation” (Ribeiro 2004b, 4), a borderland. The border is a core theme in Sousa Ribeiro’s critical intervention. He asserts: “Um pensamento crítico ... é, por definição, um pensamento fronteiriço, exerce-se, não para além das fronteiras, mas *na* fronteira” (Ribeiro and Ramalho quoted in Ribeiro 2002b, 204).<sup>85</sup> In consequence, the translator, moved by a “cosmopolitan reason,” has not the function “of a ‘go-between’ [borders], but of a ‘get-between’, someone who does not simply bring and take, but who, literally, gets in the middle” (Tobias Döring quoted in Ribeiro 2004b, 5-6).

And here I pause to reflect on a theme that recurs in this dissertation, which is the moving definition of the border as frontier or as borderland, to enlighten dynamics of postcolonial (dis)encounter. Relying on Ribeiro’s account, I argued for the borderlands to be gazed at as spaces of (dis)encounter traversed by power asymmetry. This perspective points to the arduous and witty dynamics of transformation of the (dis)encounter. Ribeiro recourse to Decolonial Thought to reveal the disputed dynamics in the realm of culture, where colonial ideology attempts to subsume the subaltern through assimilation and the imposition of patterns of the centre. The act of translation actually occurs when such power relations are put into question and redefined, and the terms of engagement are disturbed (Ribeiro 2004b, 4). Departing from the work of Lawrence Venutti on the ethics of difference (1998), Ribeiro calls for a further step towards the “critique of the much abused word dialogue” (Ribeiro 2004b, 4), which means interrogating such terms of engagement:

As can easily be observed in postcolonial contexts, offering to engage in dialogue, if it is not accompanied by the willingness to put in question the dominant frames of reference, often

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<sup>85</sup> Transl.: “A critical thinking ... is, by definition, a border thinking. It applies itself, not beyond borders, but *on/at* the border.”

amounts to just one more act of power – no wonder the colonised or subaltern are often not prepared to accept such a gist of dialogue, much to the (in the end unjustified) surprise of the offering party. (Ribeiro 2004b, 4-5)

This critique of translation's bond with the West and thus at the service of colonialism in alleged *zones of contact* associates with Mary Louise Pratt's (2008, 8-9) *anti-conquest*, which are "the strategies of representation whereby the European bourgeois subjects seeks to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony." This coinage marks a clear distancing from face-value dialogical dynamics between hegemonic and subaltern subjects that, at the end of the day, reinforce the benevolence of a hospitable imperial centre, and crystallise representations of alterity.

The core issue is, precisely, the mode of translation, the question whether those processes tend simply towards assimilation and reduction to the identical or, on the contrary, are able to put forward the non-identical, which can only be done by keeping alive a relation of mutual tension and mutual strangeness. (Ribeiro 2004b, 5)

Translation is therefore a practice par excellence at the space of (dis)encounter. Here Ribeiro highlights the pivotal importance of the concept of the border—as a tense space of relation without alterity—in relation to translation.

Translational reason is a cosmopolitan reason, but not simply in the sense that it proceeds across borders; what is decisive is its ability to situate itself on the border, to occupy the spaces of articulation and to permanently negotiate the conditions of that articulation. (Ribeiro 2004b, 5)

The border, which I rather name the borderland as a liminal territory of decolonisation—after Anzaldúa (1987)- is linked by Ribeiro to the notion of "third space" that Santos also borrowed from Bhabha.

That the border, by definition, signals a condition of precariousness and instability is something that does not need to be stressed. One of the consequences of the acceptance of this interstitial condition is that the accepted topoi, literally the commonplaces of a given culture, no longer apply as premises, and rather become themselves an object of contention and argumentation – of negotiation. (Ribeiro 2004b, 6)

This critique is fundamental for it invites questioning of the very premises of Portuguese postcolonial thought, which still relies on *Lusotropical* commonplaces and is haunted by the phantoms that inhabit the Portuguese *postempire*. From Medeiros, and as referred to in the Introduction to this dissertation, the postempire is the locus of metropolitan postcolonialism (in line with Spivak).

Ribeiro's critique associates with Santos' theses on social change, which find in translation a means to rescue silenced subaltern knowledges and foster "mutual intelligibility" (Ribeiro 2004b, 7). Santos' (2003, 240) main project is to recover the multiplicity and diversity of social practices, which were erased and discredited by the imposition of the hegemonic model of western modernity. I will dedicate attention to the intricacies of his politically laden project, for it enables an understanding of the translation it calls for. First Santos illustrates how this erasure has been generated:

Há produção de inexistência sempre que uma dada entidade é desqualificada e tornada invisível, ininteligível ou descartável de um modo irreversível. O que une as diferentes lógicas de produção de não existência é serem todas elas manifestações da mesma monocultura racional. (Santos 2006c, 95)<sup>86</sup>

Out of non-conformism with such a waste of social experience and for the struggle for social emancipation in order to build a more ethical and plural present and an alternative future, Santos aims to found a new model of rationality, which he coins *cosmopolitan reason*. This reason is built through the procedures of the *sociologia das ausências*, *sociologia das emergências* and the *trabalho de tradução* (*sociology of absences*, *sociology of emergences* and the *work of translation*) (Santos 2006c, 88).

Santos argues that translation must be preceded by the scrutiny of the mechanism whereby subjects, knowledges and experiences are made absent. His criticism of western hegemony entails apprehending the asymmetrical power relations actively involved in the production of non-existence (through silencing, suppression and marginalisation). He argues that both absence and disqualification are shaped through the establishment of criteria of validity and credibility and simultaneously legitimising hierarchy, associating difference with inequality, defining a particular logic of scale between the West and *the rest*, and privileging the capitalist productive logic above all other forms of economic organisation. Broadly speaking, these mechanisms are inscribed in two logics: universalisation of the West, and de-credibilisation of *its others*. First, western epistemology was turned into a universal, a procedure that hid the socio-economic context of its production, and naturalised its pretence validity. However, Santos posits with Maria Paula Meneses that:

[A] epistemologia dominante é, de facto, uma epistemologia contextual que assenta numa dupla diferença: a diferença cultural do mundo moderno cristão ocidental e a diferença política do colonialismo e do capitalismo. (Santos and Meneses 2009, 10)<sup>87</sup>

Santos' project inscribes itself in the wider endeavour taken by Cultural Studies, as outlined by Ribeiro (2002b), to critically "confront the Humanities with its radically de-contextualizing logics": "É essa exigência [contextualizante] que permite não perder de vista tudo aquilo que resiste à lógica de indiferenciação – a começar pelo sofrimento concreto dos seres humanos" (Ribeiro 2002b, 204).<sup>88</sup> Categories such as value, difference, distinction and hierarchy, have an important role to play in this wide-ranging project.

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<sup>86</sup> Corresponding extract in English: "Non- existence is produced whenever a certain entity is disqualified and rendered invisible, unintelligible, or irreversibly discardable. What unites the different logics of production of non-existence is that they are all manifestations of the same rational monoculture." Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "The World Social Forum: Toward a Counter-Hegemonic Globalization," in *World Social Forum. Challenging Empires*, ed. Jai Sen and others (New Delhi: The Viveka Foundation, 2003), 238.

<sup>87</sup> Transl.: "[The] dominant epistemology is indeed a contextual epistemology based on a dual difference: the cultural difference of the western Christian modern world and political difference of colonialism and capitalism."

<sup>88</sup> Transl.: "It is this [contextualizing] requirement that allows us not to lose sight of all that resists the logic of differentiation - starting with the real suffering of human beings."

According to Santos and Meneses, the scrutiny of the establishment of that hierarchy and western hegemony opens the path to a reconfigured West (Santos and Meneses 2009, 14). Santos (2009b) elaborates further on the waste of experience inside the West, and calls for rescuing suppressed or forgotten western traditions and for consciousness about the continuity between western values and institutions—regarded as manifestations of its exceptionality (Occidentalism)—with values and institutions of other regions of the world.

Os exercícios que proponho visam ampliar a experiência histórica do ocidente. Dão voz a tradições do ocidente que foram esquecidas ou marginalizadas porque não se adequavam aos objectivos imperialistas e ocidentalistas que vieram a dominar a partir da fusão entre modernidade ocidental e capitalismo. ... O meu interesse é mostrar que muitos dos problemas com que hoje se debate o mundo decorrem não só do desperdício da experiência que o ocidente impôs ao mundo pela força, mas também do desperdício da experiência que impôs a si mesmo para sustentar a imposição aos outros. (Santos 2009b, 448)<sup>89</sup>

Santos recovers western traditions that escaped Occidentalism—traditions of *the South of the North*—as, he argues, they are better suited to learn with the global South and engage with it in the construction of credible alternatives to hegemonic western modernity (*o pensamento ortopédico e a razão indolente*) (*orthopedic thinking and lazy reason*) (Santos 2009b, 464). For Santos, a critical element to these traditions is that they depart from a reflection on the infinite diversity of human experience and the limits of our knowledge of it. We therefore should acknowledge the inherent limitation of our knowledge, while on the other hand aim to capture epistemological diversity through the *ecologia dos saberes* (*ecology of knowledges*).

According to Santos, through comparing knowledges (i.e. ways of knowing), we can arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of a particular experience. However, Santos argues, comparison is complex for it is haunted by an asymmetry, which he labels “epistemological difference.” It is the difference between what a way of knowing knows better, which is its own limits and possibilities, and what it knows worse, which is the limits and possibilities of other ways of knowing. Yet, Santos contends, what is most problematic is that this epistemological difference manifests itself as a political question, namely as power asymmetry. Maximising this asymmetry—inherited from colonialism—entails maximum ignorance of other ways of knowing, which are declared nonexistent (Santos 2009b, 468; 2009a, 117).

A este modo chamo fascismo epistemológico porque constitui uma relação violenta de destruição ou supressão de outros saberes. Trata-se uma afirmação de força epistemológica que oculta a epistemologia da força. O fascismo epistemológico existe sob a forma de epistemicídio cuja versão mais violenta foi a conversão forçada e a supressão dos

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<sup>89</sup> Corresponding extract in English: “To my way of thinking, it is imperative to enlarge the historical experience of the West, namely by giving voice to western traditions and experiences that were forgotten or marginalized because they did not conform to the imperialist and Orientalist objectives prevailing after the convergence of modernity and capitalism. ... My concern is to show that many of the problems confronting the world today result not only from the waste of experience that the West imposed upon the world by force, but also from the waste of experience that it imposed upon itself to sustain its own imposing upon the others.” Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “A Non-Occidental West? Learned Ignorance and Ecology of Knowledge,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 7-8 (2009a), 106-107.

conhecimentos não ocidentais levadas a cabo pelo colonialismo europeu e que continuam hoje sob formas nem sempre mais subtis. (Santos 2009b, 468)<sup>90</sup>

For Santos, if the first mechanism of instituting western hegemony was the universalisation of western epistemology, the second is such discrediting of other ways of knowledging, which have been relegated to the categories of residues of a buried past, indigenous, particular and local—and a range of them have been suppressed. Shedding light onto these processes exposes occluded experiences, and supports the recovery of their credibility.

Tornar-se presentes significa serem consideradas alternativas às experiências hegemônicas, a sua credibilidade pode ser discutida e argumentada e as suas relações com experiências hegemônicas podem ser objeto de disputa política. (Santos 2006c, 97)<sup>91</sup>

This process incorporates an attempt to minimize epistemological asymmetry between knowledges. It requires reciprocal comparisons for identifying limits and possibilities out of this engagement. It is coined *ecologia dos saberes* (*ecology of knowledges*) (Santos 2009b, 469). And here surges the requirement of translation to enable a debate between the newly emerged diversity of practices/knowledges on an equal footing (Santos 2006c).

Na acepção que aqui lhe dou, a tradução é tradução recíproca. Através dela, a diferença epistemológica, ao ser assumida por todos os saberes em presença, torna-se uma diferença tendencialmente igual. Os procedimentos de proporção e correspondência são procedimentos indirectos que permitem aproximações sempre precárias ao desconhecido a partir do conhecido, ao estranho a partir do familiar, ao alheio a partir do próprio. (Santos 2009b, 469)<sup>92</sup>

This requirement for reciprocity in translation makes it into an ontologically different endeavour to its current practice, which entails an intrinsically asymmetrical enterprise. Santos departs from such *monoculture* to an *ecology*—*ecologia dos saberes, dos tempos, das diferenças, das escalas e das produções* (Santos 2006c)<sup>93</sup>—made out of non-destructive interactions between partial and heterogeneous entities. This ecology denies the privileged statute of scientific practices, aiming at cognitive justice, and intends to promote interdependencies between the different knowledges: “O princípio da incompletude de todos os saberes é condição de possibilidade de diálogo e debate

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<sup>90</sup> Corresponding extract in English: “This I call epistemological fascism, because it amounts to violent destruction or concealment of other ways of knowing. It is a statement of epistemological force that hides the epistemology of force. Epistemological fascism exists in the form of epistemicide, which most violent version was the forced conversion and the suppression of non-Occidental knowledges undertaken by European colonialism, and that continue today in ways not always more subtle than back then.” (Ibid., 116)

<sup>91</sup> Corresponding extract in English: “To be made present, these absences need to be constructed as alternatives to hegemonic experience, to have their credibility discussed and argued for and their relations taken as object of political dispute.” Santos, *The World Social Forum: Toward a Counter-Hegemonic Globalization*, 239.

<sup>92</sup> Transl.: “In the meaning that I give it here, translation is reciprocal translation. Through it, epistemological difference, as it is accepted by all the present knowledges, becomes a difference that tends towards equality. The procedures of proportion and correspondence are indirect procedures for they enable approximations that are always precarious, approximations from the known towards the unknown, from the familiar towards the stranger, from the self towards others.”

<sup>93</sup> Transl.: “ecology of knowledges, of times, of differences, of scales and of productions.”

epistemológicos entre diferentes formas de conhecimento” (Santos 2006c, 99).<sup>94</sup> Here Santos draws a dialogical experience that escapes the benevolent “gist of dialogue” criticised by Ribeiro (above).

Ao alargar o círculo da reciprocidade – o círculo das diferenças iguais – a ecologia dos reconhecimentos cria novas exigências de inteligibilidade recíproca. A multidimensionalidade das formas de dominação e opressão dá origem a formas de resistência e de luta que mobilizam diferentes actores colectivos, vocabulários e recursos nem sempre inteligíveis entre si. O que pode colocar sérias limitações à redefinição do espaço político. Daí a necessidade dos procedimentos de tradução. (Santos 2006c, 104)<sup>95</sup>

Beyond enriching the present with such occluded practices and knowledges, Santos argues for exploring the possibilities and expectations regarding the future at the present time. Through a *sociologia das emergências* (*sociology of emergences*), latent possibilities of changing the present and shaping the future surface. This reinstates an ethics of care with the present towards a future liberated from the univocality of progress and the absence of alternatives. The multiplicity and diversity that surge through this procedure should lead to new zones of interaction where conflict and dialogue take place (Santos 2006c). It is critical to emphasize the political dimension of such *zones*, as argued above by Ribeiro, Ferreira and Sanches, during colonialism and its afterlife.

As assimetrias de poder nestas zonas de contacto são tão vastas hoje, se não mais ainda, do que no período colonial, sendo mais numerosas e intensas. A experiência de contacto é sempre uma experiência de limites e de fronteiras. (Santos 2009b, 453)<sup>96</sup>

For Santos, what remains is the requirement for establishing a mutual intelligibility between such different worlds of experience without aiming to destroy their unique identities or to assimilate them into an enforced homogeneity. This is what the work of translation entails: “um conhecimento argumentativo que, em vez de demonstrar, convence, que, em vez de se querer racional, se quer razoável” (Santos 2006c, 111).<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Corresponding extract in English: “The principle of the incomplete nature of all kinds of knowledge is the condition of the possibility of epistemological dialogue and debate among them all.” Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “Public Sphere and Epistemologies of the South,” *Africa Development* XXXVII, no. 1 (2012), 58.

<sup>95</sup> Corresponding extract in English: “By enlarging the reciprocity circle—the circle of equal differences—the ecology of recognition creates a new exigency of reciprocal intelligibility. The multidimensionality of forms of domination and oppression gives rise to forms of resistance and struggle mobilizing different collective actors, vocabularies, and resources not always mutually intelligible, which may pose serious limitations to the redefinition [sic] of the political space. Hence the need for intercultural translation.” Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 33.

<sup>96</sup> Corresponding extract in English: “The power asymmetries in these contact zones are as large today, if not larger, as in the colonial period, and they are more numerous and widespread. The contact experience is always an experience of limits and borders.” Santos, *A Non-Occidental West? Learned Ignorance and Ecology of Knowledge*, 109.

<sup>97</sup> Corresponding extract in English: “An argumentative kind of knowledge that, rather than demonstrating, persuades, rather than wishing to be rational, wishes to be reasonable.” Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*, 64. Here, however, in a slightly different manner, Santos refers to knowledge underlying the sociologies of absences and emergences, rather than to translation, which is the case in the text in Portuguese.

Altogether, Santos' project directly aims to decolonise knowledge and support emancipatory practice. Hereby he explicitly or implicitly associates with Latin Americanists departing from World-systems Theory. The decolonial sociologist Ramón Grosfoguel (2011) calls attention to the importance of Santos' contribution to debunk Eurocentrism and foster solidarity bonds with the *global South*. Grosfoguel denotes the centrality of the analysis of racism in its different fashions in Santos' thought on imperial oppression, which for him approximates Santos to Fanon. He further highlights the intersectionality (from Kimberlé Crenshaw) of Santos' thought, which encapsulates the differences of class, gender and race characterizing the "capitalist western Occident-centric and Christian centric modern/colonial world-system" (Grosfoguel 2011, 99). Hereby, Grosfoguel foregrounds the propriety and relevance of Santos' theories to counter the coloniality of knowledge, following on from Aníbal Quijano. I note that the theorisation on the global South by Santos (at times with Meneses) offers a solid decolonial alternative that is often lacking in his theorising on Portuguese *imperial hybridity*.

These theoretical tools should serve to problematize the dynamics of (dis)encounter with *Africa*. How then, following this precept, should translational practice be exercised in the realm of this relation? Touching upon this question, Santos draws on the philosopher Tsenay Serequeberham (1991) to identify the challenges to African philosophy, which I understand as a *recovery* of Africa beyond western imagination:

O primeiro, um desafio desconstrutivo, consiste em identificar os resíduos eurocêtricos, herdados do colonialismo e presentes nos mais diversos sectores da vida colectiva, da educação à política, do direito às culturas. O segundo desafio, um desafio reconstrutivo, consiste em revitalizar as possibilidades histórico-culturais da herança africana interrompida pelo colonialismo e pelo neocolonialismo. O trabalho de tradução procura captar estes dois momentos: a relação hegemónica entre as experiências e o que nestas está para além desta relação. (Santos 2006c, 115)<sup>98</sup>

Another moment of reconfiguring the (dis)encounter centres on the categorisation of scientific disciplines, which implicates changing the terms of engagement or, as discussed above, the terms of the dialogue. Santos and Meneses point to Paulin Hountondji's reflection about the power relations in African Studies. Hountondji calls for a dialogue between knowledge makers in order to overcome relations of dominance within the field. For him another knowledge about Africa requires a critical reappropriation of Africa's own endogenous knowledges and, beyond that, it needs a critical appropriation of the process of production and capitalisation of this knowledge (Santos and Meneses 2009, 14).

In the same line Meneses offers her study on recent accusations and suspicions of witchcraft and traffic of organs in Northern Mozambique as "uma janela privilegiada para a complexa realidade dos conflitos de conhecimento e poder" (Meneses 2009a,

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<sup>98</sup> Corresponding extract in English: "First, a deconstructive challenge which consists in identifying the Eurocentric remains inherited from colonialism and present in the most diverse sectors of collective life, from education to politics, from law to culture. Second, a reconstructive challenge which consists in revitalising the historical and cultural possibilities of the African legacy, interrupted by colonialism and neo-colonialism. The work of translation aims to capture these two moments: the hegemonic relation among the experiences and what in the latter (especially the experiences and resistance of the victims) remains beyond the said relation." Santos, *Public Sphere and Epistemologies of the South*, 58.

183).<sup>99</sup> This is a window into the dynamics of the (dis)encounter of Portugal/*Africa* that I intend to highlight here. She materialises in this work the requirement of translation as outlined above. Firstly she reveals the ideological operation of the actual production of ignorance about Africa during colonisation. Back then, Meneses contends, the magical dimension of African experience was relegated to the category of backward and *savage*, while the colonial system simultaneously made use of this representation to enforce its own domination. Translation was then an instrument for exercising the epistemic violence on the colonies. Hereby *the African* was construed as the other and its practices as foreign, backward and unintelligible.

Um dos momentos base da intervenção colonial é a transformação do “outro” num objecto, sobre o qual a ordem de conhecimento colonial poderia exercer o seu poder. O trabalho descritivo privilegiou a descrição que acentuava as diferenças do “outro”, tornando pessoas e ambientes distantes e estranhos intelegíveis a públicos ocidentais. Assim a tradução actuou como um meio para construir uma “representação” do outro. (Meneses 2009a, 180)<sup>100</sup>

In this vein, translation, as a mechanism of framing alterity, incorporated the project of assimilation. Meneses highlights the contemporary discourses that give continuity to this representation, fitting Mozambique to an image of material violence and cognitive chaos in need of western intervention. In my understanding she is calling here for a *worldly gaze* to such phenomena to reveal the articulations between politics and “the occult.”

Alguns problemas relativamente à interpretação da natureza dos conflitos sociais actuais do país são um reflexo da complexidade do carácter dos encontros entre as ideologias políticas extra-locais (nacionais, regionais, globais) e os imaginários locais do poder; uma análise cuidadosa, situada e multifacetada das circunstâncias que geram estas acusações [de feitiçaria] é crucial para melhor se compreender a luta pelo poder, no âmbito da qual distintas formas de conhecimento concorrem para imporem as suas estruturas de sentido. (Meneses 2009a, 205-206)<sup>101</sup>

For this understanding, Meneses identifies in her study a number of factors, including the growing process of urbanisation as one of the ill-fated consequences of neo-liberalism, the following uprootedness and lack of community laces, the role of the magical in African life, the place of local authorities and the dispute for land. The body becomes host to these conflictuous encounters; it reflects cognitive violence and is object of quotidian material violence. It becomes itself a border metaphor: “Na feitiçaria, o corpo torna-se uma arena política, uma extensão dos conflitos que perturbam a sociedade. ... Em suma, é a metáfora de uma preocupação com as fronteiras

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<sup>99</sup> Transl.: “a privileged window into the complex reality of the conflicts of knowledge and power.”

<sup>100</sup> Transl.: “One of the founding moments of colonial intervention is the transformation of the ‘other’ into a object upon which the order of colonial knowledge could exercise its power. The descriptive work privileged that description which accentuated the differences of the ‘other,’ rendering people and distant and unfamiliar environments intelligible to western audiences. In this way translation acted as a means to build a ‘representation’ of the other.”

<sup>101</sup> Transl.: “Some problems concerning the interpretation of the nature of the country’s current social conflicts are a reflection of the complexity of the character of the encounters between the extra-local political ideologies (national, regional, global) and the local imaginaries of power. A careful, situated and multifaceted analysis of the circumstances that generate these accusations [of witchcraft] is crucial in order to better understand the struggle for power within which different forms of knowledge compete to impose their own structures of meaning.”

sociais e com a integridade da cultura comunitária” (Meneses 2009a, 199).<sup>102</sup> Meneses’ case on witchcraft is of critical importance here because it foregrounds the body and implicates it in practices of translation. It invites an awareness to race. This border condition of the body, between metaphor and worldliness, is central to the excavation of the biopolitics of the colonial system and its heritage, which I touched upon in the Introduction to this dissertation and will address in more depth below.

Therefore, still with Meneses, this phenomenon must be considered in the broad context of the neoliberal political and economic opening of Mozambique. Rather than a manifestation of a revived tradition, it represents the contradictions inscribed in the experience of modernity (Jean and Johan L. Comaroff quoted in Meneses 2009a, 199). Here Meneses presents a critical moment of translation that is to rescue *Africa* from the obscurity and anachronism installed by missionaries, travellers, settlers, western anthropologists and their postcolonial heirs. This entails critical scrutiny of the category “Africa tradition”—here associated with witchcraft—and its analysis within a worldly context of local responses to predatory globalisation. This category, shows Meneses, is locally reinvented in articulation with modernity, and can give way to strategies to challenge hegemonic power and knowledge systems.

It follows that the colonial period must be re-evaluated from the perspective of such responses. The case of witchcraft, whose (alleged) practitioners were subjected to persecution during colonial times and in the post-independence years of socialism, is paradigmatic for phenomena that are currently interpreted as consequential to the rupture with African value systems. Yet it might represent the very resistance to colonisation and the realisation of innovative strategies to engage with its reminiscences.

Meneses fits this strategy within a broad category of *marginal subaltern cosmopolitanisms*, which address dignity, cultural rights and an ample consideration of rights including the right to cognitive justice. This wide range of rationalities, once recovered, should enter the realm of debate in its own right, “alargando o espaço de produção de conhecimentos e de modos de pensar, instaurando a própria possibilidade de falar *com* – em vez de falar *sobre* – outros mundos e saberes” (Meneses 2009a, 208).<sup>103</sup>

A translation then takes place between knowledges, worldviews, social practices and agents. It constitutes a work of cultural interpretation aiming to enable articulation of non-hegemonic practices and knowledges in order to identify isomorphic preoccupations that lead to the establishment of counter-hegemonic alliances. It is a work called for by different cultures aware of their incompleteness, reaching out to others (Santos 2006c).

Also according to Santos, this practice aims not only at intelligibility but at coherence and articulation in a plural world. Therefore translation is an intellectual but equally

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<sup>102</sup> Transl.: “In witchcraft, the body becomes a political arena, an extension of the conflicts that disturb society. ... In short, it is the metaphor of a concern with social borders and with the integrity of community culture.”

<sup>103</sup> Transl.: “Extending the space of production of knowledges and ways of thinking, establishing the very possibility to talk *to* - rather than talk *about* - other worlds and knowledges.”

political and emotional work. Its exercise entails responding to the following questions: What to translate? Between what? Who translates? When to translate? How to translate? Translate with which objectives? (Santos 2006c, 120). For Meneses, the core issue is the definition and validity of a system of truth (Meneses 2009a, 204). This critical inquiry foregrounds the requirement of *situating* translation. One of the fundamental targets of scrutiny here, which transits between sociological and literary analysis of the postcolonial (dis)encounter with *Africa*, is that of voice.

Paulo de Medeiros' work on postcolonial literature has consistently addressed this question, which is a perspective that further politicises the field. Incursion into his analysis, now within the discipline of literature, highlights the dialogue that Portuguese postcolonial criticism establishes with coterminous disciplines from other shores. It is in this strand of literary analysis that this pivotal question will inscribe both the metaphor and the practice of postcolonial translation within a reflection on the issues approached above, namely representation, alterity, language and cognitive violence in the (dis)encounter with Africa.<sup>104</sup>

In the essay "Power/Desire," Medeiros (2007b, 207) relies on Gayatri Spivak's seminal "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) to bring "together already a key question of Postcolonial Studies: that of voice in a political and not solely aesthetic sense, with the issues of power and desire" (ibid.). Hereby Spivak foregrounds the very ambiguity inscribed in the craft of the (postcolonial) intellectual, shaped by the "desire to speak for the other" and "the desire for incorporation of the other" (ibid.). Medeiros elects J.M. Coetzee (in *Foe*) the most eloquent voicing of Spivak's contentions, for the writer stages the impossibility of speaking for the other in the terms recognised by the West. Coetzee's construction embodies "the western desire for the other, a desire which though not completely bereft of a sexual component, is foremost a desire for narrative and the power invested in truth" (ibid., 208). By highlighting Coetzee's deceased character Friday, whose silent mouth gave fruition to a "perpetual vomiting," Medeiros gives an important clue for gazing at the postcolonial encounter:

The question that Coetzee exposes is both political as well as ethical. Representing the other is not the same as empowering the other. By having a silent Friday, in a sense, is as much an indictment of colonial power and violence as it is a marker of the limits of representation: "but this is not a place of words." (Medeiros 2007b, 208)

Homi Bhabha (1994) has drawn from analogous hiatuses presented in "world literature," which refer back to colonial violence and speak it through fractured languages. He chooses to focus on female writers and their female characters, for they embody the sexual core of colonial desire and the political dimension of the intimate racialised sphere. Gazing at Tony Morrison and Nadine Gordimer's novels, Bhabha elucidates the disarrangement and dispossession that such writings make, first and foremost reversing the order of private (what must be hidden) and public (what must be said): "When the public nature of the social event encounters the silence of the word it may lose its historical composure and closure" (Bhabha 1994, 18). Bhabha draws extensively from Morrison's *Beloved* as it conveys "the undecipherable language of the

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<sup>104</sup> Portuguese studies of African literature in the Portuguese language have been explicitly debating these questions. Relevant positions in this trend will be discussed in the following section on literature. Here I engage with reflection on the analogous (dis)encounter beyond the Portuguese language.

black and angry dead” (ibid., 10). It materialises colonial violence inscribed in the phantom language. *Beloved* character Sethe embodies such silence in a violent fashion; a violence of which she is both victim and perpetrator.

The memory of Sethe’s act of infanticide emerges through the holes – the things the fugitives did not say, the questions they did not ask... the unnamed, the unmentioned. ... As we reconstruct the narrative of child murder through Sethe, ... the very historical basis of our ethical judgement undergoes a radical revision. (Bhabha 1994, 11)

*Beloved* highlights then the recovery of the historical memory of those “who live ‘otherwise’ than modernity but not outside it” (Bhabha 1994, 18), the “unspoken unrepresented pasts that haunt the historical present” (ibid., 13). In Gordimer’s *My Son’s Story*, Bhabha highlights the private nature of the domestic sphere, where “each of the houses ... is invested with a specific secret or a conspiracy” (ibid.). These houses host the stirring of that “historical composture.” For Bhabha, Gordimer’s eye to the domestic sphere reveals the workings of politics through the banalities of everyday life: “as the violence of a racialised society falls most enduringly on the details of life” (ibid., 15). Gordimer’s act of giving voice and image to such hidden sites and subjects of the narrative constitutes the actual subject’s “revenge” of representation. “In her silence she becomes the unspoken ‘totem’ of the taboo of the coloured South African” (ibid., 14). The same dynamic plays out in Sethe’s house in *Beloved*:

What finally causes the thoughts of the women of 124 “unspeakable thoughts to be unspoken” is the understanding that the victims of violence are themselves “signified upon”: they are the victims of projected fears, anxieties and dominations that do not originate within the oppressed and will not fix them in the circle of pain. (Bhabha 1994, 16)

Gayatri Spivak (1993) had already called attention to Morrison’s *Beloved* and Coetzee’s *Foe* as critical examples of cultural translation in English. They reveal the history of subordination that pervades regimes of representation. Spivak argues that her examples of women apply generally to the colonial context as well (Spivak 1993, 192). She finds in *Beloved* and *Foe* different manifestations of a withholding, which is the untranslatable outcome of historical violence. The latter “represents the impropriety of the dominant’s desire to give voice to the native [as y]ou cannot translate from a position of monolinguist superiority” (ibid., 194-195). As for *Beloved*, the loss of the mother tongue from mother to daughter is the representation of a withholding, which is the narrative of slavery. The story that must not be told is counted with this very mark of constraint, loss and violence, with “the mark of *untranslatability* on it” (ibid., 195).

Deborah Madsen (1999) addresses the paramount question of postcolonial voice brought up by Subaltern Studies. She focuses on the same widely-quoted text from Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” for it argues that the subaltern can only attempt to escape her/his very definition as historical subject from western conceptions through subverting the narrative and producing resistant texts. Madsen highlights the core of Spivak’s critique, that is the contamination of Postcolonial theory with the difference inscribed in colonial discourse, which is the elite. This analysis associates with questions on African writing in western languages, highlighted in the Introduction to this dissertation.

For Madsen, “[s]ubaltern subjectivity, once represented in language is enmeshed in a Western colonial discourse. Authenticity can be preserved only in the medium of silence, once articulated that authenticity is lost” (Madsen 1999, 9). She draws further from postcolonial literature to indicate that:

To deny the power of the English language is to deny the control of communication that is exerted by the metropolitan centre. Dialect, allusions, narrative intrusions, the refusal to translate key words, the strategic use of vernacular expression, the switching between languages or “code switching” – all serve to undermine the assumption that English is an especially privileged agent of colonial control (see Ashcroft et al., 1989, pp. 55-72). (Madsen 1999, 9)

Following from here, the concept of untranslatability, which I will discuss in more depth below, manifests the attempts of a subaltern voice that resists assimilation to the metropolitan language as such to emerge. Instead, the subaltern *marks* hereby her/his presence in language. These marks in language, its manipulation—allusions, intrusions and refusals—indicate acts of self-reparative justice.

Bhabha draws further from postcolonial poetry, in this case Derek Walcott’s poem on the colonisation of the Caribbean, to elaborate on cognitive justice that is our horizon after/through translation. “He stages the slaves’ *right to signify*, not simply by denying the imperialist the ‘right of everything to be a noun’ but by questioning the masculinist, authoritative subjectivity produced in the colonising process” (Bhabha 1994, 233). The right to signify is then turned into an act of cultural translation (Bhabha 1994) whereby cultural difference is reinscribed to install instability, and I would add discomfort, in the memory of colonialism. Bhabha draws upon Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1902) to expose the *Horror* that illustrates “the link between colony and metropolis, so central to the ideology of imperialism” (Bhabha 1994, 212). The novel’s main character Marlow unveils the gendered and racialised violence that hides behind the silence in the colonial *encounter*, the unspeakable:

Between the silent truth of Africa, and the salient lie to the metropolitan woman, Marlow returns to his initiating insight: the experience of colonialism is the problem of living in the “midst of the incomprehensible.” (Bhabha 1994, 213)

It is this aura of incomprehensibility that Bhabha finds in Toni Morrison’s “chaos” and Wilson Harris’s “void of misgiving,” which points to “the veil of the colonial fantasm” (Bhabha 1994, 213). It is the dramatic enactment of a “daemonic doubling”: the silent truth of Africa and the salient lie of the metropolis; the white woman as the shadow of the black African woman. “Double lives” are then inscribed in narratives of the postcolonial. Bhabha argues for incorporating the “experience of anxiety” in the analysis of such narratives. Cultural translation explicitly considers this anxiety, which is, from Walter Benjamin’s “temporality of the present,” “a strange stillness” that characterizes a moment of transition when “the very *writing* of historical transformation becomes uncannily visible” (ibid., 224). Hereby the postcolonial narrative intentionally presents a range of meanings that are not fully apprehensible within the colonial grid.

Cultural globality is figured in the *in-between* spaces of double-frames; its historical originality marked by a cognitive obscurity; its decentred “subject” signified in the nervous temporality of the transitional, or the emergent and provisional “present.” (Bhabha 1994, 216)

This notion of the present as a moment of transformation into a future that is a *becoming* “once again open” feeds Santos’ analysis above. It is, for Bhabha, a present of non-synchronous temporalities, in which incommensurable differences are tensely negotiated in a third space—that hybrid space of culture. It is a *time-space* where otherness is inscribed in a “genuinely articulatory” fashion. This opening up, I would argue, is a forceful rupture within the metropolitan space of imperial comfort for it means confronting the silences and the very naming system that institutes them as such, as non-language outside of cognition.

Bhabha centres his analysis on the “narrative construction of minority discourses” to dislodge “the everyday existence in the Western metropolis” (ibid., 223). He finds a transformative capacity in the migrant experience, which he coins liminal, for the migrant is caught in between “nativism” and assimilation. Further down I will delve into the subject position of the migrant who, in the field of the Portuguese postcolonial, conflates historical experience with the gendered construct of race. S/he is therefore *the other* inhabiting this liminal time-space that is postcolonial culture:

The subject of cultural difference becomes a problem that Walter Benjamin described as the irresolution, or liminality, of “translation”, the *element of resistance* in the process of transformation, “that element in a translation which does not lend itself to translation.” (Bhabha 1994, 224)

Here, at its own limit, translation becomes a decolonial practice. This moment introduces the theme of a culture’s untranslatability, which is, following Bhabha, the space of encounter of disjunctive temporalities, joined with the time of cultural displacement. It points to the realm of indeterminacy of cultural identities, whose difference cannot be fully captured within a closed system of essential (nominal) identities. Bhabha appropriates Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* to elaborate on the link between translation and the absences it institutes, and the violation of the canon (“the system of naming”). He elucidates the dramatisation of this struggle through the concept of blasphemy. This trope is dear to my analysis for it paves the way to rescuing and centring the problematique of race in(to) the postcolonial canon.

Blasphemy goes beyond the severance of tradition and replaces its claim to a purity of origins with a poetics of relocation and reinscription. ... Blasphemy is not merely a misrepresentation of the sacred by the secular; it is a moment when the subject matter or the content of a cultural tradition is being overwhelmed, or alienated, in the act of translation. (Bhabha 1994, 225)

“Blasphemy is [therefore] a transgressive act of cultural translation” for “opening up a space of discursive contestation” of traditional authority, placing its claims of authenticity “within a perspective of historical and cultural relativism” (Bhabha 1994, 226). The important extension of this argument on Koranic authority towards the secular politics of meaning enables usage of the concept of blasphemy, with its radical and cunning edge, to the realm of colonisation and its aftermath.

Bhabha highlights the “linkage between the term *black* and the sin *blasphemy*” in Rushdie’s *Verses*, which indicates the presence of “the social fantasm of racism” in the postcolonial novel. The negotiation of such an “unstable element” (phantom) in this narrative illustrates the non-consensual character of translation. Blasphemy rescues the

veiled face of colonialism and therefore its implicated subjects. In this sense, Bhabha argues that “to blaspheme is to dream” (ibid.), to persist in one’s otherwise silenced and occluded presence.

To dream not of the past or the present, nor the continuous present; it is not the nostalgic dream of tradition, not the Utopian dream of modern progress; it is the dream of translation as “survival” as Derrida translates the “time” of Benjamin’s concept of the after-life of translation, as *sur-vivre*, the act of living on the borderlines. (Bhabha 1994, 226-227)

The dream of the migrant is then transformed into “an emergence that turns ‘return’ into the reinscription or redescription; an iteration that is not belated, but ironic and insurgent” (ibid., 227). This reconfigured “return” constitutes the entrance of “newness into the world.” It is cultural translation staging cultural difference, a struggle between “discursive and cultural modes of signification” in conflict for the same objects. Here, translation works in the counter-current, through highlighting (colonial) difference in its political significance, i.e. the struggle for meaning. It enacts the refusal of collapsing “the subaltern,” the other of colonialism, into the narrative of empire.

The complementarity of language as communication must be understood as emerging from the constant state of contestation and flux caused by the differential systems of social and cultural signification. The process of complementarity as the agonistic supplement is the seed of the “untranslatable” – the foreign element in the midst of the performance of cultural translation. (Bhabha 1994, 227)

The foreign element of cultural translation and the foreignness of language surge here as the avengers of cultural difference banned from the historical canon. They re-emerge to “destroy the original structures of reference and sense of communication ... by negotiating the disjunction in which successive cultural temporalities are preserved in the work of history and at the same time cancelled” (R. Gasché and W. Benjamin quoted in Bhabha 1994, 228). Translation actually reverses the hierarchy of subject positions and their respective utterances. Consequently it is not the canonic narrative that hosts the foreigner, but the host narrative is reconfigured as itself foreign.

The “time” of translation consists in that *movement* of meaning, the principle and practice of a communication that, in the words of de Man “puts the original in motion to decanonise it, giving it the movement of fragmentation, a wandering of errance, a kind of permanent exile.” (Bhabha 1994, 228)

Altogether, Bhabha places translation within the historical process of formation of the colonial subject/postcolonial minority positions, that I designate as that *place of racialised subalternity*: “Cultural translation desacralizes the transparent assumptions of cultural supremacy, and in that very act, demands a contextual specificity, a historical differentiation within minority positions” (ibid., 228). This resonates with the call for contextualisation within the realm of Portuguese postcolonial criticism and its alleged metropolitan subalternity. It supports reflecting about a collective formation out of such colonial/minority racialised and gendered subject positions.

The imagination of community that Bhabha conveys is again found in Santos’ *counter-hegemonic alliances*, or punctual struggles. These positions are articulated through collective formations born out of a process of homogenisation of subaltern subjectivities turned into “a negative and generic subject” position (ibid., 229). This

commonality, materialised in the everyday life of subalternisation informed by a set of different ideological forms, constitutes the “passionate and partial conditions of communal emergence.” This idea of community, from Hegel, articulates for Bhabha a cultural temporality of contingency and indeterminacy.

Following Bhabha, community is the antagonist supplement of modernity; in the metropolitan space it is the territory of the minority, threatening the claims of civility; in the transnational world it becomes the border problem of the diasporic, the migrant, the refugee. It is the terrain where agency is created “through incommensurable (not simply multiple) positions” (ibid., 231). By holding such infinite distant (discursive) positionalities, a community—that I coin a *community of racialised subalterns*—can only emerge out of bits and pieces. Bhabha paraphrases Richard Rorty on the subject, for whom “solidarity has to be constructed out of little pieces, rather than found already waiting, in the form of an ur-language which all of us recognise when we hear it” (ibid., 235). This argument ties to the critical contentions above outlined about the Portuguese language as such standing as the ur-language or narrative of solidarity, which supposedly joins together *its* speaking subjects. Instead, contingent communities built themselves while crafting a new (thus *foreign*) language. Translation is instrumental in the process.

For Santos, translation happens in the *contact zone* (epistemological and/or colonial) that is marked by extreme disparities between realities in contact and the great inequality of the power relation between them (Santos 2006c, 120). Translation requires that such agents in contact elect elements to be brought to the *zone*. There remain, however, untranslatables or profound absences, unspoken due to extreme oppression of a culture. Those elements brought to the zone are elected out of a convergence of needs between agents, namely as a reaction against colonial or imperial zones. The moment of translation emerges when there is another convergence, between times, rhythms and opportunities mutually identified. Here Santos further decolonises the realm of knowledges, which is no longer conceived as a epistemologically separated space, supposedly dissociated from the context:

Os saberes que dialogam, que mutuamente se interpelam, questionam e avaliam, não o fazem em separado como uma atividade intelectual isolada de outras atividades sociais. Fazem-no no contexto de práticas sociais constituídas ou a constituir, cuja dimensão epistemológica é uma entre outras e é dessas práticas que emergem as questões postas aos vários saberes em presença. (Santos 2009b, 471)<sup>105</sup>

Knowledges can therefore only be conceived in their relation to social practices rather than standing above them. Chosing the quotidian experience as the locus of enunciation of knowledges in dialogue highlights the *abyssal differences* between the everyday in the global South and the global North. They enable a visualisation of the contexts in which knowledges emerge and are occluded in the making of universals (Santos 2009b).

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<sup>105</sup> Transl.: “The knowledges that engage in dialogue, that challenge, question and evaluate each other, do not do it separately, as an intellectual activity isolated from other social activities. They do so in the context of social practices already constituted, or to be constituted, whose epistemological dimension is just one among others. From these practices emerge the questions addressed to the various ways of knowing that are present.”

Esta contextualização obriga a ter presente que o quotidiano da grande maioria da população do Sul global – que inclui o Sul global que existe no interior do Norte global, o “terceiro mundo interior”- é uma luta incessante pela sobrevivência e pela libertação face às imposições com que o Norte global e sua epistemologia imperial exercem a sua dominação sobre o Sul global. (Santos 2009b, 481)<sup>106</sup>

According to Santos, the translator, inscribed in the context, must be a cosmopolitan intellectual with strong roots in the practices/knowledges s/he represents, and with a critical gaze towards homogenising hegemonies. Finally arriving at the question of how to translate, Santos identifies important hurdles, first of all the premises of argumentation, which, in translation, are transformed into arguments. New premises, specific to a contact zone and the situation of translation, will be built as translation proceeds. Ribeiro referred to this same process when establishing the need to negotiate the common places of a culture (im)posed as premises to the dynamics of engagement, as highlighted previously. The second problem is the language in which argumentation is conducted, which is unequally dominated among the participants. Moreover: “Trata-se outrossim do facto de a língua em questão ser responsável pela própria impronunciabilidade de algumas aspirações centrais dos saberes e práticas que foram oprimidos na zona colonial” (Santos 2006c, 124).<sup>107</sup> This fundamental problem illustrates the limits of overcoming the empire through its most prized tools and artifacts. The third problem resides in the different meanings attributed to silence and its particular rhythms. Here Santos relates to the inquiry into the problem of voice as scrutinised in literature.

Gayatri Spivak explored these dynamics in the (post)colonial entanglement between Great Britain and India. Her insights support reflecting on translation within this very intricate terrain of (dis)encounter already framed by one of the supposed counterparts in *dialogue*. In *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999) Spivak looks at nineteenth-century British literature embedded in imperialism producing the representation of England and the English through the figure of the native informant. She analyses Rudyard Kipling’s short story *William the Conqueror* (1880) for exposing the “set of moves – in effect a mark of perceiving a language as subordinate” which she coins “translation-as-violation” (Spivak 1999, 162). His unfamiliarity with Hindu words, his incorrect translation—that she calls “British pidgin” (ibid.) - that the narrative sanctions as correct, informed by the authority of narrative and language, violate the subject and her/his language. “[W]hen the violence of imperialism straddles a subjected language, translation can become a species of violation as well” (ibid., 163).

Yet further, the narrative applies strategies to marginalise the colonial subject beyond strictly linguistic operations. Spivak points to “Kipling’s technique of specifying India” whereby “famine” becomes the container of this specification, and India becomes

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<sup>106</sup> Transl.: “This contextualisation requires the realization that the daily lives of the vast majority of the global South’s population - which includes the global South that exists within the global North, the ‘internal third world’- is a constant struggle for survival and liberation against the impositions with which the global North and its imperial epistemology exert their dominance over the global South.”

<sup>107</sup> Corresponding extract in English: “The issue is that this language is responsible for the very unpronounceability of some of the central aspirations of the knowledges and practices that were oppressed in the colonial contact zone.” (Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*, 23-24)

“home” to the British, thereby enacting the disappearance of the Indians. This contention links up with reflections on *Africa* throughout this dissertation.

Thus the incantation of the names, far from being a composition of place, is precisely the combination of effacement of specificity and appropriation that one might call violation. (Spivak 1993) ... The word “native,” which is supposed to mean “autochthonous,” is paradoxically recoded as an unindividuated parahumanity that cannot aspire to a proper habitation. (Spivak 1999, 161)

In “The Politics of Translation” (1993) Spivak engaged with the violence in translation of non-European texts, in particular eighteenth- to twentieth-century texts penned by women, into a “tedious translatese [that] cannot compete with the spectacular stylistic experiments” found in British literature (Spivak 1993, 182). Here Spivak encounters “the old colonial attitude, slightly displaced at work in the translation racket” (ibid., 189), and she explicitly tackles the gendered structuring element of such a colonial attitude. Foregrounding the enlacement of patriarchy and colonialism is fundamental to capturing the constructed authority of European texts.

To countering that “colonial attitude,” Spivak contends: “one must attend to ... that special relationship to the staging of language as the production of agency” (ibid.). Cultural translation requires then a grounded familiarity with the situation of both languages, in particular with the original (Third World women’s) texts, a familiarity that is often lacking. Hereby, Spivak argues that the translator should be able to escape the ethno-cultural agenda inscribed in translation politics, which obliterates third-world specificity and denies cultural citizenship (ibid.).

My initial point was that the task of the translator is to surrender herself to the linguistic rhetoric of the original text. Although this point has larger political implications, we can say that the not unimportant minimal consequence of ignoring this task is the loss of “the literarity and textuality and sensuality of the writing” (Barrett’s words). I have worked my way to a second point, that the translator must be able to discriminate on the terrain of the original. (Spivak 1993, 189)

This means that a sufficient familiarity with both contexts and the literary production is necessary in order to distinguish the different meanings that similar ideas evoke. Translation therefore requires an intimacy with language and an awareness about the regimes of alterity, both gendered and racialised, that language inscribes and that are inscribed in it:

The task of the feminist translator is to consider language as a clue to the workings of gendered agency. The writer is written by her language, of course. But the writing of the writer writes agency in a way that might be different from that of the British woman/citizen within the history of British feminism, focused on the task of freeing herself from Britain’s imperial past, its often racist present, as well as its “made in Britain” history of male domination. (Spivak 1993, 179-180)

Furthermore, Spivak points to the marks of normalised hegemony in the dynamics of translation, whereby English ascended to the position of international norm through a historical trajectory from the Industrial Revolution to “monopoly imperialist territorial capitalism” (Spivak 1993, 190). She draws from the less passionately debated field of European Renaissance (“since a great deal of wholesale cross-cultural translation from

Greco-Roman antiquity was undertaken then” (ibid., 191)) to make the case: “What one overlooks is the sheer authority ascribed to the originals in that historical phenomenon. The status of a language in the world is what one must consider when teasing out the politics of translation” (ibid.).

While Spivak is writing throughout about the politics of translating texts into English, informed by empire, her argument is of critical relevance for careful consideration of the postcolonial realm of the Portuguese language. She draws from translation to discuss the enduring textual dynamics of talking *about* the other in a language embedded in the production of alterity. This is a point extensively debated within the realm of African literatures in Portuguese, which seem to have been relegated to an either-or position (in terms of adopting Portuguese as the national language) associated with the times of independence struggles and their immediate aftermath. This inquiry is relevant today as part of the scrutiny of the dynamics of categorisation, production and reception of postcolonial literature in the Portuguese language. Inocência Mata, Livia Apa, Elena Brugioni and Jessica Falconi are scholars of salience currently active with this query, and their reflections will be further discussed below.

Spivak argues that the process of subordination enacted through linguistic translation into English is correlatedly enacted in the assumption that Third World peoples are represented in literature in a hegemonic language. This is of particular importance for this study, considering the state of the Portuguese language in Africa, namely the fact that the majority of the population of countries that adopted Portuguese as (one of the) official language(s) does not speak Portuguese and/or is illiterate, albeit polyglot.

In other words, if you are interested in talking about the other, and/or in making a claim to be the other, it is crucial to learn other languages. ... I am talking about the importance of language acquisition for the woman from a hegemonic linguistic culture who makes everybody’s life miserable by insisting on women’s solidarity at her price. ... I am uncomfortable with notions of feminist solidarity which are celebrated when everybody involved is similarly produced. There are countless languages in which women all over the world have grown up and been female or feminist, and yet the languages we keep on learning by rote are the powerful European ones, sometimes the powerful Asian ones least often the chief African ones. (Spivak 1993, 192)

What is at stake here is the voracious act of assuming commonality from a hegemonic locus of the feminist in the West that defines grounds for solidarity *a priori*.

If we are discussing solidarity as a theoretical position, we must also remember that not all the world’s women are literate. There are traditions and situations that remain obscure because we cannot share their linguistic constitution. It is from this angle that I have felt that learning languages might sharpen our own presuppositions about what it means to use the sign “woman.” (Spivak 1993, 192)

Spivak affirms the applicability of her arguments for the colonial context, with the *care* to not lose sight of the particular operations of subalternisation targeting woman. For Spivak, a notion of solidarity can only emerge in practice out of the different positions of subalternity (the “space of parsubjects”) where “the staging of language produces not only the sexed subject but the gendered agent” (ibid.,193).

Then we can cautiously begin to track a sort of commonality in being set apart, within the different rhetorical strategies of different languages. But even here, historical superiorities of class must be kept in mind. ... Tracking commonality through responsible translation can lead us into areas of difference and different differentiation. (Spivak 1993, 193)

A very different community to that *time-space of the Portuguese language* emerges here, which is contingent, and born out of the different positions of subalternity in their elected enclaves.

Rather than imagining that women automatically have something identifiable in common, why not say, humbly and practically, my first obligation in understanding solidarity is to learn her mother-tongue. You will see immediately what the differences are. You will also feel the solidarity every day as you make the attempt to learn the language in which the other woman learned to recognise reality at her mother's knee. This is the preparation for the intimacy of cultural translation. (Spivak 1993, 191-192)

Solidarity must therefore materialise in a movement of approximation that requires the reciprocal gesture of learning each other's mother tongue. This requirement is paramount for thinking about fruitful and therefore necessarily decolonial (dis)encounters in the terrain of the Portuguese language. Here the language embodies the contingency of the encounter, which is imperial colonisation, though it does not constitute the centre of the narrative born out of the (dis)encounter, and nor does it dictate the terms of engagement.

A further exploration of solidarity that glues this community demands attention for the question of reciprocity. The translation that emerges from postcolonial, subaltern and feminist critique supports borrowing such ethical imagination of encounter from literature in order to reflect on reciprocity in its connections with the social sciences. This reflection is geared towards the terrain of cognitive justice. For Santos, translation aims at social emancipation and is a requirement for that goal when the modern project lies moribund.

O trabalho de tradução permite criar sentidos e direcções precários, mas concretos, de curto alcance, mas radicais nos seus objectivos, incertos, mas partilhados. O objectivo da tradução entre saberes é criar justiça cognitiva a partir da imaginação epistemológica. O objectivo da tradução entre práticas e seus agentes é criar as condições para uma justiça social global a partir da imaginação democrática. (Santos 2006c, 125)<sup>108</sup>

In the next chapter, I will delve into the terrain of cognitive justice in order to carry on with politicising the postcolonial *encounter* with an eye on the "place" of *Africa* within this *time-space*.

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<sup>108</sup> Corresponding extract in English: "The work of translation permits the creation of meanings and directions that are precarious but concrete, short-range but radical in their objectives, uncertain but shared. The aim of translation between knowledges is to create cognitive justice. The aim of translation between practices and their agents is to create the conditions for global social justice from the standpoint of the democratic imagination." (Ibid., 62-63)

## Chapter 3. Cognitive justice

Maria Paula Meneses (2009b) advances Santos' theses for the purpose of conceiving *another economy*. This analysis is instrumental for a worldly scrutiny of the (dis)encounter between Europe and Africa, which lands in the issue of cognitive justice. Meneses argues for the need to decolonise hegemonic economic thinking, which has been instituted through the expansion of a teleological narrative that couples modernity with capitalism, identifying Europe as its birthplace (as posited by Enrique Dussel). This expansion occurred through *encontros, negociações e apropriações violentas* (Meneses 2009b, 232).<sup>109</sup> Hereby other economic logics are discredited: those that are not guided towards progress and do not identify in property the *princípio estruturador da cultura e da sociedade* (ibid., 232).<sup>110</sup> Concurrently their economic agents are gazed through operations of alterity. This subalternisation constructs African economic systems as underdeveloped and all African places and things outside the realm of contemporaneity.

No caso africano, a tradição, na medida em que atribui um lugar de especificidade à realidade africana, transforma-se no artifício ideológico que tem justificado não só a invenção do mundo local, como também a naturalização da não contemporaneidade de África com os tempos do Norte global. (Meneses 2009b, 235)<sup>111</sup>

This criticism, which is also tied to the case of witchcraft explored in the previous chapter, is paralleled in the field of literature. Inocência Mata (2011) reveals Eurocentrism and its mechanisms of continuous global dominance in the literary field, whereby difference is inscribed in a hierarchical model topped by western particularity inscribed as universal. Hereby Mata highlights the manipulation of categories for the study of African literatures in western centres, which induces the “subaltern processing of the sphere” (Mata 2011, 97). This critique resonates the query on power relations inscribed in the field of African Studies, as addressed by Santos and Meneses (above). Mata calls for resistance strategies that *de-ghettoize* (local) histories and discourses through (re)reading them in the context of their articulations. In the context of Africa/Europe relations, which she examines in the particular case of literary practices, they must be reconsidered in terms of the very relations that constituted them.

In following this code, the “local” is labelled as any book or any writer (mainly from a peripheral country) bringing the urgent issues of his or her society into the literary picture where they are not considered reasons for uneasiness beyond the borders confining them. (Mata 2011, 92)

Mata relies on Alfredo Margarido to highlight the core role of criticism in/to the field, which is to join the categories of “local” and “universal” for “knowledge lives through exchange which constantly crosses local borders” (Margarido quoted in Mata 2011, 93). This means installing uneasiness within the very terrain that tensely joins and *separates*

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<sup>109</sup> Transl.: “encounters, negotiations and violent appropriations.”

<sup>110</sup> Transl.: “structuring principle of culture and society.”

<sup>111</sup> Transl.: “In the African case, the tradition, in that it assigns a place of specificity to African reality, becomes the ideological device that has justified not only the invention of the local world, but also the naturalisation of the non-contemporality of Africa with the times of the global North.”

Africa and Europe. This arena, which forcefully resists epistemological challenge, preserves its dormant easiness in the confines of a comfort zone. Those instances of exchange lose their force of transformation as they are inscribed within the epistemology of colonial contact.

Mata argues that the force of Eurocentric mechanisms perpetuating colonial dynamics is protagonised by those (European and Third World scholars) working in the centre constituted as the metropolis. In this, she resonates with Appiah (1991). Mata calls on Shohat and Stam to shed light into the perversity of the “canonic centripetal power” whereby Eurocentric discourse “embeds, takes for granted, and normalizes the hierarchical power relations generated by colonialism and imperialism, without necessarily even thematizing those issues directly” (quoted in Mata 2011, 95). The African writer writing in originally European languages is therefore “conditioned” by foreign criticism, which legitimises her/his text against the standard and model of European literature.

Owing to the fact that the colonial still exerts a domineering presence, and that many places in the world are still affected by their colonial experience, which has shaped other parameters (and left its marks on education), African(s’) literary imagination has nearly always ended up being the product of a Eurocentric stilted out process. This has meant burying particularities (interpreted as “local”) and acquiring the universal (read: “western”) culture. The literary culture through which Africa, writings are *read* is, therefore, first and foremost, western. (Mata 2011, 96)

Mata draws from the literature scholar Carlos Reis to reveal that this mechanism, which accompanies the use of originally European languages, is active in the case of Portuguese reading of African literatures in the Portuguese language. This problematization is gaining prominence in the field. João Paulo Borges Coelho (2012) drew an insightful critique of the dissociation between the *loci* of production of criticism and consumption of Mozambican literature in the Portuguese language. Elena Brugioni (2010) has critically studied the reception of Mia Couto’s literature vis-à-vis the glossary instituted by the disciplines of *Literaturas Africanas de Língua Portuguesa* (African Literatures of Portuguese Language) and Postcolonial Studies. In the same critical collection, Elena Brugioni (2011) and Livia Apa (2011) further analysed the institution of categories and definitions in the study of African literatures in the Portuguese language and neighbour zones of *Lusophone (dis)encounter*. Jessica Falconi (2012) made an analogous critique of the shaping of the discipline of Lusophone literature and the problematic Eurocentric bias inscribed in the names and frames that configure the field. This inquiry follows that by Manuela Ribeiro Sanches’ (2007), which analyses the risks of equating *Lusophone postcolonial literature* with postcolonial criticism, and of the nationalist bias of the former against the transnational universal aura of the latter.

Mata engages boldly with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s criticism of the “obedience to the canon” (quoted in Mata 2011, 96). Hereby the Third World intellectual enters a relationship with the centre in her/his aspiration for recognition and access to a cultural market framed through western power, the *postcolonial cultural industry*. I am not at ease in affirming the willingness of the Third World intellectual to enter this *marriage*, but I agree with the relevance of pointing out the dependency dynamics in the field. This place of engagement, for Mata, is the “*locus* of building up a cultural imaginary”

whereby a “perverse globalization dynamic” determines the entry point for Africa (Mata 2011, 96-97). She argues that this dynamic is evident in the field of the so-called Portuguese-speaking African literature marked by the selective presence of African texts that gain visibility through the categories established by the Portuguese colonial canon.

Taken in this context, the freedom of choice and literary cosmopolitanism that would supposedly reap benefits, owing to the globalization process, end up by being a mirage because what is not broadcast ceases to exist. (Mata 2011, 97)

Mata refers to Walter Mignolo’s reflections on the colonality of power and knowledge to emphasise the force of what she coins “Westerncentric” “cultural fascism” living through “forms of knowledge that, being critical of modernity, colonality and capitalism” are still hostage to “abstract universals” (quoted in Mata 2011, 98-99). This poignant remark awakens questioning of the actual possibility of translation within such an unlevelled playing field. Is translation held hostage by the very categories that define it? Or differently formulated: how much is translation inscribed in the canon? Doesn’t the hegemonic model definitively compromise translation? How can the practice of translation evidence this dependency and act beyond its constraints? These questions refer to the premises of argumentation in translation and its languages, as asserted by Santos above.

Again, the *violence of the colonial encounter* entailed annihilating those *other* agents and experiences that were incorporated in a relationship of cultural, economic and political subordination to the West. The recovery of multiple practices accompanies a critical revision of concepts hegemonically defined through modern rationality.

Rever estes conceitos integra várias exigências: a histórica, ou seja, a necessidade de repensar todos os passados e perspectivas futuras à luz de outras perspectivas, que não são as do Norte global; a ontológica, que passa pela renegociação das definições do ser e dos seus sentidos; e, finalmente, a epistémica, que contesta a compreensão exclusiva e imperial do conhecimento, desafiando o privilégio do Norte global. (Meneses 2009b, 234-235)<sup>112</sup>

This hegemony was installed through the force with which the political, economic and military interventions of colonialism and modern capitalism were imposed on non-western and non-Christian cultures (Santos and Meneses 2009, 10). The weakening of this hegemony requires cognitive justice, which sheds light on epistemic alternatives, so that the canon of knowledges is amplified beyond modern science (as indicated by Boaventura Santos), and the range of their agents recovers credibility. At the same time, as previously argued, a new form of relationship between these knowledges must be envisaged and the terms of their dialogue must be conceived anew.

A geração de traduções entre situações contemporâneas pressupõe o reconhecimento mútuo, o qual terá de ser criado, a partir do descentrar das narrativas dominantes produzidas no

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<sup>112</sup> Transl.: “There are several requirements for revising these concepts: the historical, i.e. the need to rethink all pasts and future prospects in the light of other perspectives, which are not those of the global North; the ontological, which passes through the renegotiation of the definitions of being and its meanings; and finally, the epistemic, that contests the exclusive and imperial understanding of knowledge, challenging the privilege of the global North.”

Norte global, apostando numa tecedura da análise assente numa ecologia dos saberes enquanto rede composta de múltiplas narratives interligadas. (Meneses 2009b, 235)<sup>113</sup>

Bhabha also referred to the requirement of such reciprocity, in line with Frantz Fanon. Hereby the question of anti-blackness resurfaces, as well as the urge to confront it.

As soon as *I desire* I am asking to be considered. I am not merely here-and-now, sealed into thingness. I am somewhere else and for something else. I demand that notice is taken of my *negating activity* [my emphasis] insofar as I pursue something other than life; insofar as I do battle for the creation of a human world – that is a world of reciprocal recognitions. (Fanon quoted in Bhabha 1994a, 8)

This dialogue between recovered experiences from the racialised South and reconfigured experiences from the North can only be materialised in conditions of equal opportunities among the different knowledges so that wide-ranging epistemological disputes can take place. Following Santos:

Não se trata de atribuir igual validade a todos os conhecimentos, mas antes permitir uma discussão pragmática entre critérios alternativos de validade que não desqualifique à partida tudo o que não cabe no cânone epistemológico da ciência moderna (Santos et al., 2005). (Santos quoted in Meneses 2009b, 236)<sup>114</sup>

For Meneses, cognitive justice is a *new global grammar*, which urgently calls for the visibility of knowing and experiencing the world, in particular for those marginalised and turned subaltern, outside of civilisation. These could then re-emerge as *rival knowleges* (Santos and Meneses 2009) that engage in a *ferocious competition* (Meneses 2009a, 182) mainly with hegemonic knowledge.

Esta concorrência entre saberes é uma fonte genuína de grande receio e ansiedade, pois que se pressupõe que os supostamente menos civilizados e menos competentes estão a penetrar no território da civilização, contestando o lugar de destaque que a ciência reivindica sistematicamente para si e provando que há vários saberes em presença. (Meneses 2009a, 182)<sup>115</sup>

Following Boaventura Santos, Meneses acknowledges the wide variety of knowledges and experiences within the South, but identifies in the colonial experience a common ground for the constitution of a *global South*. This formation forwards a criticism that aims to dethrone the resilient coloniality of power and knowledge. Therefore, both in Santos and Meneses' reflections above, critical analysis accompany the counter-hegemonic project of challenging the current monologue.

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<sup>113</sup> Transl.: “The generation of translations between contemporary situations presupposes mutual recognition, which must be created from decentralizing dominant narratives produced in the global North, betting on a weaving of analysis based on an ecology of knowledges as a network composed of multiple interconnected narratives.”

<sup>114</sup> Transl.: “This is not to assign equal validity to all knowledges, but rather to allow a pragmatic discussion between alternative criteria of validity which does not disqualify at the outset everything that does not fit into the epistemological canon of modern science.”

<sup>115</sup> Transl.: “This competition between knowledges is a genuine source of great fear and anxiety, because it assumes that the supposedly less civilised and less competent are penetrating the territory of civilisation, challenging the prominent place that science systematically claims for itself and proving that there are various knowledges present.”

Designamos a diversidade epistemológica do mundo por epistemologies do Sul .... O Sul é aqui concebido metaforicamente como um campo de desafios epistêmicos, que procuram reparar os danos e impactos historicamente causados pelo capitalismo na sua relação colonial com o mundo. Esta concepção do Sul sobrepõe-se em parte com o Sul geográfico, o conjunto de países e regiões do mundo que foram submetidos ao colonialismo europeu e que, com exceção da Austrália e da Nova Zelândia, não atingiram níveis de desenvolvimento económico semelhantes ao do norte global (Europa e América do Norte). (Santos and Meneses 2009, 12-13)<sup>116</sup>

The formation of the global South resonates with Gilroy's Black Atlantic.<sup>117</sup> Again here, the experience of colonial subalternisation emerges as a glue for what I would call an *opportune community*. This loose formation is joined by solidarity born out of what Spivak above identified as a *commonality in being set apart*. Gilroy argues that the Black Atlantic is an intercultural and transnational webbed formation that emerged out of the slave trade. It acts as a counterculture to modernity through paving *the difficult journey from slave ship to citizenship* (Gilroy 1993, 31). The Black Atlantic, rather than being an empty space between the corners of a triangular trade, becomes a living micro-universe where cultures and histories cross to produce new forms of aesthetic expression and ethical projects (ibid., 167-168). It gathers a myriad of black sensibilities that all share the fundamental tragedy of the *middle passage*.

Therefore, translation is a requirement for cognitive justice to enable a postcolonial encounter through mutual recognition. Alongside that, the counter-hegemonic project of the global South is fundamental for challenging the coloniality of power and knowledge. The Black Atlantic supports rethinking the grounds for such a (loose) community established upon the shared position of the gendered and racialised subject of the empire. This positionality recovers the phantom of the Portuguese empire for the postcolonial realm. Again here I am referring to violence towards the gendered and racialised *object* of colonialism, *the Black*. To explore the significance of this phantom in the Portuguese postempire, in the next chapter I will delve into an analysis of biopolitics inherited from empire.

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<sup>116</sup> Transl.: "We designate the epistemological diversity of the world by epistemologies of the South .... The South is here conceived metaphorically as a field of epistemic challenges, which seek to repair the damage and the impacts historically caused by capitalism in its colonial relationship with the world. This conception of the South overlaps in part with the geographic South, the group of countries and regions of the world that have been submitted to European colonialism and that, with the exception of Australia and New Zealand, have not reached levels of economic development similar to the global north (Europe and North America)."

<sup>117</sup> Within the scope of Portuguese colonisation and its aftermath, this formation has informed the *Atlântico Pardo* and/or *Um Mar Cor da Terra* (see: Vale de Almeida, *Um Mar da Cor da Terra: Raça, Cultura e Política da Identidade*, 255; *An Earth-Colored Sea. 'Race', Culture and the Politics of Identity in the Post-Colonial Portuguese-Speaking World* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2004b), 176.; "O Atlântico Pardo. Antropologia, Pós-Colonialismo e o Caso "Lusófono"," in *Trânsitos Coloniais: Diálogos Críticos Luso-Brasileiros* (Campinas: Editora UNICAMP, 2007b), 27-43.); and *The Lusophone Black Atlantic* (see: Nancy Priscilla Naro, Roger Sansi-Roca and David H. Treece, eds., *Cultures of the Lusophone Black Atlantic* (New York and Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 272.).

## Chapter 4. Colonial violence

The postcolonial analysis of Portuguese colonialism carried out in this dissertation so far arrived at translation in its epistemological decolonial possibilities. I have designed an analytical trajectory *departing* from elaboration on Portuguese colonial specificity bordering colonial exceptionalism (in spite of explicitly rejecting it) towards calls for a Portuguese *situated colonialism* attending to its *difference*. I insisted on the gendered racialisation inscribed in this difference, its invisibilisation and the requirement to foreground it. It follows that the possibility of dialogue among hegemonic and subaltern knowledges depends on translation, and the formation of a community is harboured on the shared experience of violence. This point of arrival supports exploration of that colonial difference through analysis of the Portuguese *colonial exception*. I deem this analytical *location* an important place for once again recovering and foregrounding that often occluded yet fundamental problematic for the Postcolonial field, namely race. The work of Roberto Vecchi and António Sousa Ribeiro has been pivotal in this development.

Vecchi (2007) relies on Spivak (1999) to elaborate on the implications of Foucault's theorisations when reflecting on European imperialism. Vecchi examines the mechanisms of imperial power, which rule the domain of life in its enlarged space – that is no longer bounded to a national territory. He reveals the intimate relationship between biopolitics and modernity and argues that Portugal was precocious in the implementation of such a regime. For Vecchi, racism, a specific mode of biopolitics (referring to Foucault) was diffused in modern times through colonialism. It instituted, he argues, a fragmentation of the domains of life/death within the realm of the empire. This analysis articulates, albeit not explicitly, with Mbembe's necropolitics previously discussed.

Vecchi points to the “undeniable mark of biopolitics” in the Portuguese empire, the subsequent *colonial war* and its postcolonialism. He reveals the lines of race present in the constitution of (Portuguese) modernity against the backdrop of a rhetoric of colonial specificity built upon an idealised imperial mission (Vecchi 2007, 179). Further investigating biopolitics and its nexus with modernity, Vecchi draws from the concept of immunity elaborated by the philosopher Roberto Esposito (2002). Immunity becomes then the very possibility of colonisation, i.e. the institution of a discretionary space whereby the sovereign ruler is dispensed of respecting the rules of community life. Racism works here through the “political recodification of life or of the different types of life” (Vecchi 2007, 181).

Vecchi works on this conceptual arsenal aiming to critically reflect on the symbolic technology upon which biopower within Portuguese colonialism was built. He identifies in *Lusotropicalismo* a linguistic fashion to cover up the material practices of imperial immunity. The *colonial war* is, in Vecchi's eyes, a mere continuity of the practice of biopower when the technologies of representation of a *Lusotropical* empire—for Vecchi, “a portugalidade” (i.e. Portugalidade)—are confronted with those I would call its colonial dissidents. The silence that smothered the *colonial war* in

Portugal for a long time has therefore been a fundamental requirement for the maintenance of national integrity in its bonds with the empire.

Further exploring the connection between biopolitics and colonialism, Vecchi points out the strict association between the diffusion of camps with colonialism and borrows from Giorgio Agamben (1995), who identifies in the concentration camp the paradigm of modern biopolitics, and asserts that there is a strict connection between the widespread existence of camps and colonialism (linked to *colonial wars*). He then delves into the Agambenian *state of exception* as the mechanism that rules life in both colony and camp:

Mas além dessa matriz originária que conjuga colónia e campo, há uma analogia íntima de funcionamento entre império/colónia e a figura do campo que é interessante sublinhar. Como sabemos, há um paradoxo topológico que designa a soberania que se funda sobre o conceito da exceção: é pela exceção (do latim *ex-capere*, “prender por fora”) que se possibilita ao soberano estar contemporaneamente fora e dentro do ordenamento jurídico, é justamente na exceção soberana que a norma se aplica à exceção desaplicando-se, retirando-se dela, sendo o estado de exceção a situação que decorre da suspensão da norma. (Vecchi 2007, 183-184)<sup>118</sup>

Amílcar Cabral has made a correlated analysis, whereby he affirms that imperialist domination rejected the *option* of liquidating the colonised population, as it would defeat the purpose of its domain (economic exploitation). Instead, “o domínio colonial imperialista tentou criar teorias que, de facto, não passam de grosseiras formulações do racismo e se traduzem, na prática, por um permanente estado de sítio para as populações nativas, baseado numa ditadura (ou democracia) racista” (Cabral 2011, 358).<sup>119</sup> Vecchi’s articulation of Agamben’s state of exception correlates with Cabral’s elaboration on the state of siege to describe the functioning of colonial life traversed by racism and its contrast to the (*Lusotropical*) rhetoric of Portuguese imperial exceptionality.

A soberania colonial do império, portanto, articula-se pela redefinição de cesuras biológicas operando no *continuum* da vida, que materializam a exceção e criam zonas onde a cidadania se subtrai deixando em evidencia a vida não qualificada. É nesse espaço de suspensão do direito em que tudo é realmente possível que o bio-poder pode mostrar o seu rosto autêntico fora de qualquer pseudo construção jurídica ... de acordo com o qual, pela desqualificação da morte dos que ocupam o campo, a vida dos que estão fora reforça-se e pode assim prosperar ou até regenerar-se .... (Vecchi 2007, 185)<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Transl.: “But beyond that original matrix that joins colony and camp, there is an intimate analogy between the functioning of empire/colony and the figure of the camp that is interesting to highlight. As we know, there is a topological paradox, which designates the sovereignty that is based on the concept of the exception: it is through the exception (from the Latin *ex-capere*, ‘taken outside’) that the sovereign is enabled to be simultaneously inside and outside the normal juridical order. It is precisely within the sovereign exception that the rule applies to the exception in no longer applying, in withdrawing from it. Hence, the state of exception is the situation that results from the suspension of the rule.”

<sup>119</sup> Transl.: “the imperialist colonial rule tried to create theories that, in fact, were nothing more than crude formulations of racism and translate, in practice, by a permanent state of siege to native populations, based on a racist dictatorship (or [a racist] democracy).”

<sup>120</sup> Transl.: “Therefore, the colonial sovereignty of the empire articulates itself through the redefinition of biological caesuras operating in the *continuum* of life, which materialise the exception and create zones where citizenship is subtracted, leaving in evidence the non-qualified life. It is in this space of suspension of rights in which everything is in fact possible that biopower can show its true face out of any pseudo-

It is in the very radicalisation of a regime of alterity—necropolitics—that a careful analogy between camp and colony holds its power. For Cabral, apartheid epitomizes this encounter: “A prática do apartheid traduz-se por uma exploração desenfreada da força de trabalho das massas africanas, encarceradas e reprimidas no mais cínico e mais vasto campo de concentração que a humanidade jamais conheceu” (Cabral 2011, 358).<sup>121</sup> This is a highly contentious analogy, but one that I deem of central importance, for it sets a path to discontinuity with empire. I will highlight and explore its possibilities.

Robert Stam and Ella Shohat corroborate the argument of the precociousness of Portugal in the institution of biopolitics. They identify the imbrication of representations of alterity that fed anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism (precursors to racism targeting *blacks*) in the early *Reconquista* (Christian Reconquest) of the Iberian Peninsula from Islamic control and the *Conquista* (Conquest) of the Americas, which followed the former.

The campaigns against Muslims and Jews as well as against other “agents of Satan” made available a mammoth apparatus of otherizing for recycling in the ‘new’ continents. Such campaigns provided a disciplinary framework, which, after being turned against Europe’s immediate or internal “others”, was then projected outward against Europe’s distant or external others. The point is not that there is an exact equivalence between Europe’s representations of Jews and Muslims and of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, but only that European Christian demonology pre-figured racist colonialism. Indeed, we can even discern a partial congruency between the phantasmatic imagery projected onto the Jewish and Muslim “enemy” and onto the indigenous and black African “savage”, all imaged to various degrees as “blood drinkers”, “sorcerers”, “devils” and “infidels.” (Stam and Shohat 2011, 33)

Following Francisco Bethencourt (2009), this imagery draws inspiration from conceptions already shaped in antiquity. The Iberian Peninsula saw the development of such imagery through a history of Muslim rule between the eighth and the thirteenth centuries. The first Christian Reconquest of Lisbon dates to the eleventh century, which launched a period of persecution of (converted) Muslims and Jews. Later in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, medieval tropes harboured in notions of blood and descent were adapted into a *taxonomy of deviance* (Bethencourt 2009, 52) attached to religion. These were systematised during the Inquisition, targeting Jews and Muslims, New Christians, but also Protestants, as well as former Hindus and animists, and other categories of (ethnic) *natural* or *acquired deviation*, such as political activism, or sexual norms and conduct, and *witchcraft* mainly practiced by *native* colonial women (witches, or *bruxas*, and sorceresses, or *feiticeiras*). The latter in particular were important categories justifying control and persecution in the colonies.

The Portuguese Inquisition (1536-1821) drew from its Spanish predecessor (1487-1834). It accompanied the Portuguese colonial enterprise. This violent enterprise must be understood in its breadth and depth as a military, trade-oriented and evangelising

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legal construction ... Hereby, through disqualification of the death of those occupying the camp, the life of those outside is strengthened and so can thrive or even regenerate itself.”

<sup>121</sup> Transl.: “The practice of apartheid translates into an unbridled exploitation of the workforce of the African masses, incarcerated and repressed in the most cynical and the vastest concentration camp that humanity has ever known.”

endeavour, which started in North Africa with the conquest of Muslim-ruled Ceuta (1415). The Portuguese imperial conquest was fundamentally tied to a process of rearticulating deviance along racial lines.<sup>122</sup>

According to Stam and Shohat, the relations black-Jewish but also Jewish-Muslim have a long history and racism targeting each is interlinked. Indeed, as they argue, as much stress must be put on their connections as on their distinctions. Stam and Shohat further posit:

These linked trajectories and submerged analogies can be traced, as we have argued elsewhere, back to the events associated with the cataclysmic moment summed up in what might be called “the two 1492’s,” when the conquest of the “new” world converged with the expulsion of Muslim and Jews from Spain. At that time, the ground for colonialist racism was prepared by the Inquisition’s *limpieza de sangre*, by the expulsion edicts against Jews and Muslims, by the Portuguese expansion into the west coast of Africa, and by the transatlantic slave trade. (Stam and Shohat 2012, 155)

António Sousa Ribeiro (2011a) explores this congruency by examining the canonical texts from Jean Améry and Frantz Fanon—a *dialogue* that has been recovered by Gilroy (2010). Ribeiro views the Holocaust as a signpost for absolute violence linked to “(anti-Semitic ideology of) racist domination,” (Ribeiro 2011a, 145) and argues for its use as term of comparison with the experience of colonialism. Hereby he emphasises the fact that the Holocaust was not accidental but pertains to the very course of modernity, which is an argument correlated with Gilroy’s contention on the *middle passage* (Gilroy 1993).

Under this light, the singularity and uniqueness of the chain of events epitomized by the name “Auschwitz” does not preclude its use as a term of comparison, not only for other genocides in history, but also for other experiences of radical violence and exclusion inherent to the process of modernity – on the contrary, it calls directly upon it. (Ribeiro 2011a, 145)

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<sup>122</sup> This dissertation and this chapter in particular serve the purpose of teasing race into the postcolonial analysis of Portuguese colonialism. The topic requires and deserves a more thorough historical analysis than the one I can carry out in this short space. I would however like to mention some important aspects of the history of racialisation in Portugal. Charles Boxer argues that although the main criteria for acquiring the status of civilised in the Portuguese colonial realm was religion and not colour, this was not always clear or applied with consistency. Charles R. Boxer, *Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire 1415-1825* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 69-70. In the first half of the eighteenth century, white supremacy rose to become the main paradigm of Portuguese identity. With the rule of the Marquis of Pombal, Portuguese colonialism turned into a secular enterprise for a while, though with different racial implications, for blacks remained undesirable blood for racial mixture, whereas Amerindians and Asian indigenous populations were welcome as partners for intermarriage. *Ibid.*, 98-102. As noted previously, slavery was officially abolished in Portugal in 1761, and the transatlantic slave trade was officially abolished in 1836. Still, up until the mid-tweentieth century, blood purity remained the hegemonic national model. Patrícia Ferraz de Matos, *As “Côres” do Império: Representações Raciais no Império Colonial Português*, 3rd ed. (Lisbon: ICS: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2006), 287. Though religious bigotry and racism walk hand in hand and the previous has lost force with the passing of time, “color prejudice survived the draconic edicts of the Marquis of Pombal in 1763-74, and the egalitarian legislation of the Constitutional government in Portugal of the early nineteenth century.” Boxer, *Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire 1415-1825*, 126. Anti-black racism, which draws from this long trajectory of producing alterity on the basis of religion and nature, resisted the heydays of the praise of racial mixture in the twentieth century, and still permeates Portuguese society in the twenty-first century.

Ribeiro evokes the “crucial difference between colonialism and anti-Semitism, for the latter is quintessentially based on an ideology of elimination,” but argues for relativising this difference in face of the “genocidal episodes in the history of colonialism” (Ribeiro 2011a, 146). This comparison is contentious, evoking different positions. Colonialism scholars touch on the questions of difference, recognition, and the entry point for Africa, as approached above, to reflect on the important problem of asymmetry inscribed in the making of public memory. This questioning actually departs from the same affirmation of the centrality and radicalism of the violence of slavery, to arrive at (*grosso modo*) two sets of different conclusions. Typically, accounts differ in numbers (or the “arithmetics of suffering,” e.g. how many years of subjugation, how many dead, how many damaged) and are inscribed in different contexts of the Black Atlantic, but foreground the same possibility of comparison despite disagreeing on the desirability of the exercise. Most importantly, they invert the current precedence, problematizing hereby the hierarchy inscribed in public memory and in the Eurocentric historical canon.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> I will briefly highlight these exemplary positions with a comparison from other sites of the Black Atlantic than the one of Portuguese language. In the introduction to the new (1996) edition of the autobiography of the enslaved African Olaudah Equiano, *Equino's Travels* [1789], the scholar of African literature Stephan Efe Ogude writes: “The Nazi pogroms pale into relative insignificance when set beside over three hundred years of torture, rapine and enslavement, and the death and forcible transportation of over 100 million people to slave on sugar plantations for the benefit of total strangers. We shudder at the enormity of the crime against the Jews but in this instance one may take solace in the knowledge that the crime was committed by a pariah state; the Africans were enslaved and subjected to all sorts of indignities by the most civilized states in the world. At least, that was the boast.” Stephan Efe Ogude, “Introduction to the New Edition,” in *Equiano's Travels: The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano Or Gustavus Vassa the African*, eds. Olaudah Equiano and Paul Edwards (London: Heinemann, 1996), xii. While Ogude’s position can be interpreted as a rejection of the analogy, the Dutch scholar Sandew Hira explicitly makes a comparison. Hira recently launched the *online community SlavernijOnline.nl* [Slavery Online] with the intent to make information on the Dutch slavery past publicly available. He asserted that the website is a means to “achieve the same as the Jews achieved with the Holocaust. Slavery must be recognised as a crime against humanity.” “‘Slavernij Moet Internationaal Erkend Worden als Misdaad Tegen Menselijkheid’ – Nieuwe Website Zowel in Amsterdam Als in Paramaribo 20 Januari Gelanceerd.” *Obsession Magazine*, January 14, 2013. <http://obsession-magazine.nl/?p=22396>. This highly problematic contention (that posits the Holocaust as a “Jewish achievement”) was criticised as inappropriate for using the Holocaust to make a comparison with slavery. Hira responded with insistence on the comparison. Willingly or not he draws from the necropolitical perspective to enslavement as (social) death:

“De vergelijking met de Joodse holocaust heeft als doel om te laten [zien] hoe hypocriet de redenatie in Europa is ten aanzien van misdaden tegen de menselijkheid en dat aan die hypocrisie een einde zou moeten komen en met in alle eerlijkheid alle misdaden tegen de menselijkheid op gelijke manier behandelt. Ik baseer me bij de vergelijking van misdaden tegen de menselijkheid op wetenschappelijke feiten: de omvang van de misdaad (hoeveel slachtoffers), de duur (hoe lang duurde het) en de aard (hoe was die misdaad georganiseerd en hoe was het lijden van de slachtoffers). ... De Joodse holocaust was gericht op de vernietiging van mensenlevens. Slavernij was gericht op de uitbuiting van mensen. Dit klopt feitelijk al niet. Het effect van slavernij wás de vernietiging van mensenlevens. Voor iedere Afrikaan die levend vertrok uit Afrika zijn 2-5 mensen onderweg gestorven in het proces van kidnapping. Die levens (24-60 miljoen) zijn vernietigd. Van de 12 miljoen mensen die naar de Amerikas vertrokken zijn 2 miljoen onderweg gestorven. Die levens zijn vernietigd.” Sandew Hira, “De Vergelijking met de Joodse Holocaust,” *StarNieuws*, January 21, 2013.

Transl.: “The comparison with the Jewish Holocaust aims to show how hypocritical is the reasoning in Europe with regard to crimes against humanity, a hypocrisy that should come to an end, and in all honesty all crimes against humanity [must be] treated in the same way. To compare crimes against humanity I rely on scientific facts: the scope of the crime (the number of victims), the duration (how long it lasted) and nature (how was that crime organized and how was the suffering of the victims). ... The Jewish Holocaust was aimed at the destruction of human lives. Slavery was focused on the exploitation

On the other side of the analogy, Holocaust scholars often hold the Holocaust as a historical episode and an experience beyond comparison (an issue which will emerge further below in the section). As highlighted above, Ribeiro relativises the Holocaust's difference with colonialism, and digs into the dynamics of representation of alterity: "And the fact remains that there are undeniable structural similarities between the Nazi construction of Jewish people and the construction of the colonized in the framework of colonial difference" (Ribeiro 2011a, 146). Therefore Ribeiro, drawing on Fanon, contends that "the colonizer, and not the colonized, should be the focus of critical attention, since the colonizer only exists as such as a projection of the colonizer's gaze" (ibid.). In the same line, Stam and Shohat highlight the parallels between contentions by Fanon and Sartre, indicating that: "Fanon recalls Sartre's argument that the Jew is a creation of the anti-Semite's fixating gaze. For Sartre, 'it is the anti-Semite who makes the Jew,' just as for Fanon, it is the white who makes the black" (Stam and Shohat 2012, 160).

Ribeiro forwards the argument for scrutiny of the workings of colonial power in its intricacies with race and social stratification, with a focus on the epistemic violence exercised against these overdetermined subjects: *the Black* and *the Jew*.

Michael Rothberg offers another important argument for comparatively approaching both racialised systems of dominance, namely the fact that the Third wave of the empire and Nazi-fascism are coterminous. Therefore, posits Rothberg, "the emergence of Holocaust memory and the unfolding of decolonization [should be seen] as overlapping and not separate processes" (quoted in Ribeiro 2011a, 148-149). Indeed, people's movements for liberation flourished in the period 1950-1970, including the independence war in Algeria and several other colonised countries in Africa—including those under Portuguese colonial rule—and Asia, the student movement in France, and the civil rights movement in the USA.

Alongside and with that, as Robin Kelley indicates in the introduction to Césaire's *A Tempest*: "a wave of anticolonial literature [was] produced during the postwar period." Césaire's work is highlighted as an inquiry into the process of "decivilisation" of the master. This query connects with an important corpus of western literature on the problem of The Human in the postwar. Stam and Shohat identify associations between Césaire and Hannah Arendt and offer a brief overview of Jew-Black affiliations but also of de-identification and fissures in alliances in the postwar period (Stam and Shohat 2012, 154-162). Kelley (2002, xii) rescues Césaire's powerful contention in *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950) to highlight the continuum between "the logic of colonialism and the rise of fascism" in the practice of racialised violence, though hinting at the racial hierarchy that pervades this relationship:

[T]hat they tolerated Nazism before it was inflicted on them ... because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated Nazism, that they have been responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole of Western, Christian civilization

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of people. This is actually not accurate. The effect of slavery *was* the destruction of human lives. For every African who departed from Africa alive, 2-5 people died on the way in the process of kidnapping. Those lives (24-60 million) have been destroyed. Of the 12 million people who left for the Americas two million died en route. Those lives are destroyed."

in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps and trickles from every crack. (Césaire quoted in Kelley 2002, xii)

Despite being aware of the difference, the analogy is crucial as it brings to the fore the “epistemic violence” (Ribeiro 2011a, 146) enacted against the imprisoned Jew and the black colonial subject. As they both work within and against the dynamics of “double consciousness” (Du Bois’ term)—the desire of belonging to enlightened universalism and the consciousness of being victim to its violence—Ribeiro identifies in colonialism and anti-Semitism the “silenced reverses of modernity.” According to Ribeiro, these “need to be made to speak in order to bring to light their full relevance for the questioning of the master narrative of the modern” (ibid., 147).

Another important aspect in Ribeiro’s analysis is the precedence given to experience over theory. This is important because it foregrounds the question of voice and historical memory. According to Ribeiro, the testimony of one’s violent life events has an “exemplary value, in that it points to the form of operation of power mechanisms which, by objectifying the colonized or the Jew, confer by definition a trans-subjective quality to the discourse of testimony that reflects on that experience” (ibid., 149-150). But further than embodying the “cosmopolitan intellectual” (from Boaventura Santos), these figures merge the “bearer of violence” (ibid., 150) and the avenger. Ribeiro departs from the memorisation of the Holocaust through testimony. He recalls that Jean Améry’s “whole theory and practice of testimony can be understood as symbolic violence and symbolic revenge, a word from which Améry does not refrain” (ibid., 151). Améry’s writing focuses on the testimony of the victim, revealing the power mechanisms that dehumanised victim as well as perpetrator, to call for “revolutionary violence”:

We have finally to abandon, it seems to me (and this emerges from the work and existence of Fanon), any false notion of symmetry: violence equals violence. ... Repressive violence blocks the way to the self-realisation of the human-being; revolutionary violence breaks through that barrier, refers and leads to the more than temporal, the historical humane future. (Améry 2005, 16)

This particularity of Améry as a Holocaust bearer and thinker (vis-à-vis Primo Levi, who is determinant for the historical canon) brings him closer to anticolonial narratives and it is where he identifies with Fanon, as Ribeiro argues. Améry calls for struggle for restoring his dignity and recovering his humanity, out of which liberation should follow. This difference rests on the very experience of torture.<sup>124</sup> And here the biopolitics of the colony/camp (as discussed by Vecchi) offer further insight into the materiality of experience under such regimes. Ribeiro calls upon Améry’s description

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<sup>124</sup> Primo Levi remarks in *The Drowned and the Saved* that he, who did not experience torture as his contemporary Améry did, could understand Améry’s politics of revenge but could not share them. For Levi, Améry’s “*Zurückschlagen*” or “returning the blow” morality inevitably leads to one’s defeat. It represented therefore a very high price to be paid for one’s recovered dignity. Levi hints to this way of living as the explanation for Améry’s suicide. Adrian Daub, translator of Améry’s *The Birth of Man*, remarked that Améry “regarded suicide as a way of countering victimisation,” in Améry’s own words: “a summation of any number of humiliations, which the one committing suicide has refused to make his own.” Jean Améry, “The Birth of Man from the Spirit of Violence: Frantz Fanon the Revolutionary,” *Wasafiri* 20, no. 44 (2005), 18. At the time of *The Drowned and the Saved*, Levi was aware of the fact that Améry referred to him as “the forgiver.” Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (London: Abacus, 1988), 109-110. Tragically, short after writing those remarks Levi himself committed suicide.

of the workings of violence, which *transform the human being into flesh*, denying her/his humanity for ever: “The victim of torture will never again feel at home in the world” (quoted in Ribeiro 2011a, 150). Hereby the body gains centre stage in the experience and memory of racialised violence.

The central issue here is that torture is a prison for life, a way of confining its victim forever within the limits of a reductive corporeity. The analogy with Fanon’s thoughts on the inescapability of his black skin are evident. (Ribeiro 2011a, 150)

Turning the biopolitics of the colony/Lager back against its perpetrators implies then violating the very integrity of the modern narrative, which constructed them as subjects of modernity at home, and holders of the power to represent and dispose of *their others*. Violence becomes the means of “healing the real wound” (Améry quoted in Ribeiro 2011a, 151). Yet, the wound remains open in the afterlife of camp and colony.

Ribeiro is conscious of the “precariousness” and “ambivalence” of this analogy, which “conflates the experience of the colonized and of the concentration camp inmate in the single utopian vision of a state of humanity.” Its transformative potential is found in the force and singularity of testimony (Ribeiro 2011a, 151). However, the analogy should be explored beyond the testimony as, I would argue, it is instrumental for shedding light into imperial continuities reflected in the establishment of racial hierarchies. It is crucial to reflect on the system of representation of alterity that remained in place after and beyond the borders of camp and colony. The difference of colonisation remains imprinted in the skin after the death of the enslaved *black*, which is not the case when the last *numbered Jew* dies. *The Black*—the ontological slave—as an ascribed identification or condition is therefore not a subject of choice. On this crucial issue, Améry refers to Fanon, countering Sartre’s accusations on Jews subjecting to the stereotypes others make of them:

All the same, the Jew can be unknown in his Jewishness. His actions, his behaviour are the final determinant. He is a white man, and, apart from some rather debatable characteristics, he can sometimes go unnoticed. ... [B]ut in my case, everything takes on a new guise. I am given no chance, I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the “idea” that others have of me, but of my own appearance. (Fanon quoted in Améry 2005, 13-14)

Stam and Shohat comment on this same poignant passage of *Black Skin, White Masks*, whereby “Fanon delineates the distinct psychic mechanisms that emplot the Jew and the black within the racist imaginary,” to argue that “[s]ignificant distinctions separate anti-Semitic and antiblack imaginaries, then, precisely in terms of corporeality” (Shohat and Stam 2012, 160). Corporeality is a critical difference that imposes limits to the analogy, and must be taken into account in particular as it relates intimately to the biopolitical regimes of body categorisation, use and control in the twenty-first century, in postempires and postcolonies.

Additionally, the status of the testimony in the making of history and public memory is not beyond questioning. Levi himself posited that: “[E]ach of us survivors is in more than one way an exception; something that we ourselves, to exorcise the past, tend to forget” (Levi 1988, 82). He affirmed that those who could possibly testify, the “true witnesses,” have been annihilated; they are the *sommersi* (the drowned). Survivors (the

*salvati*) can only “speak in their stead, by proxy” (Levi quoted in Introduction The drowned, Bailey, Paul ix).

Returning to literature, Vecchi (2010a) draws from this problematic nature of the testimony—following Levi as the *partial witness*, and to the complex nexus between history and experience—to argue for a broader consideration of elements that constitute the memory of war. Further, Vecchi points to the authority ascribed to a first-hand testimony, defined along the establishment of other definitions, namely of a *colonial war*. This literature, he argues, must be used in a critical fashion so that the historical canon is faced with a “non-hegemonic counter-memory” (Vecchi 2010a, 39). Memory of these wars in Africa, he affirms, is still highly disputed in Portugal, and here testimony could act to dislodge recurrent assertions in national memory indebted to *Lusotropical* exceptionalism.

Vecchi points to the “usefulness” of the Shoah as a model of reconstruction of memory (after Wiewiorka), which finds itself in a state of emergency. It is a memory trapped in the impossibility of utterance that can be precariously represented as rests and residues (ibid., 36):

A literatura da guerra colonial entra em pleno título nessa discussão e dentro da perspectiva dos estudos da pós-Shoah, não em virtude de um reducionismo ou de um exercício redutor de comparatismo histórico, mas porque muitos dos seus elementos constitutivos - a impossibilidade de simbolizar o trauma, a fragmentação do sujeito, a incomunicabilidade da experiência, a urgência de fundar uma memória compartilhada que vá além das recordações ou vivências individuais - podem instaurar intensas e produtivas solidariedades críticas. (Vecchi 2010a, 36)<sup>125</sup>

Literary language works with and within this regime of residues, according to the “conditions of opacity proper to the “*exceção atlântica*”” (*Atlantic exception*). The subversive potential of these readings (of the *colonial war*) is found in shedding light into these fragments from *differing points of view*, “pela reconstrução do rosto ocultado pela máscara do colonialismo” (ibid., 186),<sup>126</sup> and elucidating their mechanism.

Nesta linha, a literatura da guerra colonial permite é multiplicar os pontos de vista através dos quais pensar o império, encontrar os seus nomes, e poder prefigurar uma memória compartilhada que, antes ou depois, se torne parte de uma memória efetivamente pública. (Vecchi 2010a, 187)<sup>127</sup>

Still, voice is a critical question in the current trend of memorialisation in the public sphere in Portugal. In fact, the loci of utterance of such cultural artifacts are not as diversified as they need to be, and the very centrality of the scrutiny of literature on the *colonial war* reflects this privileged locus. In addition there is a problematic situation of

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<sup>125</sup> Transl.: “The literature of the colonial war befits this discussion and belongs inside the perspective of the post-Shoah studies, not because of a reductionism or of a reducing exercise of historical comparatism, but because many of its constituent elements - the impossibility to symbolise trauma, the fragmentation of the subject, incomunicability of experience, the urgency of establishing a shared memory that goes beyond individual memories or experiences - can establish intense and productive critical solidarities.”

<sup>126</sup> Transl.: “by rebuilding the face hidden by the mask of colonialism.”

<sup>127</sup> Transl.: “In this line, the literature of the colonial war allows a multiplication of the points of view through which to reflect on the empire, find its names, and to foresee a shared memory that, sooner or later, becomes part of a truly public memory.”

dependency on the part of the *others* of this experience to the canon, as argued by Mata above. A further, and fundamental point of tension here is the appropriation of a “model” based on the figure of the victim as a site of interpretation, as argued about Améry (Adrian Daub quoted in Améry 2005, 18) and construction of historical memory alongside and in supposed equivalence with the testimony of the perpetrator at her/his home. Both Fanon and Améry—and for that matter Levi too— argued that regimes of absolute violence dehumanise both victims and perpetrators, and Fanon in particular analysed at length the intricacies of such positions. However, all insisted on the distinction between them. This distinction tends to be absent within the Portuguese *Lusotropical* eschatology that inhabits both the public sphere and postcolonial accounts. This is however a trend that reaches beyond Portugal, as well exposed by Gilroy:

There is something about the way the loss works, which tells them that they themselves are the primary victims of colonial history rather than the people who tell you that they are the victims of the racism, which comes out of it. Europe displaces them from their victimage and holds the space of victim for itself. That role of victim gets monopolised in order to deny immigrants, denizens, foreigners, – infrahuman beings – any access to the moral authority associated with their victimisation. Keeping victimhood exclusively for oneself has another benefit. It takes away any legitimacy from the wounded less-than-people who strive to draw attention to their victimisation at the hands of Europe and to its colonial crimes. White Europe stands as the only victim worthy of acknowledgement. This pattern has become common in the contemporary situation. (Gilroy 2006)

Therefore I would stress the requirement of a critical gaze to the politics of making a *shared memory* in current postcolonial Portugal, attending to the limits of the postempire to shape its own *counter-memory*. Vecchi’s contentions on the disputed terrain of building public memory in postcolonial Portugal hold power here.

Vecchi’s proposed perspective to the biopolitics of the Portuguese empire is an important step towards a self-critical Postcolonial, because he reinscribes the enslaved black into the field, revealing the racialisation of the everyday under Portuguese colonisation. Hereby Vecchi comments on and associates with reflection on the notion of colonial exceptionality. In the next chapter, I will delve into his theorisation on the enlacement between race and *exception* in order to foreground the often-occluded fact and workings of Portuguese racialised colonial violence in the postcolonial field.

## Chapter 5. The racial element

Vecchi identifies in colonial legislation, particularly the *Estatutos dos indígenas* (1929-1961), important instruments for the institution of biopolitics in the Portuguese colonial realm. The *Estatutos*, as previously highlighted, regulated the status of colonial subjects through the establishment of norms of civility, and rules for acquiring citizenship within the enlarged realm of the Portuguese empire. Besides regulation, Vecchi argues that the particular rhetoric in which the *Estatutos* were presented was an essential *suplemento retórico* (*rhetorical supplement*) to their working: “ao elemento racial sobrepõe-se a mitologia da ‘nação atlântica’” (Vecchi 2007, 186).<sup>128</sup> Hereby race linked to cultural inferiority defined the category of indigenous people rhetorically assimilated into the empire. This configures an “exclusionary inclusion”:

Ressalta assim uma diferença que não se configura na aparência como racial, mas que afunda a sua legitimidade no mito duma superioridade cultural reivindicada por duas ordens de fatores: o primeiro, o cunho ideológico, católico-ocidental, do projeto colonizador, o segundo a primazia com que ele começou a ser realizado no tocante à expansão colonial da Europa. De facto, porém, a diferença institui a exceção ... Assim, como sempre, a atitude imunitária de conservação negativa da vida descortina-se no “Estatuto dos indígenas portugueses” de 54 (a condição do “indígena português” marca linguística e até figurativamente a “exclusão inclusiva” da exceção colonial) ... De facto a assimilação opera de acordo com linhas que são simétricas às normas do campo, sancionando a continuação da exceção e fundamentando a soberania colonial. (Vecchi 2007, 186, 188)<sup>129</sup>

Finally Vecchi rescues the context of the last *estatuto*, which reaffirms the rules of its biopower (relying on the differentiation of the peoples of the empire) within an ever-stronger *Lusotropical* rhetoric of multiracial harmony. These were the times when the *colonial war* erupted (1961). The reminiscences of these biopolitics—and its racial basis—are still working today in Portuguese postcolonial times.

Vecchi (2010b) relies on the notion of “colonial desire” (Robert Young 1995)—identified as present in the whole of the West throughout modernity—to reflect on the specificity of Portuguese (post)colonialism. He argues that the extraordinary (i.e. out of the ordinary) character of “the Portuguese case” is found in the force and resilience of a mythology of *Lusotropical* shapes, in other words: “um horizonte interpretativo favorável à ideologia expansionista que Portugal estabelece como singularidade entre os colonialismos europeus” (Vecchi 2010b, 136).<sup>130</sup> Departing from the criticism put

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<sup>128</sup> Transl.: “the mythology of the ‘Atlantic nation’ overrides the racial element.”

<sup>129</sup> Transl.: “Hereby a difference is highlighted, a difference that is not configured in appearance as racial, but that grounds its legitimacy in the myth of a cultural superiority claimed by two orders of factors: first, the ideological, Catholic western nature of the colonising project, the second the primacy with which it began to be implemented with respect to the colonial expansion of Europe. In fact, however, the difference institutes the exception. ... So, as always, the immunitary attitude of negative preservation of life reveals itself in the “Estatuto dos indígenas portugueses” [“Statute of the Portuguese Natives”] of 54 (the condition of the “indígena português” [“Portuguese indigenous”], linguistic brand and even figuratively the “inclusive exclusion” of colonial exception) .... In fact assimilation operates according to lines that are symmetrical to the rules of the camp, sanctioning the continuation of the exception and justifying colonial sovereignty.”

<sup>130</sup> Transl.: “An interpretative horizon that is favourable to the expansionist ideology that Portugal establishes as a singularity among European colonialisms.”

forward by Eduardo Lourenço and Santos, Vecchi points to the ever-present self-representation of a semi-peripheral nation with a divine destiny. This paradox, archaic and modern at once—and therefore “Baroque”—defines the very “singularidade semântica do imperialismo *à portuguesa*: ... a força da imaginação combinada com a gracilidade e marginalidade da nação ... colocam o escravo e a exceção relevante do sistema de escravidão no contexto do colonialismo *sui generis* de Portugal” (ibid., 133).<sup>131</sup>

Therefore slavery, and I would argue, more precisely *the body of the enslaved*, enters the core of this specificity. Hereby Portuguese colonisation is gazed at through the *paradigma biopolítico moderno (modern biopolitical paradigm)* (ibid.). This perspective enables reflection on continuities with empire in an elusive communal terrain of the Portuguese postcolonial. A narrative of the Portuguese postcolony would be tentatively possible if harboured in the commonality of (veiled or not) racism aligned with social exclusion, framed as the *anti-conquest*, that is, within the realm of Portuguese colonialism, the *Atlantic exception*.

Vecchi explicitly draws from a current of social thought imbued with a psychoanalytical conceptual arsenal that critically gazes at Portuguese self-representation. The novel coinage *exceção atlântica* is inspired in what Lourenço defined as “a insólita *exceção portuguesa*” (quoted in Vecchi 2010b, 18),<sup>132</sup> as argued above. Lourenço (1999b) coined this expression when discussing what the Portuguese perceive as the miracle of its survival as a nation, given its historical fragility. Vecchi appropriates the historical particularities of the nation from this account, the critical scrutiny of the cultural meaning-making of particularity as exceptionality, and Boaventura Santos’ sharp criticism to what he saw as the process of creation of new instances of national mythology in Lourenço’s account (see *Onze Teses*, previously analysed). Vecchi (2010a) explores the complexity of the category *exception*, which in his eyes is ambiguous and controversial, constituting a case of *limit* and *frontier*.

Por isso, falar em “exceção atlântica”, simplesmente sem mais ilustração, tornar-se-ia problemático porque o traço excepcional remete para a abordagem que valoriza o desvio normativo, o *nómos* português luso-tropicalista. Muito melhor e bem mais adequado, como faz Boaventura de Sousa Santos, é distinguir entre especificidade (que decorreria da condição semiperiférica de Portugal) e exceção que se conecta com algumas providências operadas no eixo do tempo, isto é, da representação, como a retroactividade, a suspensão e o anacronismo. Estas, no seu re-uso, produzem uma temporalidade própria de longa duração (Santos, 2006 : 230-233) que é estranha mas coerente com o projeto de inventar uma continuidade inexistente. (Vecchi 2010a, 20)<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Transl.: “semantic singularity of imperialism *à la Portuguesa*: the power of imagination combined with the graciousness and marginalisation of the nation ... put the slave and the notable exception of the slavery system in the context of Portugal’s *sui generis* colonialism.”

<sup>132</sup> Transl.: “the peculiar Portuguese exception.”

<sup>133</sup> Transl.: “Therefore, speaking of “Atlantic exception” simply without further explanation, would become problematic because the exceptional trait refers to the approach that values the normative deviation, the Portuguese *Lusotropical nomos*. Much better and far more appropriate, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos does, is to distinguish between specificity (that would arise from the semi-peripheral condition of Portugal) and exception, that connects with some dispositions operated on the time axis, that is, of representation as retroactivity, suspension and anachronism. These, in their re-use, produce an own temporality of long duration (Santos, 2006: 230-233) which is strange but coherent with the project of inventing a nonexistent continuity.”

In this way, Vecchi disturbs the biopolitical mechanisms inscribed in modernity, which carry violence in a latent form. He aims to tease out of western civilisation its *other sides*. At the same time he furthers a stream of critical thought on Portuguese nationality linked to empire, drawing strongly from Santos and Ribeiro, to capture “the intimate mechanism that reins the idea of a Portuguese exception” (Vecchi 2010a, 20).

Beyond delineating the most important claims of this specificity, I will not aim to resolve the tension born out of adopting such tropes. I will however cautiously indicate the sensibilities of this particular Postcolonial field regarding such notions, following Sanches above. By this I mean to say that analysis of Portuguese colonial mechanisms and claims of its exceptionality have often been knotted together. Besides identifying where they met and became one (myth), it is fundamental to remain alert to their continuous leaning towards the common sensical (colonial) vocabulary populating the Portuguese postcolonial field, as discussed above.

Building upon the work of Foucault, Vecchi characterises *Lusotropicalismo* as a *dispositive*, an “ingenious and subtle symbolic technology” that oils the Portuguese (post)colonial machine. Drawing from Agamben, he points to the intricate proximity between exception and example, which functions at the core of this dispositive:

É esta dinâmica que se incorpora, engenhosa e subtilmente, no dispositivo luso-tropicalista que, na anfibiologia dos dois campos, tende a trocar a “exceção atlântica” - que expõe os mecanismos críticos de uma soberania complexa e problemática - com a “exemplaridade atlântica”, isto é, o excepcionalismo da história do império português. Uma exemplaridade que se funda sobre um exemplo concreto, palpável, de integração multiracial lograda: o Brasil. (Vecchi 2010a, 184)<sup>134</sup>

Vecchi refers to Santos’ *Entre Próspero e Caliban* for a critical analysis of this machinery of (re)producing imperial exceptionalism as virtue, revealing a “different racism” that rests upon that biocultural pillar, within the perspective of a “situated post-colonialism.” The fundament of this specificity—taken as exception—is the Baroque character of Portuguese colonialism, whereby liberal law and rhetoric are intricately combined with the archaism of colonial domination, the latter a parasite of the former. For Vecchi, the particular case of literature on the *colonial war* exposes colonial occlusions “podendo revelar ... o funcionamento de uma micro-física do poder, no caso português ocultada por mantos e dispositivos retóricos que se depositaram sobre o discurso e ainda produzem efeitos” (Vecchi 2010a, 186-187).<sup>135</sup>

Vecchi confirms the difficulty of revising imperial history in Portugal for that history is conditioned by the “resíduos mitopoéticos das (auto)representações. Assim, a debilidade ôptica da nação liminal, marginalizada e periférica da Europa, combina-se com a força ontológica de uma semiperiferia que tem de si uma imaginação de centro”

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<sup>134</sup> Transl.: “It is this dynamic that incorporates, ingenious and subtly, into the *Lusotropical* device which, in the amphibiology of the two fields, tends to exchange the ‘Atlantic exception’ - which exposes the critical mechanisms of a complex and problematic sovereignty - with the ‘Atlantic exemplarity,’ i.e., the exceptionalism of the history of the Portuguese empire. This exemplarity is founded on a concrete, tangible example of successful multiracial integration: Brazil.”

<sup>135</sup> Transl.: “being able to reveal ... the operation of a microphysics of power, in the Portuguese case hidden by cloaks and rhetorical devices that were deposited on discourse and which still produce effects.”

(Vecchi 2010b, 136).<sup>136</sup> And here he harbours the argument in Calafate Ribeiro's work, highlighting the "monumental dimension of the rhetorical investment of Portuguese colonialism" in order to sustain the colonial enterprise:

O "caso" do império português, a sua permanência como máquina simbólica, como "lanterna mágica" de revisão histórica, evidencia assim o funcionamento do desejo imperial, na não coincidência entre o império histórico e o imperialismo identitário que marcou e talvez ainda marque a experiência portuguesa. Um dispositivo, este, indispensável para apreender sinais daquele "heart of darkness" da história não escrita mais imprescritível da violência colonial. (Vecchi 2010b, 138-139)<sup>137</sup>

Altogether Vecchi (2010b) minusciously chops up the workings of the Portuguese colonial system, making an analogy with the (concentration) camp where the exception is the rule. This analogy is of paramount importance for it reinstates in the field the aspect of violence enacted through colonisation. Across Europe, colonial violence has been overshadowed by the Holocaust since World War II, and in Portugal in particular, alongside that, through the assertion of that notion of subaltern imperialism (defined in contrast to the central imperial power, namely the British). However, this perspective has been contested for it ignores the very racialised hierarchy in memory systems. Manuela Ribeiro Sanches turns to Césaire (1955) to argue that while the Holocaust was subjected to public condemnation and revision in the heart of Europe, colonial violence did not receive the same treatment, as it did not victimize "white" Europeans (Sanches 2011b, 9). This discrepancy enabled Europe to set forth the self-representation of the continent as the cradle of secularism, enlightenment and human rights while enforcing processes of exclusion of the *less than human* through the racialisation of difference (ibid., 8). Sanches asserts that the idea of Europe still requires urgent critique. A crucial element of this critique is asking why and how that asymmetrical memory system works, and recovering the humanity of those excluded from the idea and material borders of the continent. As I argued above, these questions are pertinent for postimperial Portugal, including the postcolonial field. I deem the dialogue between Améry and Fanon to be instrumental in laying this asymmetry bare and pointing to its currency.

Paul Gilroy affirmed the persistency of this asymmetry while comparing the different reception of convergent ideas of Fanon and Améry on the reparative aspect of counterviolence:

Améry transposed this controversial insight away from the colonial world, where it has proved offensive and controversial, and relocated it in the different setting provided by the concentrationary universe, where it could appear quite reasonable if not righteously necessary. (Gilroy 2010, 27)

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<sup>136</sup> Transl.: "mythopoetic residues of (self) representations. So the ontic debilitation of the liminal, marginalised and peripheral nation of Europe, combines itself with the ontological force of a semi-periphery which imagines itself as centre."

<sup>137</sup> Transl.: "The 'case' of the Portuguese empire, its permanence as symbolic machine, as 'magic lantern' of historical revision, evidences the operation of imperial desire, in the non-coincidence between the historical empire and the identitary imperialism, which marked and maybe still marks the Portuguese experience. A device that is indispensable in order to apprehend signs of that 'heart of darkness' of the most imprescriptible unwritten history of colonial violence."

Gilroy makes use of Améry's place in the western canon to rescue Fanon's writing, as it is of critical importance for reflecting on continuing patterns of racial inequality in the present day. Gilroy (2010, 16) addresses Améry as Fanon's "enthusiastic reader," which reverses the canonical reading whereby the Holocaust becomes paradigmatic for explaining other experiences of modern alienation. Améry (2005) described his encounter with Fanon's writings as opening his eyes to naturalised "occidental cultural hegemony":

For the first time, I, a European who in his youth had thought nothing of hearing about colonies and colonialism, who had been able to look at photographs depicting blacks bearing loads and whites supervising them in topees without an upwelling of emotion, began to realise that there is nothing natural about being some coloniser's colonial slave. (Améry 2005, 13)

Améry was grabbed by the erudition and eloquence in which Fanon presented the experience of the black man (which betrays Améry's own upbringing within normalised racism, as revealed by himself), which he found corresponded to his own experience as a Jewish inmate in a concentration camp: "It is still impossible for me ... to simply ignore these parallels between our respective experiences. Perhaps however my point will gain rather than lose authoritativeness through these parallels" (Améry 2005, 13).

Améry is critically aware of the rampant asymmetry in the construction of public memory, which he counters. Colonisation gains full recognition of one such system such as the Shoah, through the words of a Holocaust victim who formed, at the same time, the analytic body of reflection on the phenomenon.<sup>138</sup> Gilroy explicitly argues for the association of Améry's reflections with Fanon's, as Améry acknowledged the central role that racism played in the debasement of humanity carried out by the Third Reich. Therefore Améry's radical humanism, born out of the experience of torture—that was key to a racialised regime of power—resonates with Fanon's. So Gilroy "uses" Améry to highlight Fanon's humanism and calls for its revision and recovery for addressing new forms of racism imbued in "the routinisation of torture in contemporary statecraft" (Gilroy 2010, 16).

Fanon's writing highlighted the evolving articulation of colony and postcolony so that, away from the torrid and sandy killing zones, there is also a sense he may be of help in explaining aspects of the social and psychological conflict being discovered inside the postcolonial metropolis. (Gilroy 2010, 20)

Hereby Gilroy insists in scrutinising the structures that Fanon identified in colonialism, "which have lately migrated from the experimental settings provided by the colonial laboratory and moved toward the mainstream of the 'neo-con-opticon' (Statewatch, 2009)" (Gilroy 2010, 19).<sup>139</sup> He thus highlights coloniality in the postempire:

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<sup>138</sup> It is however important to highlight that Améry acquired a subordinate position in Holocaust Studies where, as argued by Gilroy, he appeared primarily as an interlocutor to the analysis developed by his fellow inmate Primo Levi. Paul Gilroy, "Fanon and Améry: Theory, Torture and the Prospect of Humanism," *Theory, Culture & Society* 27, no. 7-8 (2010), 23.

<sup>139</sup> "'NeoConOpticon' is a crude attempt to encapsulate these ideas: a coherent state-corporate project, potentially global in scope, designed to impose a high-tech security apparatus for the express purpose of maintaining and extending the current neo-liberal order in the 21<sup>st</sup> century." Statewatch, *NeoConOpticon*.

Tracking those developments raises the uncomfortable possibility that the colonial space is not, after all, an atavistic location but a rather futuristic one. In that necropolitical space (Mbembe, 2003), a variety of technologies – deadly, juridical, biometric – can be implemented and refined prior to their importation into the walled but declining metropolitan hubs of the old imperial web – just as they were during Europe’s colonial phase (Browse, 2010; Headrick, 1981; Sengoopta, 2003; Thomas, 2008). (Gilroy 2010, 19-20)

Gilroy points to the mirage of the cessation of racism through the “spectacular mainstreaming of black cultures” (ibid, 22), which is an argument that resonates with Manuela Ribeiro Sanches’ portrayal of contemporary Portuguese society. Altogether, Gilroy insists on the understanding of race and its connection with violence for addressing “the problem of the human” contemporarily in sites ranging from the neo-imperial “war on terror” to internal systems in centres and peripheries, postempires and postcolonies. Fanon’s work is fundamental for carrying out this task.

Fanon remains important because the whole significance of Europe’s colonial dominance of the world has been grossly underestimated by social and political theory. The extent of that system – which saw, at the start of the 20th century, some 55 percent of the world’s population under the colonial yoke – is not appreciated as a historical phenomenon with contemporary consequences. Without that acknowledgement, the theory of globalization becomes incomplete. More than that, the ways in which the undoing of the colonial system transformed the global order remain essentially unexamined at the metahistorical level that they demand. (Gilroy 2010, 29-30)

It is significant that Ribeiro introduced the camp/colony analogy into Portuguese postcolonialism through Jean Améry’s reading of Frantz Fanon. Hereby Ribeiro draws from the canonical tradition of gazing to Africa through western lenses, though at the same time breaking the order of precedence. This move opens the door of the western canon to theorizing from and through *the African centre*, which is, according to Achille Mbembe (2012) a fundamental aspect of Fanon’s work that must be recovered.

O primeiro desses centros é a África na era da praxis revolucionária, das grandes lutas de emancipação que abalaram os três primeiros quartéis do século XX – as lutas anticoloniais propriamente ditas, as lutas imperialistas e a luta contra o apartheid. (Mbembe 2012)<sup>140</sup>

Mbembe contends that readings of Fanon commonly addressed his indebtedness to western scholarship, but failed to acknowledge the anticolonial praxis of universal value that it puts forward, which emerged in Africa.

A obra de Fanon faz parte integrante de uma rica tradição africana de reflexão crítica sobre os temas adjacentes do advento do sujeito humano, do renascimento da África e do “descerco” do mundo .... Esta tradição, que data pelo menos do século XIX, é diaspórica e

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*The EU Security-Industrial Complex* (Amsterdam: Transnational Institute and Statewatch,[2009]). <http://www.statewatch.org/analyses/neoconopticon-report.pdf>, 8.

<sup>140</sup> Corresponding text in French (original publication): “Le premier de ces foyers est l’Afrique à l’âge de la praxis révolutionnaire, celui des grandes lutas d’émancipation qui ébranlèrent les trois premiers quarts du XXe siècle – les lutas anticoloniales proprement dites, les lutas anti-impérialistes et la lutte contre l’apartheid.” Achille Mbembe, “L’universalité De Frantz Fanon,” *Revue Mouvements*, December 22, 2011, . <http://mouvements.info/luniversalite-de-frantz-fanon/>.

os seus centros situam-se nos circuitos do Atlântico. ... A Europa mais não é, aqui, que lugar de passagem ou de trânsito. (Mbembe 2012)<sup>141</sup>

This “African quality” (inspired in Patrick Chabal’s accounts)<sup>142</sup> of Fanon’s oeuvre has been appropriated by the western canon, which has devoured it, and forgot to attribute its sources. Mbembe posits that African intellectual tradition has been cannibalised by the West.

A África não é apenas o lugar a partir do qual Fanon pensa. É o próprio tema desse pensamento, bem como a sua matéria. E é à África que ele se dirige em primeiro lugar. Foi essa “africanidade” do pensamento de Fanon que, infelizmente, se perdeu de vista, precisamente porque a África terá sido o ponto de partida da sua teoria revolucionária e da sua praxis anticolonial. (Mbembe 2012)<sup>143</sup>

Mbembe (2012) points to Fanon’s critical contributions which keep his writings of paramount contemporary relevance, namely unveiling the mechanism of interaction between race and sexuality, the workings of difference—permeated by ambivalence where desire plays a key role—and the decodification of logics of racialisation in the colonial setting.

Historicamente, a raça foi sempre uma forma codificada de cesura e de organização das multiplicidades, da sua fixação, da sua distribuição ao longo de uma hierarquia e da sua repartição no seio de espaços mais ou menos fechados – a lógica do cerco. A raça, deste ponto de vista, funciona a um tempo como ideologia, dispositivo de segurança e tecnologia de governo das multiplicidades. É o meio mais eficaz para abolir o direito, no próprio acto através do qual se pretende erigir a lei. (Mbembe 2012)<sup>144</sup>

It is in the current scenario of planetary violence and torture newly justified through the “duty to civilise” that Mbembe affirms the currency of Fanon’s thought, first of all for the critique of violence it foregrounds and the insistence on the recovery of humanity. Both the actuality of Fanon’s writing and the Eurocentric blindness to it inform queries on racialised violence and (war) trauma current in Europe.

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<sup>141</sup> Corresponding text in French: “L’œuvre de Frantz Fanon fait partie intégrante d’une riche tradition africaine de réflexion critique sur les thèmes voisins de l’avènement du sujet humain, de la renaissance de l’Afrique et de la “déclosion” du monde [7] . Cette tradition, qui date pour le moins du XIXe siècle, est diasporique et ses centres se situent sur les pourtours de l’Atlantique [8] . Le mouvement des idées y suit généralement un arc allant des Caraïbes aux États-Unis avant de faire retour sur l’Afrique [9] . L’Europe n’est, ici, qu’un lieu de passage ou de transit.” (Ibid.)

<sup>142</sup> This trope is proposed and analysed in the section on literature, namely on the chapter on Mia Couto’s novel. It is borrowed from: Patrick Chabal, *The Post-Colonial Literature of Lusophone Africa* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 314.

<sup>143</sup> Corresponding text in French: “L’Afrique n’est pas seulement le lieu à partir duquel il pense. Elle est le sujet même de cette pensée ainsi que sa matière. Et c’est à l’Afrique que celle-ci s’adresse en premier lieu. Cette ‘africanité’ de la pensée de Fanon a malheureusement été perdue de vue alors même que l’Afrique aura été le point de départ de sa théorie révolutionnaire et de sa praxis anticoloniale.” (Mbembe, *L’universalité De Frantz Fanon*)

<sup>144</sup> Corresponding text in French: “Historiquement, la race a toujours été une forme codée de découpage et d’organisation des multiplicités, de leur fixation, de leur distribution le long d’une hiérarchie et de leur répartition au sein d’espaces plus ou moins fermés – la logique de l’enclos. ... La race, de ce point de vue, fonctionne à la fois comme idéologie, dispositif de sécurité et technologie de gouvernement des multiplicités. Elle est le moyen le plus efficace d’abolir le droit dans l’acte même par lequel l’on prétend ériger la loi.” (Ibid.)

Holocaust Studies' perspectives in comparison with other structures of institutionalised violence point to the possibilities and limitations of a field embedded in the West. Some trends in Holocaust scholarship can be used productively for laying bare colonial mechanisms, as argued above, but also for questioning the asymmetry in memorialisation and on the other hand exposing the very asymmetry they rely on and reproduce.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Rather than offering an overview of the field of Holocaust Studies, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation and of this chapter, I briefly highlight some arguments forwarded on the question of whether the Holocaust is a model for research on historical atrocities. Thus I focus on the contribution of some prominent scholars in the field, who were keynote speakers at the International Conference on the Holocaust and other Genocides: *The Uses, Abuses and Misuses of the Holocaust Paradigm*. The Hague: Peace Palace, November 27, 2011.

Eric Weitz points to the solid infrastructure that supports research on National Socialism and the Holocaust, and “the empirically rich and sophisticated historiography” that came out of that. For him this infrastructure should serve as a model to be reproduced for the investigation of other genocides, but the Holocaust should not act as a standard for research. Instead it can be used comparatively with other such episodes, as common patterns link them. One outstanding pattern is the racialised categorisation of the subject of nationality. Weitz affirms that the uniqueness debate on the Holocaust is over, as there is recognition that it is one amongst several other genocides. Perhaps the outstanding invisibility in this otherwise fruitful analysis is the working of institutionalised racism preventing the development of research infrastructure on the violence of colonisation. Eric Weitz, *The holocaust as model? Lessons from twenty years of comparative genocide scholarship*, 2011.

Christian Gerlach argues for looking at connections between episodes of mass violence, rather than comparing them with the Holocaust. He reveals the strongly uneven character of research on the Holocaust itself, which overlooks a multitude of victim groups other than Jews (and here he is referring to Russian prisoners of war amongst other groups, including the victims of forced labour in the French, British and Portuguese colonies in Africa). Gerlach demands that, beyond pointing to race as the spear in exclusionary regimes, critical attention is paid to other groups excluded from the nation. For him, such regimes materialise a hostility towards the one identified as a foreigner. Gerlach calls for a history of enforcements between different victim groups, which is an argument that links up with Stam and Shohat's above. However his occlusion of race undermines his own argument and this fundamental linkage. Christian Gerlach, *Extremely violent societies: What did the murder of European Jews have to do with other contemporary mass violence?* 2011.

Debórah Dwork affirms the importance of the Holocaust, as it became a legal precedent for claims of restitution. This is a key aspect imbued on debates on rescuing colonial history into European memory. However, she departs from the contention that the Holocaust is in the core of European identity, shaping a *common memory*. It should therefore, she poses, be used to explore and expose mechanisms that have resonance with violence today. Here she centres the Holocaust in the construction of a centrifugal memory. This operation does not counter the contention of the *passé* stage of the uniqueness debate on the Holocaust, but attaches precedence to it and overlooks those excluded from the idea of Europe and its memory. Debórah Dwork, *University education and the holocaust paradigm*, 2011.

The account of Stephen Smith is of particular relevance for my analysis as it offers reflection straight out of the Europe/Africa relationship. Different to the colonial case, this perspective is fruitful for analysing the dynamics of shaping public memory on violent historical events. Smith attempted to make use of the resonances between the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide in order to shape a memorial for the latter. He departed from an awareness of Eurocentrism built in his assignment (and on the geopolitics of the genocide) and centred his task on listening to testimonies and dialogically shaping a memorial. He found strong resonances with the Holocaust, as this is also an experience of pain and injustice marked by a state of being unresolved. However, according to him, “this is not about paradigms, it is about pain.” He affirms the physiognomy of genocide to be much the same. The killing is here only one moment of the genocide. The mental harm takes place in the aftermath, in the survivors. It is an experience that never ceases, and exceeds physical pain, for it dehumanises. Therefore the past cannot simply be remembered, but it must be lived *viscerally*. The constitution of public memory must convey the phantoms that visit the victims at night, and give voice to their screams. Such a memorial inscribes then the violent past through the senses. Following Smith, “this is not about theory,” it is “not in the mind, but in the body.” In such cases articulating the past in a structured manner seems impossible and can, in fact, only be tentative

Calling upon the Holocaust to compare with other genocides—which, by definition, constitute regimes of annihilation/extinction—is not only proper but a fundamental tool for interrupting colonial/Eurocentric resiliences in the postempire. Colonisation can be defined as a system of dehumanisation and exploitation intimately linked to and dependent on armed conflict, marked by genocidal episodes. The human consequences of these systems of institutionalised violence are appalling. However, there are important historical distinctions between these regimes. As argued above, the resonances are visible in a *historical continuum* (drawing from Stam and Shohat). Identifying similar patterns and making connections are helpful to unveil the microphysics of contemporary power also active in the core of an asymmetrical memory system. In the realm of Portuguese postcolonialism, I would argue that the camp/colony analogy can be productive for de-mythologizing the national imagination on colonisation and countering imperial nostalgia, hereby debunking Eurocentrism. However, this analogy must be applied with that awareness of its precariousness and ambivalence that Ribeiro (2011a) noted. Yet further it must be used with utmost vigilance against attributing precedence to the European subject (configured as white) in detriment to *the Black*, and thus centring the narrative in colonial racism is paramount. This centring will allow the possibilities of a *postcolonial community* of sorts to be explored, which is what I will do in the next chapter. This will lead us back to the query on *the time-space of the Portuguese language*.

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and circumstantial. Smith responds hereby to the question on the propriety of the Holocaust as a model for memorialisation practice in the Europe/Africa nexus. He calls for awareness in order not to colonise other people's memories. His account on this relationship is somehow more palatable to European tastes for it does not embark on violence perpetrated by Europeans. Stephan Smith, *The paradigm of neglect: Trauma, politics, and short memories*, 2011.

## Chapter 6. Community of the unhomely

Boaventura Santos (2006a, 223-226) pointed to the contribution of Postcolonial theory through countering the idea of ethnic and racial homogeneity in the West and affirming the impact of slavery (the *middle passage*) in shaping a transnational formation, the African diaspora, capable of “solidarity within difference” for contesting common forms of oppression (colonial, nationalist and racist discourses). Santos forwards John McLeod’s definition on Diasporas as “composite communities” that challenge the model of national identity and the idea of roots. Furthermore Santos indicates (following Stuart Hall) that such groups counter the fixity of imposed representations. As highlighted above, Santos states his contentious relation with the postcolonial for the celebration of the diaspora in its hybrid condition (that he partially reproduces himself), which overlooks and hides actual social conflicts beyond the culturalist realm of representations. He insists on awareness of the disadvantageous position of power in which (diaspora) migrants are found. He criticises the homogenisation of the colonial experience based on the supposed experience of the British empire to delve into the difference of Portuguese colonisation and the *time-space of official Portuguese language*, or *Portuguese postcolonialism*. In order to reflect on a possible and actual postcolonial bond, I dispute this formation, leaning on Sanches’ arguments. These associate with Ana Paula Ferreira’s critique as previously discussed:

O que leva a que também seja tempo de se considerar o questionamento de ideias de partilhas linguísticas e memórias comuns entre antigas colónias e metrópoles. Se é evidente que essas interdependências são inevitáveis, seja sob a forma de cumplicidades, por vezes, questionáveis, seja sob o reconhecimento de familiaridades que a violência das histórias comuns também ajuda a explicar, a verdade é que, sob a capa de meras políticas de defesa de língua - da lusofonia à francofonia -, se ocultam ainda memórias nostálgicas e estratégias comerciais em relação a antigos impérios que, em última instância, em nada contribuem para que se pense o que a Europa e as suas nações são actualmente, em tempos pós-coloniais. (Sanches 2011a)<sup>146</sup>

Therefore, as argued above regarding the *Atlantic exception*, if an aspect of commonality emerges out of the sometimes radically different experiences of Portuguese colonisation, this is found in the veiled forms of racism associated with a meta-narrative of soft imperial power (*Lusotropical* rhetoric). Sanches argues that this commonality serves better to explain processes (of racialisation) in the former metropolis. *Its* former colonies may find other bonds more productive for their own purposes of decolonisation and emancipation.

Com efeito, algumas práticas culturais, apesar de tudo partilhadas por muitos descendentes de imigrados depois do colonialismo para a Europa, permitem um termo de comparação mais interessante do que aquele que é sugerido pelas histórias de (pós)colonialismos

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<sup>146</sup> Transl.: “It is therefore also time to consider the questioning of ideas of linguistic sharing and common memories between former colonies and metropolises. If it is clear that these interdependencies are inevitable, whether in the form of complicities, at times questionable, or in the recognition of familiarities that the violence of common histories also helps explain, the truth is that, under the guise of mere policies of defense of language - from Lusofonia to Francophonía - nostalgic memories and commercial strategies with respect to ancient empires are obscured which, ultimately, offer no contribution for thinking what Europe and its nations are currently in, which are postcolonial times.”

nacionais. Os processos de identificação a que muitos desses europeus (afro)descendentes recorrem alimentam-se de um imaginário que tem menos a ver com as línguas herdadas do colonialismo, do que com as encyclopaedias mediáticas (Appadurai) que os meios de comunicação contemporâneos permitem disseminar, para o melhor e o pior – desde o rap ao reggae globais, a uma negritude ou a um pan-africanismo reinventados, identidades diaspóricas também partilhadas pelos descendentes dos “nativos” das nações europeias. (Sanches 2011a)<sup>147</sup>

Within the postempire, Paul Gilroy’s Black Atlantic serves as a bond between marginalised peoples. Sanches approximates Meneses’ account of the *difference* within the North and the South and the associations between such positions. A community born out of exclusion surpasses the Portuguese postcolonial condition, which is the alleged bond between former empire and former colonies. *Africa* associates with other positions of subalternity to Europe, which are gendered and racialised. In current Portuguese society this entails bonds of solidarity with migrants. Hereby, the postcolonial terrain foregrounds the relationship between *the Black and the foreigner*. The fundamental aspect of a postcolonial analysis of current Portugal is awareness of the intricate mechanisms whereby race, gender and geography (migration) are made to cross and are put to work. Therefore the imagination of Africa remains central in the discourses and policies associated with a *multicultural and tolerant raceless society*.

However, the Black Atlantic bounds together racialised subjects in different colonial geographies as well, beyond the postempire, in Portuguese and other languages. If there remains a critical postcolonial role within the realm of the Portuguese language, it is to offer reflections on the marks of violent racialisation carved by Portuguese colonialism and continued in its aftermath. It is in the realm of literature that I aim to reflect on the possibilities of such bonds established by the experiences of racialisation. For that end, I recover the trope of translation.

From the above contentions, it follows that a presupposed overarching commonality as a basis for a language community is bailed out. Through the acknowledgement of all orders of difference, a community can only be envisaged if fragile (following Vecchi). It is a terrain where language acts as “postcolonial exception,” unveiling the ideological dispositive of exception, and revealing the relations of inclusion/exclusion “produced by language and through which it is gazed at” (Brugioni 2010, 139). This conception runs parallel to Spivak’s assertion on feminist translation that gazes at language as “a clue for the workings of gendered agency” (Spivak 1993, 179).

In the particularity of the (dis)encounters between Portugal and Africa, translation must foreground and reveal postcolonial agency too. Elena Brugioni (2010) departs from Mia Couto’s writing—that will be analysed in the following section—as an “example” of an African homoglot literature, to elaborate a critical lexicon for a postcolonial theoretical paradigm. She adopts the term Homoglot Literatures for “texts written outside Europe

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<sup>147</sup> Transl.: “Indeed, some cultural practices, though shared by many descendants of immigrants to Europe after colonialism, allow a more interesting point of comparison than that which is suggested by the histories of national (post)colonialism. The identification processes that many of these (African) descendant Europeans turn to, feed on an imaginary that has less to do with the languages inherited from colonialism than with the media landscapes (Appadurai) that contemporary media allow to spread, for better or worse - from global rap to reggae, to a reinvented *negritude* or pan-Africanism, diasporic identities also shared by the descendants of the ‘natives’ of European nations.”

in languages similar to the European languages” (Brugioni 2010, 129). In the case of the particular (dis)encounter discussed here, this would mean abandoning the term *Lusophone Literatures*. Brugioni grounds this epistemology in the contextual character of the literary practice, highlighting its relational aspect (drawing on Glissant); in other words, its relation to literatures written in other national languages, including oral literatures, and its relation to other homoglot African literatures. Hereby she intentionally dismounts the western canon, which is grounded in the idea of a universal language that establishes national literature for the construction of a homogeneous community. Brugioni builds on Edward Said’s (2004) “worldly” imperative—that is all texts and representations are in the world and are thus contaminated by and entangled with “histories, memories and relationships” (Brugioni 2010, 135)—in order to decolonise literary criticism and to capitalise on its radical potential. This “mundane prerogative” of a literary language demands translation. It follows a vision of a homoglot community that is fragile; it is a place for articulating singularities (following Vecchi); a “liminal anti-hegemonic space;” and a “paradigm of post-colonial translations” (ibid., 138).

This formation associates with Bhabha’s “community of the unhomely” that “sees inwardness from the outside” (drawing from Levinas). It is a community born out of an estranging moment of dislocation and “relocation of the home in the world.” It is a moment of terror when indigenous traditions are asserted and repressed histories are retrieved into the *home-world*. Bhabha further suggests that “world literature” hosts such a community. Departing from the centrality of the nation towards the border and frontier conditions that characterize the histories of migrants, the colonised or political refugees, Bhabha identifies in this literature “an emergent, prefigurative category that is concerned with a form of cultural dissensus and alterity, where non-consensual terms of affiliation may be established on the grounds of historical trauma” (Bhabha 1994, 12).

On the topic of the Portuguese language community, Boaventura Santos (2006a) identified a dynamics that lack neo-colonial hegemony for the very “debilities of the Portuguese colonial Próspero.” Instead, Portugal struggles on one hand with Brazil and on the other with other European language communities. Santos wonders whether this “debility” will foster a new postcolonial order beyond the coloniality of relations. Here it is important to mark the difference between such debility (that is an unintended lack) and the very notion of a fragile and contingent community (that emerges out of *another epistemology*) that is concerned with dissensus and alterity.

Altogether, Brugioni realises two parallel operations. The first operation entails a departure from *Lusofonia* as a primordial space of reference – hereby rescuing other African *homoglot literatures* to make comparisons with African literatures in the Portuguese language (as an *example*):

No que diz respeito a um plano metodológico, o contraponto entre a escrita de Couto e as propostas que surgem nas literaturas africanas de língua inglesa e francesa contribuiria para a neutralização de uma especificidade frequentemente atribuída à escrita deste autor – pelo menos nos contextos de língua portuguesa – e que determina a consolidação de processos de exotização desta proposta literária. (Brugioni 2010, 131)<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Transl.: “With regard to a methodological level, the contrast between the writing of Couto and proposals emerging in African literatures in English and French would contribute to the neutralization of

Secondly, Brugioni (2010, 139) installs debility into the communitarian imagination. This is a movement towards *Lusofonia*, calling for its deconstruction. Translation is here proposed as an aesthetical creative practice and a political engagement, as it problematizes established relations through the literary presentation of a “third code”—as Vecchi puts it, a place for the “*língua resto*” (“*residual language*”). Pointing to the colonial foundations of language linked to these literatures and their neo-colonial dynamics, translation supports envisioning epistemologies beyond this dichotomy. These are the grounds for arguing (literary) language as “postcolonial exception.” It is the place of a “situated cultural practice.”

Por outras palavras, tendo em conta o dispositivo ideológico comunitário que a língua numa situação pós-colonial subentende e, simultaneamente, desconstrói, o conceito de estado de excepção salienta a complexa rede de relações que se estabelecem na língua no que diz respeito aos fenómenos de inclusão e exclusão que ela própria produz e através dos quais é também observada. (Brugioni 2010, 139)<sup>149</sup>

Spivak’s postcolonial “reading as translation” realises this operation, whereby “the postcolonial as the outside/insider translates white theory as she reads, so that she can discriminate on the terrain of the original” (Spivak 1993, 197): “Under the figure of RAT (reader-as-translator), I have tried to limn the politics of certain kind of clandestine postcolonial reading, using the master marks to put together a history” (ibid., 200). The translator metamorphoses into a rodent to unwarrantedly enter the master’s house. In the terrain of postcolonial (dis)encounter this entails excavating that common vocabulary haunted by the empire as the reading progresses.

Robert Stam and Ella Shohat map the travelling of some ideas and debates on race and multicultural questions and argue for a transnational perspective. The mapping exercise comprises scrutinising the different genealogies and local attachments to terms such as black/*negro*, miscegenation, and multicultural society. It traces the presence of the empire in its historical enclaves and continuities.

We propose what we call, in the wake of Mikhail Bakhtin, a “multichronotopic” approach, which sets the culture wars against the broader backdrop of the history of an Atlantic world shaped by the violent “encounter” between Europe and indigenous America, by the exploitation of African labour and by the evolving attempts to go beyond master race democracy towards more egalitarian social formations. (Stam and Shohat 2011, 19)

Translation gained a central role in understanding regimes of representation in their connection with different cultures. It undermines core pillars of the coupling of national ideology with a monolithic linguistic system. Stam and Shohat explore this clandestine operation resorting to Bakhtin’s “active polyglossia” for it “destroys two myths at the same time: the myth of a language that presumes to be the only language, and the myth of a language that presumes to be completely unified” (Stam and Shohat 2011, 34). Debunking these myths happens along those movements towards the exterior and the

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an often ascribed specificity to the writing of this author - at least in Portuguese-speaking contexts - and which determines the consolidation of exoticization processes of this literary proposal.”

<sup>149</sup> Transl.: “In other words, taking into account the ideological communitary device that the language in a post-colonial situation implies and, simultaneously, deconstructs, the concept of the state of exception highlights the complex network of relationships that are established in the language with regard to the phenomena of inclusion and exclusion that it produces and through which it is also observed.”

interior of homoglot languages. Regarding the latter, Stam and Shohat remark that *intra-linguistic translation* gains complexity for the very inscription of language in colonial and imperial domination: “In such situations, language becomes a contested space, a social battleground, the place where political struggles are engaged both comprehensively and intimately” (ibid., 23). This arena requires redoubled awareness of the different histories inscribed in the same vocabulary, for the same terms are occupied by a variety of different meanings and materialise different ideological attachments. The word that traversed colonisation manifests this *embeddedness with history* and its *being “in bed with” history* through racial encoding (ibid.). This codification differs according to the linguistic and ideological environment. It is therefore paramount to reveal the relation between language and power within the conjuncture and time-boundedness, and the interrelations shaped through the travel routes of a vocabulary.

However, the realm of the empire is not the final destination for the postcolonial—for the limitations of this space of (dis)encounter. Stam and Shohat warn against the naturalised sets of comparable experiences that accompany travelling vocabulary within the realm of multicultural and race debates, which occupy postcolonial criticism. They posit:

Comparisons are sometimes animated by a priori agendas and projections, motivated by national narcissism or even, for that matter, by national self-hatred. ... Comparisons, then, can take many forms: one form is that of national narcissism and exceptionalism, often premised on cultural essentialism and geographical reductionism. (Stam and Shohat 2011, 28)

The linkage between nationalism and exceptionalism—coined forms of *relational narcissism*—is important here. The quest for a national trademark on imperialism and colonisation has been pivotal for constructing imagined postcolonial communities that operate as “master narratives of comparison” —referring to Hegel (Stam and Shohat 2011, 29). Hereby the empire safeguards its protagonism in fashioning representations and establishing relations.<sup>150</sup>

Exceptionalism, then, usually assumes the form of an implied “conversation” with “others.” It is a question not only of how a nation projects itself, but also of how it projects others, and what ends are served by these mutually shaping projections. Intellectuals, even diasporic and minoritized intellectuals, are still impacted by the process through which nations see themselves as qualitatively different from and in partial opposition to other nations, as they historically define themselves “with” and “against” and “through” their neighbours and victims and enemies. Thus, the question of national narcissism is always already engaged with national or ethnic “others”; that is, with processes of otherization. (Stam and Shohat 2011, 29-30)

Departing from this awareness that comparisons are not neutral but manifest and convey fears, vanities, desires and projections, the authors call for an examination of

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<sup>150</sup> The irony in this *marriage* is that, in some cases, national exceptionality affirms the impossibility or refusal to compare. See some claims of untranslatability in the realm of the Portuguese language (for a critical account see Onésimo Teotónio Almeida’s article: “Lusofonia - Some Thoughts on Language,” Institute of European Studies - University of California Berkeley, <http://repositories.cdlib.org/proxy.library.uu.nl/ies/050521> (accessed September 14, 2009).

the travelling routes of these ideas and the vocabulary that populate them, within the context of asymmetrical power relations (ibid., 30). It is therefore not surprising that, in the view of the authors, “even postcolonial texts have sometimes travelled within rigidly imagined cultural geographies” (ibid., 31). However, they argue, some other travelling routes have been surprising and unpredictable, and ideas have managed to escape such predetermined borders. Hereby an approximation can be made with Gilroy’s Atlantic routes and the Black communities shaped by this travelling. In order to excavate the disturbing meanings attached to this lexicon, the authors advise the following:

What is needed is a multidirectional narrative, attuned to overlapping chronotopes and the criss-crossing flow of ideas. ... Within this multichronotopic analysis, histories, geographies, communities and ideas are mutually co-implicated. On the other hand, we must speak about the power relations that corral and “discipline” the circulation of ideas. (Stam and Shohat 2011, 31, 33)

Stam and Shohat conceive translation, both within and between languages, as a “site of cultural (mis)encounter.” This relationship must therefore be centrifugal and reciprocal. “To focus on the ramifying differences of language exchange as opposed to furthering petrified conceptions of national character is one way to avoid the fetishizing of the ethno-cultural essences of what might be called ‘ontologi-nations’” (Stam and Shohat 2012, 60). This analysis is on point for gazing at the *encounters* around the Portuguese language. It also invites reflection on its configuration as a *dis-* or rather as a *mis-*encounter. Conceiving an encounter that went wrong, a *misencounter* is certainly relevant here, for doing wrongly or badly can imply a purposeful act of resistance through language. However I insist on gazing at the Portuguese language as hegemony that is given continuity through an imagination of a meeting place that has been pre-arranged and works through an inherited colonial grammar of *Lusotropical* loving affiliations and shared positionalities. Problematizing this encounter narrated as reciprocal demands debunking the myth of a meeting between equals. Confronting the terms of engagement in this meeting place requires foregrounding the phantom that haunts this imagination, *the Black*, the other, *Africa*. This entails unmasking the violent epistemology that narrates colonialism as an *encounter*. Historically involuntary and currently indebted to this heritage (through reproduction), this is a *disencounter*.

Away from the fixed set of translations and comparisons within prescribed communities (such as Lusofonia), other encounters can prove fruitful for discontinuing with empire. I have argued for rescuing the Black Atlantic formation and *the Black/Jew* analogy in order to reflect on the postcolonial condition of racialised subalternity and to conceive meaningful community bonds. This reflection necessarily turns around the condition of the other and her/his stake in translation, which will be addressed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 7. Hospitality in language

The movement of ideas across borders inevitably brings up the question of language, whether marshaled for culturalist purposes or to articulate the in-between fluidities of culture. In the case of traveling debates, translation is not merely a trope; it is entangled in the concrete arena of language conflict and dissonance. (Stam and Shohat 2012, 57)

Livia Apa (2010) draws from her experience as a translator of African literatures in the Portuguese language to argue for translation as a political act. This act aims to fashion actual *contact zones* delimited by porous borders. Translation becomes then a praxis of the border: “tradução como praxis de fronteira, como prática capaz de diluir a distância entendida como construção cultural da alteridade” (Apa 2010, 16).<sup>151</sup> Arguing against translation as the search for linguistic correspondence, Apa foresees a more radical ethical dimension of this cultural practice, which is to instate otherness into the territory of the mother tongue. I deem this a fundamental point for the sake of decanonising the terrain. Building upon the work of Paul Ricoeur (2001), Apa gazes at translation as an act of resistance to the voracious appropriation of the other. Inspired by an ethics of “linguistic hospitality” (again from Ricoeur), translation gives fruition to the pleasure of inhabiting the language of the other and of hosting the word of the foreigner in one’s own home.

Apa elaborates on the work of de-codification of the cultural archive inscribed in a language, which constitutes translation. This process reveals a variety of contexts with which a language is associated. Informed by this “worldly” dimension, translation works as a counter-tendency to the canonisation of otherness dominant in the editorial market of *world literature*, the market of cultural exoticism (or the postcolonial cultural industry). Arguing for this counter-practice, Apa points to the core of translation as an act of mediation between different cultural worlds.

Furthermore, Apa rescues Umberto Eco for bringing into light the absences instituted by translation. Translation involves saying almost the same thing, and thus mourning for what is lost. Apa rightfully addresses the “trap” of translating texts written in related languages that are usually absorbed into the canon without the necessary decodification – i.e. the text vis-à-vis the context. Following from here, Apa (2010, 19) argues for the requirement of reciprocity in language, and refers to Ricoeur for turning language into “a semiotic system without subject.”

Apa stretches the notion of hospitality by suggesting a permissive house, which receives visitors without previous appointment. Moreover, visitors are allowed to reshuffle the furniture and invent a new common set of house rules, “*uma nova linguagem*” (“*a new language/code*”). This notion derives from Derrida’s (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000) ethics of hospitality, which is utopian in its infinitude and unconditionality. It unavoidably clashes with the politics of hospitality, or the Law defined by the master of the house or the sovereign State, imposing borders and therefore finitude to the concept in its applicability.

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<sup>151</sup> Transl.: “translation as praxis of the border, as a practice that is capable to dilute the distance understood as cultural construction of otherness.”

The notion of hospitality has been elaborated in the field of Translation Studies. It is a reflection that draws from a humanistic ethics of conviviality (as Apa argues, without invisibility, i.e. domestication and assimilation) in what have been called multicultural (trans-national) societies. Apa draws from this reflection on citizenship vis-à-vis the condition of the migrant. This motivation is pivotal in the construction of alternatives to hegemony, though its application to the terrain of the Portuguese language—and perhaps to other imperial languages—has particular pitfalls. The maintenance of a notion of linguistic property is problematic. The language, whose visitation –announced or otherwise – is allowed, permitted, tolerated or *even* enjoyed, is the language that is upheld by the border that separates its owners from those *other* transient visitors. This notion resonates with the *anti-conquest* narrative (from Pratt) that affirms the benevolence of the coloniser manifested in the colonial encounter as a fraternal (or rather paternal) *contact zone*. The *anti-conquest* shaped as such is overwhelmingly present in the realm of *Lusofonia*, as argued in this dissertation. On the other hand, abdicating the subject of language at a moment when literatures struggle to enter other subjects into this semiotic system might unwittingly contribute to their further invisibility.

João Leal has already referred to the insidious presence of the empire in the representations of national identity in Portugal. Leal posits that the empire is either explicit in the stereotypical public discourses about *saudade* and hospitality taken as defining traits of Portuguese culture or in the more subtle discursive forms (Leal 2006, 78-79). Foregrounding the trope of hospitality might therefore feed the continuous depoliticisation of the field, i.e. ignoring power relations whereby one has language (property) and others use it.

Such notions inhabit the imperial civilising mission throughout the postempire. Hospitality associates with the benevolence of the host that is, by the very definition and naming, the first and original. These traces glued to hospitality betray its limitations. In the terrain of translation from Bengali (colonial languages) into English (or rather “translatese”) Spivak argued: “It is only in the hegemonic languages that the benevolent do not take the limits of their own often uninstructed good will into account” (Spivak 1993, 191). That is to say that there is much imperial indulgence within the notion of hospitality and an imbued historically constructed hegemony.

In order to fully consider the possibilities of a language community, it is essential to gaze at hospitality, taking its ambiguity into account. For that purpose I rely further on Derrida and Dufourmantelle’s account *Of Hospitality* (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000). Here the authors offer the genealogy of the term, which encompasses the meanings of the hospitable and the hostile, as guest and enemy have the same Latin root (*hostis*). Derrida argues that this tradition is imbued in the concept, in the shape of “the axioms that are elementary and presumed natural and untouchable,” exposing the need to deconstruct it (ibid., 45). The foreigner, he posits, is the fundamental element in the notion of hospitality, and s/he institutes an aspect of risk in this relationship. The foreigner is the one whose arrival destabilises the routines of the household and might pose uncomfortable questions that contest the rules of the house. Bringing such a stranger into one’s home involves the danger of having the father/master of the house killed, his authority and the sovereignty of *his house* definitely challenged. For such threats, the politics of hospitality impose a contract that demands reciprocity and

safeguards the boundaries of the house. Yet, argues Derrida, such a contract defies hospitality, for it, in its absolute form, rejects any contract and dispenses of reciprocity. Hospitality is even gratuitous. Language is part of the contract, which puts the possibility of hospitality under question:

[T]he foreigner is first of all foreign to the legal language in which the duty of hospitality is formulated, the right to asylum, its limits, norms, policing, etc. He has to ask for hospitality in a language which by definition is not his own, the one imposed on him by the master of the house, the host, the king, the lord, the authorities, the nation, the state, the father, etc. This personage imposes on him translation into their own language, and that's the first act of violence. That is where the question of hospitality begins: must we ask the foreigner to understand us, to speak our language, in all the senses of this term, in all its possible extensions, before being able and so as to be able to welcome him into our country? If he was already speaking our language, with all that that implies, if we already shared everything that is shared with language, would the foreigner still be a foreigner and could we speak of asylum or hospitality in regard to him? (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000, 15, 17)

Interestingly enough, Derrida is here commenting on Socrates' address to the Athenian judges "like a foreigner," as he was not familiar with the language of the court in which his citizenship—that which was under threat and was being deliberated upon—was defined (ibid., 17). Here the argument might have direct application to the question of hospitality within the *same* language. Derrida indicates in a footnote:

What we must be attentive to here, so as to comment upon it and explicate it at length, is the socio-cultural difference between languages, codes, connotations, within the same national language, the languages in the language, the effects of "foreignness" in domesticity, the foreign in the same. A lot could be said about languages within language: whence the cleavages, the tensions, the virtual or oblique conflicts, declared or deferred, etc. (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000, 158)

This passage, which fed Apa's critical argument above, is important for it sheds light on the condition of foreignness (defined in terms of a lack of resources) within the territory of the *same* language. It both foregrounds the right of a foreigner to her/his difference and the corresponding duty of the host to tolerate her/him, and the foreigner settling into the subject position of the stranger crossing the boundaries of the house. These notions—the foreigner and the house—need to be disputed in the terrain of the postcolonial.

Hospitality depends on a notion of property, whoever its sovereign owner is. It is all about the stranger entering *my home*. For Derrida, the stranger, her/himself homeless, has her/his other language:

"Displaced persons," exiles, those who are deported, expelled, rootless, nomads, all share two sources of sighs, of nostalgias: their dead ones and their language. *On the one hand*, they would like to return, at least a pilgrimage, to the places where their buried dead have their last resting place .... *On the other hand*, exiles, the deported, the expelled, the rootless, the stateless, lawless, nomads, absolute foreigners, often continue to recognize the language, what is called the mother tongue, as their ultimate homeland, and even the last resting place. (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000, 87, 89)

At this point it is compulsory for any reflection on Portuguese postcolonialism to consider Fernando Pessoa's widely cited "*Minha patria é minha língua*" ("My

*homeland is my language*”). I briefly problematized the encapsulation of this utterance inside the Lusophone meta-narrative in the Introduction to this dissertation, and will do so further in the following section. Derrida’s passage supports carrying on with the task. He indicates this homeliness of language, elicited by Pessoa too, to expose its shifting ground. Derrida argues that language evokes a fantasy of property that is continuously expropriated and being disrupted. It is the “absolute ground of all displacements” as it is carried along, and which never ceases to depart from one (ibid., 91). Language then represents the ultimate territory of infinite hospitality, for it does not need a home. According to Dufourmantelle:

He [Derrida] leads us to think of the mother tongue as a metaphor for “being-at-home in the other” -a place without place opening onto hospitality- and which as such gestures toward the essence of hospitality. (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000, 92)

She argues that Derrida questions the possibility of pure hospitality in perverting the Law of authority—here the maternal authority of the mother tongue—to open hospitality beyond the family, and thus rejecting the family (or the state or civil society). But can language host the neighbour at the expense of what ambiguously configures it as a terrain of ownership, namely its *new* co-owners, which in this dissertation are the postcolonial subjects of the Portuguese language? Dufourmatelle explores Derrida’s thoughts of hospitality with a relation to place and belonging. She points out that, for Derrida, authentic hospitality must start from a dwelling and dislocation (of the homeless): “Perhaps only the one who endures the experience of being deprived of a home can offer hospitality.” (ibid., 56). For Dufourmantelle, Derrida argues the “inability to have a land of one’s own” (ibid., 56, 58).

As though the place in question in hospitality is a place originally belonging to neither host nor guest, but to the gesture by which one of them welcomes the other—even and above all if he is himself without a dwelling from which this welcome could be conceived. (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000, 60, 62)

Dufourmantelle posits that the question of the other, the foreigner, is central to Derrida’s thoughts of hospitality. It is a question posed from the place of the other, defined as the no-place of utopia, or contemporarily as the out-of-place (ibid., 68, 70). This notion associates with Bhabha’s (1994) unhomey condition, rather than the condition of homeliness. Here any notion of property is volatile. Derridean ethics of hospitality ambiguously require an abolition of the home that should welcome the guest.

Mirelle Rosello (2001) insinuates a way out of the dilemma between Derrida’s ethics and politics of hospitality, arguing for a contextual, rather than universal, approach to the notion, which is above all imperfect in its awareness of its intrinsically ambiguous and even perverse shades. She hosts her inquiry in the same terrain of contemporary migration where Derrida’s reflections arrive, where the migrant is the guest and the national the host. Rosello stresses that hospitality as metaphor carries two distinctive discourses, that of rights and that of generosity (gift-giving). For its malleability, it can very well entail exclusionary politics whereby gift-giving “masks ruthless forms of non-rights” (Rosello 2001, 9).

According to Rosello, her own emphasis on the relation between the nation and migrants is only one of the territories of hospitality, but one which prominence reflects “the flavour of the contemporary debates” particularly in Europe (ibid., 119). It is important for this study to keep in mind this territory of hospitality and the automatic associations with the concept, as although the transnational terrain of language differs from it, it is similarly inhabited by the very same (imperial and national) assumptions. It is also relevant to note that the current trend in Europe is one of strong rejection of migration. Portugal is no exception to this trend. Within this hostile climate, usage of the term *guest* has associations with racialised violent practices of policing and, as above-mentioned, exclusion—as in “Remember that you are *only* a guest *here*” rather than in “*Mi casa es su casa*” (“*My home is your home*”). Housing her inquiry in reflections on the position of the migrant in France, Rosello argues for revealing the invisibility and hegemonic transparency of what hides under the equation host/national, guest/foreigner (ibid., 8).

Rosello relies on Sophie Wahnic’s accounts on the rhetoric of “friendship” or “affection” to strangers adopted by the French new republic against its exclusionary practices. Hereby she exposes the conjunction of a discourse of universal hospitality without (national) borders with the impossibility (and unwillingness) of the state to deliver its altruistic promises (ibid., 3, 4).

A pessimistic and demystifying essay, [Wahnic’s] *L’impossible citoyen* offers no definitive answer to the [sic] “the enigma of a hospitality subverted by suspicion, of a friendship experienced in terms of treason, and of a fraternity that invents the most radical forms of exclusion.” (ibid., 4)

Here the intimate language of loving bonds finds its limits when meeting the nation. For the resilience of this rhetorical legacy in contemporary France, Rosello argues that:

The vision of the immigrant as guest is a metaphor that has forgotten that it is a metaphor. It is surprising that the myth of French hospitality should have survived not only the darkest days of the twentieth century but even earlier foundational moments during the French Revolution, when contradictions where rifle. (Rosello 2001, 3)

Analogous dynamics inhabit the Portuguese political arena torn between what Bela Feldman-Bianco (2007) described as the Atlantic and the European projects, a public domain soaked in the rhetoric of imperial benevolence and social life traversed by racialised exclusion. Rosello’s reflections are fundamental for the sake of this analysis, as she affirms that “the laws of hospitality form a symbolically significant part of any national identity” (Rosello 2001, 6). These laws are outstanding features of imperial mythology in its continuous workings.

A salient problem with hospitality here is the insidious presence of the foreigner in the *polis*/house. The risk for its applicability in the postimperial terrain is that descendants of migrants of “only some ethnic and national groups,” as well observed by Rosello (ibid., 90), are identified with strangers to the body of the nation, outsiders to its representations of national identity and excluded from citizenship. Hospitality is therefore trapped in what the author titles “benevolent scripts” (ibid., 20) – the *anti-conquest*—for it feeds on ownership and mastery of the racialised terrain of encounter.

The host is indeed the “guardian of hospitality” (ibid., 16) who above all polices the guest to ensure s/he conforms to the law (ibid., 95). Hereby, Rosello argues, the guest is infantilised while the host adopts the role of the parent (ibid.). This construction resonates with colonial mechanisms of hegemony and subjugation and, in the realm of Portuguese colonialism, with the rhetoric of *Lusotropical* affinities structured as family relations, whereby Portugal is the father, Brazil the mother and African countries their progeny.

Rosello points to “the absurdity of an ideology that sees immigration as an hereditary feature” (ibid., 90). The fundament of her take on hospitality is however the very possibility of the guest becoming the host through opening the doors of her/his dwelling place, constructed as a home, to a stranger. The confinement of the guest (the postcolonial subject) in an ascribed otherness highjacks any chance of hospitality. It actually reveals the insidious presence of the racialised body of the other.

The home, that is also the home of language, is haunted here by the idea of the (French) nation. Sara Ahmed says of the national ideal:

Such an ideal is not positively embodied by any person: it is not a positive value in that sense. Rather, it accrues value through its exchange, an exchange that is determined precisely by the capacity of some bodies to inhabit the national body, to be recognisable as living up to the national ideal and as passing through the ideal. But other bodies, those that cannot be recognised in the abstraction of the unmarked, cannot accrue value, and become blockages in the economy; they cannot pass as French, or pass their way into the community. (Ahmed 2015)

To enter this home that is prescribed as universal is therefore to reject those bodily markers that can be rejected, and all others marks. Ahmed expressly the condition of veiled Muslim women in France, but also looks beyond them by including all others outside of whiteness, intruding the space of the universal:

[T]o enter the room, to enter the universe you have to “give up” the parts of you that cannot be accommodated. Remember: brown becomes universal if you give up your relatives. You announce your departure from the parents of your parents: from Hinduism, from fanaticism, from culture as custom. That announcement is how you enter the room of the universal. (Ahmed 2015)

Translation, usually associated with the practice of “second generation” children, reproduces this perverse mechanism, whereby these children are perceived “as the hyphen between their parents” assumed cultural incompetence and the dominant norm” (Rosello 2001, 92). Rosello affirms the infantilisation inherent to this position but also its incorporation into what I see as assimilation politics. It entails rejecting “your brown relatives” but also disciplining them:

Paradoxically, the translator is a guest invited to better exclude those who are encoded as others; for the translator allows the host to get away with not speaking the other’s language and contributes to the creation of a context where the newcomer who does not speak the dominant (linguistic or cultural) idiom is expected to find a way of communicating with a host who shows no intention of learning the other’s language. (Rosello 2001, 92)

As addressed above, the prerogative of defining the norms of the *game/encounter* by and in favour of the presumed universal West is a constant in translation theory and practice. In the same postcolonial fashion that translation is under scrutiny, hospitality must be dissected and opened up to the non-West. This is the terrain that includes the migrant, which is a highly gendered and racialised category.

Hospitality entails therefore the “interchangeability” of the positions of host and guest and a certain promise of reciprocity, which even if not feasible at the moment of occurrence of a welcoming, may emerge later or in another circumstance, in a “continuum” of hospitality. Hereby hospitality is a Derridean gesture that is in permanent flux and by its very definition displaces fixed power configurations (Rosello 2001, 18). Still, in the exemplarity of the “small cases” Rosello resorts to, hospitality in and through language remains an aspiration and utopia.

Rosello analyses this entanglement in the relationship between a French-Algerian and his Algerian cousin newly arrived in Paris (from Merzak Allouche’s 1996 film *Salut cousin!*) to explore the continuity of relationships moulded by colonialism through, among other mechanisms, its internalisation by the postcolonial subject (as host). She points to what I identify as absences within an apparently shared linguistic universe. Hereby Rosello highlights the wide repertoire of cultural and linguistic references that inhabit the *same* language, which enables the formation of a “minimalist canon” without necessarily creating a “sense of cultural community” as the different subjects of this terrain hold “different attitude[s] towards the canonical text ... denot[ing] a different imagination, a different way of positioning oneself on the chessboard of literary and cultural allusions” (ibid., 110). Further, Rosello reveals the empire haunting the homoglot terrain. The relations among the film’s characters is still permeated by the colonial (sub)text, whereby the postcolonial host, unaware of her/his subjection to the *actual* owner of the house, absorbs linguistic and cultural superiority – “[a] sad parody of the colonial master” (ibid., 101). This is expressed through Mok, the host, that:

Gives us the impression that his guest is expected to make the effort [to bridge cultural/linguistic difference], and that, as host, he has the right to refuse to go beyond his own linguistic habits. Besides he does not try to hide his contempt for his cousin’s way of talking. When Mok reminds his cousin that *he* does not speak Arabic, he seems to take strange pride in that ignorance. (Rosello 2001, 102)

Rosello exposes in this relationship’s pattern that the responsibility for the success of the encounter is ascribed to the guest, whereas the host boldly “cho[oses] to cut himself off from the possibility of bilingual hospitality” (ibid., 102). Aware of this “problematic difference between hostile and hospitable cultural references,” Rosello poses that the “relationship between language and hospitality (including the language of cultural references)” demands “linguistic flexibility” (ibid., 100).

Rosello once again draws upon Derrida’s *Monolingualism of the Other* to stress the fact that language came to be established through the imposition of the law and violence, and that this violence is set forth through practice that affirms the linguistic superiority of the master/nation and undermines other cultural references and linguistic practices:

Every culture institutes itself through the unilateral imposition of some “politics” of language. Mastery begins, as we know, with the power of naming, of imposing and

legitimizing appellations. ... This sovereign establishment ... may be open, legal, armed or cunning, disguised under alibis of “universal” humanism, and sometimes of the most generous hospitality. It always follows or precedes culture like its shadow. (Derrida quoted in Rosello 2001, 102)

It is important to add that Derrida (1998, 38-39) was here addressing the imposition of imperial language (French in Algeria) through “the organised marginalisation of those languages, Arabic and Berber” but at the same time he was talking about the imposition of French as national language in revolutionary and monarchical France. So beyond western colonisation of the non-West, he was dealing with “colonialism” in the sense that “all culture is originally colonial,” and therefore violent. This perspective invites a consideration of the lines of continuity between imperial colonialism and the formation of nations. Derrida extends the link from the colonial/national entanglement to the single language:

*First and foremost*, the monolingualism of the other would be that sovereignty, the law originating from elsewhere, certainly, but primarily the very language of the Law. And the Law as language. ... The monolingualism imposed by the other operates by relying upon the foundation, here, through a sovereignty whose essence is always colonial, which tends, repressively and irrepressively, to reduce language to the One, that is, to the hegemony of the homogeneous. (Derrida 1998, 39-40)

Returning to Rosello’s (2001) analysis, this imposition of law through its internalisation as language is illustrated by the postcolonial host’s refusal to meet the guest (his brown relative, following Ahmed) halfway (102). What could be a truly hospitable gesture, because of its reciprocity, misses its promise in the economy of the entanglement. Rosello reaches once again to Derrida, for whom “the issue of language cannot be dissociated from the most basic level of hospitality, and one who rejects the other’s language is already rejecting him or her” (ibid., 105). Reciprocity in language is therefore a question of cognitive justice.

Within the terrain of the Portuguese language both problems erupt, namely the silence of other languages and the invisibility of other cultural repertoires. These constructed absences shape a myth of a fraternal linguistic community held together through the benevolence of the hospitable postempire. Here too the postcolonial guests will never be able to become the host.

Hospitality is well suited for concluding this chapter for it is a theme haunted by the ghost of the dangerous other, the postcolonial subject, whose violation entailed her/his incorporation into a benevolent script. Postcolonial critique has been flirting with the idea of reformulating hospitality so that it is undressed of its Eurocentrism, though maintaining its utopian aspirations as long as it is aware of its ambiguities, contextual sensitivity and the consequent danger of perverting its very founding ethos. As such, the topic encapsulates postcolonial critique of otherising the colonised and embellishing the forced encounter, and aspires to create new scripts that depart from historical awareness and new conviviality devoid of hegemony, and thus reciprocal.

These traits and topics are found through this first section, from an early definition of the Portuguese postimperial national character, through the continuance of imperial biotechniques of colonial subjectification, towards translation and finally within

hospitality. The borders of the nation are still silently but insidiously defining the text of the (dis)encounter, here the Portuguese language.

## Conclusions to the Section

In the terrain of the Portuguese language, *the African* is the racialised and gendered foreigner. S/he has been either overlooked or assimilated into the postempire. An actual provincialisation and decolonisation of the postcolonial requires a politics of visibility and reciprocity. This entails installing otherness in the territory of the mother tongue and reaching to its outside, that is learning (other) African languages.

This section explored the dynamics of continuity and reconfiguration of the imperial meta-narrative in Postcolonial theory on Portuguese colonialism. It focused on the field's early departure of the characterization of the national subject as hybrid, through the definition of a specific mode of subaltern colonisation, towards reflections on the workings of biotechnologies of otherisation. The section then analysed the racial and gendered encoding in the construction of the Portuguese *language space* and the categorisation of *Africa* dependant on the European centre. Hereby the *contact zone* has been termed a site of (dis)encounter. The associated colonial memory system was subjected to scrutiny, foregrounding its asymmetry. I addressed the dangers inscribed in the notion of a postcolonial community harboured in the Portuguese language. Finally, the section confronted colonial violence and its continuous workings through the camp/colony analogy. From there I explored the possibilities of restoring cognitive justice in the terrain of postcolonial enlacement between Portugal and Africa. This entails confronting the politics of racialisation of the colonial system and its continuous operations in Portuguese society and in the postcolonial field. The section revealed the need for visibility and reciprocity in the terrain of (dis)encounter. A tentative possibility emerged through engaging with the concept of cultural translation within and beyond the Portuguese language, and critically scrutinising the notion of hospitality towards *the other*.

Rather than producing an overview of the field, I have traversed its salient tropes, namely those that support a critical reflection of the canon. Every postcolonial houses the tension between reflecting on its *own* colonial *situation* and installing a narrative of exceptionality. This tension in Portuguese postcolonialism has been extensively problematized. This is, however, not the same as declaring the topic redundant, for the tension will always haunt the field, its vocabulary, its very economy, and the theories it proposes or ascribes to. As the postcolonial aims to disrupt the imperial phantom that inhabits it, it can only remain true to itself if continuously exploring the questions of power asymmetry inscribed in hegemonic knowledge systems and the colonial difference embedded in language.

I have explicitly sought to establish analogies and expose resonances of postcolonial tropes in Portuguese colonialism with the postcolonial canon (namely Anglophone) and concepts developed elsewhere. Exploring postcolonial connections outside of the Portuguese language supports departure from the Lusophone meta-narrative. Hereby I attempted to capitalise on the reconfigurations in the field in order to overcome the idiosyncratic continuities with empire. I have also foregrounded the unpleasant elements in the terrain of (dis)encounter in order to dislocate the benevolent text,

installing discomfort in a site scarred by violence. It is after all impossible to gaze at the postcolonial (dis)encounter without pain.

The question of voice and the limits of speaking *for* the subaltern other permeated this section. It is evident that the *Africa* either present or fantasmagorically absent in the Portuguese public memory and in the postcolonial field is often a trope working towards fixating the identity of the postempire. Boaventura Santos drew upon Patrick Chabal's point here to reflect on the place of this trope in the western imagination: "Olhamos para a África não tanto porque nos interesse compreender a África mas porque olhar para a África é uma das formas de nos definirmos a nós próprios" (quoted in Santos 2006b, 226).<sup>152</sup> Santos (2006b) himself discussed the role of *dark Africa* and the *African savage* in shaping the representation of a benevolent empire through a *jogo de espelhos* (*game of mirrors*).

Throughout this section I have identified the trends in Postcolonial theory that expressly dissociate *Africa* and *the African* from this (post)imperial imagination. This entailed having recourse to Mbembe's (2012) *africanidade* ("Africanicity"), that is, relating to Africa as a point of departure to the reconfiguration of western imagination. It is therefore critical to explicitly establish hitherto submerged analogies with African scholarship, and to foreground scholarship of the African diaspora. This is a road that I followed only tangentially. The works of Inocência Mata and Maria Paula Meneses (to mention just two African diasporic scholars on Portuguese postcolonialism) are fundamental in this regard too. I deem the consistent pursuit of such perspectives to be crucial for the field.

Postcolonial theory on Portuguese colonisation is the site of the Portuguese metropolitan canon and therefore its home. As such it only partly manages to recover the plurality of knowledges that the empire occluded and restore their credibility in order to enable some resemblance of reciprocal translation. As argued by Maria Tymoczko (2004), in her critique of western (translation) theory, it is not sufficient, and moreover it is arrogant, to think that the western canon can make its own revision. Transformation requires the entrance of the racialised and gendered subaltern into the terrain of authority. Therefore a necessary road to take into further decolonising the analysis is constructing and/or revealing the associations between the Portuguese canon and Africa. It is a mundane yet critical constation that Portuguese Postcolonial Studies is white. In a recent interview by the diasporic Rádio AfroLis (Fernandes 2016), Inocência Mata indicated that black female academics like her are extremely rare in this landscape. She argued the perversity of the ubiquitous rhetoric of academic meritocracy from the perspective of a black woman. It is time that postcolonial thought is joined by postcolonial practice, which requires questioning the actual constitution and economy of the academic field.

Finally, in the reflection of the postempire that I have conducted, the recurrent metaphor of the home refers to the borders and frontiers of the site of (dis)encounter between Portugal and Africa. Dismantling this home is the decolonial radical perversity that instigated this query and, in my understanding, guides further development of the

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<sup>152</sup>Transl.: "We look at Africa not so much because we are interested in understanding Africa but because looking at Africa is one way of defining ourselves."

field. A critical postcolonial hosted in the postempire demands both boldness and vigilance.

## **Section II.**

**Postcolonial literature on Portuguese**

**colonialism:**

*(in)hospitable homelands*

## Introduction to the Section

This section will work with language conceptions articulated in postcolonial literature within the realm of Portuguese colonialism in Africa. Specifically, the section will present an analysis of the linguistic use and the concepts of language offered by three novels written by three canonical authors and a sample of their commentary. It starts with a scrutiny of linguistically innovative aspects of their writing and of transformations in the aesthetics of the narrative. There follows an examination of the concepts of language, which makes the core of the argument.

The section aims to identify the transgressive character of the language imagination that the Mozambican Mia Couto, the Angolan José Eduardo Agualusa and the Portuguese António Lobo Antunes present, critically revealing the negotiations established with the Lusocentric identities inscribed in the hegemonic narrative of this language, the *Lusofonia* (Lusophony). Each chapter will present an investigation of language tropes and metaphors in the novels and public commentary, drawing on themes related to the concept of the border – centre, margin, horizon and frontier. These themes paraphrase and problematize notions of identity and raced and gendered alterity inherited from empire and are, therefore, dear to postcolonial criticism that informs this dissertation. Additionally, I will introduce themes around the *topos* of violence in the (post)colonial *encounter* with *Africa*. Finally, these metaphors will be associated with the context of Portuguese postcolonialism, and the position of the authors in this context. This exercise of contextualisation and location will enable an understanding of how their texts and commentary affirm, disrupt or evade the hegemonic narrative of Portuguese coloniality through the Portuguese language. Hereby I will excavate the modes whereby the language inherited from empire is (un)made into a *homeland* for the unequal subjects of the *postempire*.

The chosen novels problematize empire and colonial resiliencies from three different locations, each of which is entangled between (former) colonies and (former) metropolis and, more generally, with the West. The stories take place from the last days of Portuguese colonialism in Angola and Portugal through the struggle for independence and civil war (Antunes), and in the current post-independence and post-civil-war time transiting from socialism to global capitalism in Mozambique (Couto) and Angola (Agualusa). From the authors' different locations, loci of utterance and perspectives, *Africa* is given particular meanings, which will be analysed in this section's chapters. At the same time the authors belong to the canon of Postcolonial literature, which imposes limitations and offers possibilities that are differently inscribed in their texts or given by their reception within the *postempire*.

As the Portuguese language has been chosen to give continuity to the imagination of a benevolent empire devoid of raced and gendered violence, language metaphors and tropes will be at the heart of this investigation. The literariness of the chosen novels and the witty political inclination of the authors' public commentary offer a richness of images and imaginations on empire and coloniality. They range from explicit confrontations with the Portuguese language to suggestions of the creative possibilities and ontological and political limitations of language and literature. These were the

topics of analysis in the previous section, including (self-)representation, signification, voice, translation, community as borderzone, limits and boundaries as borders, and foreignness. These topics and tropes will emerge in different ways in the postcolonial literature under scrutiny in this section. They will be analysed in terms of their artistic craft and literariness within their historical context. This investigation aims to embrace the richness offered by the literary text, with awareness that its apprehension is always necessarily partial—in other words, located—and incomplete.

## Chapter 8. Mia Couto's *O Último Voo do Flamingo*: *linguagens (dis)continuing coloniality*<sup>153</sup>

Para si, meu filho, para si que estudou em escola, *o chão é papel, tudo se escreve nele*. Para nós a terra é uma boca, a alma um búzio. O tempo é o caracol que enrola essa concha. Encostamos o ouvido nesse búzio e ouvimos o princípio, quando tudo era antigamente. (Couto 2000, 190, my emphasis)

For you, my son, for you who studied in school, *the ground is a sheet of paper, everything is written on it*. For us, the earth is a mouth, the soul of a seashell. Time is the snail that shapes this shell. We put our ear to the shell and we hear the beginning of it all, when everything was of yore. (Couto 2004, 147, my emphasis)<sup>154</sup>

### Introduction

Mia Couto, born António Emílio Leite Couto, is a professional biologist and one of the most prolific and the most celebrated Mozambican writer, both in his own country, in Portugal and further internationally. Other Mozambican writers who made into the mainstream of the (peripheral field of) so-called *Lusophone literature* and have a readership outside of Mozambique and certainly in Portugal are João Paulo Borges Coelho and Paulina Chiziane. However they do not share the prestige and visibility of Mia Couto. His works have been published in more than twenty-two countries and have been widely translated, including to English, French, German, Italian, Serbian, Catalan, Spanish, Estonian, and Dutch. He has been awarded several prestigious literary prizes, of which I will mention some. In 1995 he won the Prémio Nacional de Ficção (National Prize for Fiction) of the Associação dos Escritores Moçambicanos (Association of Mozambican Writers). In 1999 the Portuguese Prémio Vergílio Ferreira was awarded to his oeuvre. In 2002 an international jury at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair voted his debut novel, *Terra Sonâmbula* (Sleepwalking Land), among the top twelve best African books of the 20th century. In 2007 he became the first African recipient of the renowned Latin Union Award of Romanic Languages. In 2013 he was granted the Camões Prize for Literature, an authoritative international award (set up by Portugal and Brazil) honoring the work of Portuguese language writers. In 2014 he was awarded the North-American Neustadt International Prize for Literature (also known as the “American Nobel”) for his oeuvre.

Mia Couto is a white male Mozambican. He is a desired *object* of media attention in Portugal. As a child of Portuguese settlers in Mozambique, and one of the protagonists in the construction of Mozambican national identity, he occupies a dual position of insider and outsider to a Portuguese cultural identity, which is presented as

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<sup>153</sup> An earlier translated version of this chapter was published as: Patricia Schor, "Mia Couto: A Língua Fronteira em *O Último Voo do Flamingo*," in *Passagens para o Índico: Encontros Brasileiros com a Literatura Moçambicana*, eds. Rita Chaves and Tania Macêdo (Maputo: Marimbique, 2012b), 231-243.

<sup>154</sup> These citations refer to the same passage, the first taken from the original publication in Portuguese, the second from the translated book. Further references to this novel are given after quotations in the text.

transnational. He enters this terrain paradoxically confirming its canonic condition and imploding its very centrality.

Mia Couto's writing career started successfully with journalism and poetry, but it was with fictional prose that he acquired his current status. Attention centred on his transgressive games with language. Nelson Saúte argues that Couto is "um exemplo paradigmático, um dos expoentes no remanejamento e na experimentação dos limites da língua portuguesa" (quoted in Ornelas 1996, 46).<sup>155</sup> According to Patrick Chabal (1994), "Mia Couto está na vanguarda dos que tentam integrar o português de Moçambique na sua escrita" (68).<sup>156</sup> Yet, the writer received praise for his aesthetics beyond linguistic experimentation. Chabal (1996) asserted that "Mia Couto undoubtedly is at the forefront of prose writing in the country" accounting for his first novel *Terra Sonâmbula* of 1992 as one of the starters of the genre in Mozambique (77). Furthermore, Chabal stated that "both its subject matter and literary quality are eminently innovative," (ibid.) and concluded that "his short stories like his novel ... are remarkable for imagination and language" (ibid., 78). Above all Chabal recognized an "African quality" in Couto's modern literature (ibid., 82-85). Altogether, Mia Couto's linguistic and thematic innovation created a new prose language that gained renown outside Mozambique, mainly in Portugal but also beyond the realm of the Portuguese language.

*O Último Voo do Flamingo* (2000) is Couto's fourth novel.<sup>157</sup> In 2001, it was awarded the Prémio Mário António, by the prestigious Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Portugal.<sup>158</sup> The novel follows the linguistic innovative style that was already present in his earlier writing. He also remains true to the themes approached in *Terra Sonâmbula*. The novel transcribes the journey in quest for the self through disencounters, to be found in childhood and the land. Yet, *Terra Sonâmbula* surpasses the existential dimension. The writer comments in interview to Nelson Saúte: "o romance é a metáfora do país que procura a própria identidade" (quoted in Ornelas 1996, 43).<sup>159</sup> In *Flamingo* this quest is situated in the disencounters of post-war Mozambique. This novel is of particular interest to this investigation as language is central to the story, with the narrator being a translator.<sup>160</sup> Hereby the author hints to colonial history and further

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<sup>155</sup> Transl.: "a paradigmatic example, one of the exponents in the relocation and experimentation of the limits of the Portuguese language." All translations from assorted Portuguese-language sources are mine.

<sup>156</sup> Transl.: "Mia Couto is at the vanguard of those trying to integrate the Portuguese of Mozambique in their writing."

<sup>157</sup> As the chapter will mainly draw from this novel, hereinafter it is referred to as *Flamingo*.

<sup>158</sup> Prize awarded to a work of a writer "from African countries of Portuguese language or East Timor." Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, "Relatório 2001," [http://www.gulbenkian.pt/media/files/fundacao/Relatorios/2001/Rel\\_FCG2001\\_130a165.pdf](http://www.gulbenkian.pt/media/files/fundacao/Relatorios/2001/Rel_FCG2001_130a165.pdf) (accessed June 10, 2010). 149.

<sup>159</sup> Transl.: "the novel is a metaphor of the country seeking its own identity."

<sup>160</sup> Language and translation are however issues present in other short stories and novels by Mia Couto. According to Chabal, "'O último aviso do corvo falador' (The Talking Ravens Last Warning) [in *Vozes Anoitecidas* of 1986 (Voices Made Night)] is the story of Zuzé Paraza who disgorges a raven whose 'language' he alone can interpret." Patrick Chabal, *The Post-Colonial Literature of Lusophone Africa* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 79. Translation is also present in *O outro pé da sereia* of 2006 (The mermaid's other foot). Mia Couto explains that in this novel, set in 1561, the Goan emperor requests translation to understand what the image of *Nossa Senhora* (Saint Mary), given by a Portuguese missionary, tells him. Mia Couto, "Mia Couto: 'Sou Um Poeta Que Conta Histórias.'" Interview by Maria Leonor Nunes, "JL: *Jornal De Letras Artes E Ideias* May 10-23, 2006. Mia Couto's

elaborates on cultural contact among asymmetrical power relations. This perspective invites reflections upon language inspired in both what Couto does with language and what his story tells about it.

The novel takes place in the remote Mozambican village of Tizangara, where a mission of enquiry arrives to investigate the tragic and bizarre explosion of United Nations peacekeepers whose only remains are their severed phaluses. Tizangara's *administrador* (administrator) appoints an "official translator" to the Italian Massimo Risi, who is in charge of writing a report to clarify the mystery. In the course of his research, Risi traverses the worlds of fantasy, of the dead, of witchery and of the supernatural through encounters with the villagers. Along this journey, each of the characters exposes the very impossibility of finding an explanation suitable for translation into a report to the world outside.

This is the story of an uprooting, of an African country and its peoples losing touch with their true worlds, that house in each particular story strongly determined by the place. The translator himself embarks on a journey of reencounter while enabling Massimo Risi's incursion in Tizangara.

Here, translation is hardly used in the narrow sense of exchanging languages, as the Italian speaks Portuguese and the translator does not speak Italian. Mia Couto asserts that in *Flamingo* "A questão da tradução não se coloca a nível linguístico, mas de mundos" (Couto 2006, 14).<sup>161</sup> He designates the translator with the role of intermediary. Intermediation takes place through language.

## Linguistic transformation

The translator's first act of intermediation is that of transposing oral narratives into written text. The narrator presents himself as a "falador da estória" (45) ("the teller of the tale") (28).<sup>162</sup> This is a representation of the writer who coins himself a storyteller or, better, a "contador de histórias" (Couto 2006, 14). And he adds: "Interessa-me ... como é que a oralidade se vai converter na escrita" (ibid.).<sup>163</sup> In Mia Couto's literary production, the distinction between oral and written text becomes blurred: "Escrevo, Excelência, quase por via oral," (75) ("I am writing, Excellency, almost by mouth,") states the *administrador* (54). This *oral writing* feeds from African traditions of story telling which the author acknowledges as the birth of his writing. In interview to Michel Laban, Couto tells that the stories told by the Mozambican elderly populated his

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more recent collection of poems, of 2011, is titled *Tradutor de Chuvas* (Translator of rains). In the poem that gives the collection its name, Couto writes about "the speech of the wing" that "translates rains" into "the birds' idiom." Mia Couto, *Tradutor de Chuvas*, 2nd ed. (Alfragibe: Editorial Caminho, 2013), 123. These figures and metaphors populate *Flamingo* as well, as I will show in the following pages.

<sup>161</sup> Transl.: "The question of translation does not arise at the linguistic level, but at the level of worlds."

<sup>162</sup> I have privileged citations from the original novel, in Portuguese, whenever possible, in order to convey the rhythm of Couto's literary language and call attention to his neologisms. Therefore, page numbers of citations in Portuguese refer to the original. The corresponding English citations from this novel are from David Brookshaw's translation.

<sup>163</sup> Transl.: "I'm interested in ... how orality will convert itself in writing."

childhood with the imaginary of this other world (Couto 1998). Later in his literature, orality invades the normalised written form in a process of recovery and authorization. Mia Couto argues: “Normalmente são pessoas ligadas ao mundo urbano, à lógica da escrita que [escrevem histórias], mas é preciso deixar que a oralidade refaça a página escrita, emergindo com a sua lógica e poesia” (quoted in Chabal 1994, 68).<sup>164</sup> The narrator reveals African rural voices, hidden and unheard: “transcreví em português visível, as falas” (11) (“It was I who transcribed the talk that follows into visible Portuguese”) (n.p.). These are voices considered unworthy of being heard as they are no one’s voices: “Era gente anónima, no interior de uma nação africana que mal sustenta seu sem nome no mundo” (200) (“But they were nameless people, in the interior of an African country that could hardly sustain its name in the world”) (155). Through the act of writing, oral tradition and its subjects are detached from such inferior status and a condition of invisibility. The writer and the translator are hereby intermediaries between the urban and the rural worlds, and between Africa and the hegemonic West. They enable the recovery of such voices. Yet, this recovery is not literal.

Nelson Saúte commented that, in the short stories of *Vozes Anotecidas* (Voices Made Night) of 1986, Mia Couto “reinventa uma linguagem que recupera as vozes submersas no cadinho da moçambicanidade” (quoted in Couto 1998, 1017).<sup>165</sup> According to the writer himself, he does so but only partly.

Porque, de facto, alguns dos mecanismos que eu uso para subverter a norma são inspirados na forma como os moçambicanos se apropriam da língua portuguesa, como casam e descasam – como é que eles, usando uma língua europeia, moldam nessa língua os traços da sua cultura africana. Portanto eu procuro encontrar muitas vezes essa lógica, não tanto reproduzir o que é feito, mas compreender a lógica de como é que isso é feito. (Couto 1998, 1017-1018)<sup>166</sup>

The English term language encapsulates both the Portuguese *língua* and *linguagem*, however does not differentiate between them. *Língua* can be literally translated as language meaning linguistic norm or tongue, and *linguagem* means language as a particular means of communication or code. Further down the chapter, the term idiolect will be introduced and discussed. It refers to this very passage from language to code. The appropriation and transformation of the term is fundamental to this analysis and opens up the possibilities of the Coutian text.<sup>167</sup>

Correspondingly, Ornelas (1996) argues that Mia Couto’s literary production creates a language that establishes a relation of homology rather than of identity with the colloquial Portuguese from Mozambique (45). For Chabal (1994) “Mia Couto está a

<sup>164</sup> Transl.: “People that write stories are usually connected to the urban world, to the writing logic, but it is necessary to let orality redo the written page, emerging with its logic and poetry.”

<sup>165</sup> Transl.: “reinvents a language [*linguagem*] that retrieves the submerged voices in the melting pot of Mozambicaness.”

<sup>166</sup> Transl.: “Because, in fact, some of the mechanisms that I use to subvert the norm are inspired by the way Mozambicans take ownership of the Portuguese language, how they marry and unmarry it - how they, in the use of a European language, shape in that language traces of their African culture. So I often try to find this logic, not so much to reproduce what is done, but to understand the logic of how this is done.”

<sup>167</sup> Therefore, I am explicitly adding the Portuguese term to translated passages where *linguagem* is said, written or referred to.

‘inventar’ uma nova linguagem” that is a “criação artificial linguística que ‘ecoa’ a linguagem popular ‘vulgar’” (68).<sup>168</sup> In *Flamingo* this echo sounds through constructions like “leito desconjugal” (48) (“the unconjugal solitude of her bed”) (30), and “amanhã mais outra vez” (50) (“to come back to again tomorrow”) (31). According to Mia Couto himself the language of his literature is not the language spoken in the streets, as his intention is to experiment with the freedom that literature allows (Couto 1998). At times words from Mozambican languages appear in the Portuguese text. Again this is an echo, as the core of Couto’s new literary language is made of transformations within and through the Portuguese language itself.

Eu sou de origem portuguesa, sou alguém que parte da sua própria língua materna e quero provar que essa operação não é uma operação de simples fachada, mas que, dentro da minha própria língua – que também já é uma língua moçambicana – essas operações se podem fazer profundamente, sem fazer uso das línguas bantós – outros provavelmente estarão mais à vontade para fazer isso. (Couto 1998, 1019)<sup>169</sup>

This is a critical dimension of Mia Couto’s literary language. It emerges primarily out of the encounter between the Portuguese language with African cultures rather than exclusively with its languages. Interviewed by Rodrigues da Silva he positions the process of linguistic recreation in this encounter: “[b]enefício de uma situação privilegiada porque tenho um pé na norma e outro na errância a que está sujeita a língua portuguesa. Ou, se quiseres, estou vivendo numa outra cultura uma língua que me é materna” (quoted in Ornelas 1996, 46).<sup>170</sup> This condition, situation or location, enables the writer to move from one terrain to the other, pick and choose, to intermediate.

*Languaging* is a (decolonial) concept elaborated by Walter Dignolo (2000b), which resonates strongly with Couto’s practice. It stands for the marks of this movement between terrains in language, “thinking and writing between languages” (226), “articulating [diverse] linguistic memories” (228) hitherto separated by monolingual nationalism inherited from imperial colonialism, such as in the paradigmatic example of Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987). Dignolo characterises “languaging” as speech and writing strategies of transculturation, which reappropriate language. According to the decolonial scholar, through “languaging” the “noises” and the “dust” of a mother tongue are carried into new usage of dominant languages (Dignolo 2000b, 217-249).<sup>171</sup> In the case of Couto, the writer does not depart from a subaltern mother tongue struggling to emerge in the writing of a dominant language, Portuguese. He does, however, allude to this position of linguistic subalternity that characterises the experience of the majority of Mozambicans, and gives it fruition in his writing.

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<sup>168</sup> Transl.: “Mia Couto is ‘inventing’ a new language [*linguagem*]” that is a “linguistic artificial creation that ‘echoes’ the ‘vulgar’ popular language [*linguagem*].”

<sup>169</sup> Transl.: “I am of Portuguese origin. I am someone who departs from his own mother tongue and I want to prove that that is not a mere façade operation, but that, within my own language - which is also already a Mozambican language - such operations can be done profoundly, without having recourse of Bantu languages - others will probably be more comfortable to do so.”

<sup>170</sup> Transl.: “I benefit from a privileged situation because I have one foot in the norm and another in the wandering to which the Portuguese language is subjected. Or, if you like, I’m living my mother tongue in another culture.”

<sup>171</sup> I will explore Dignolo’s concept of languaging in the Appendix of this dissertation.

Furthermore, Mia Couto's literary language realizes a second act of intermediation, which is between prose and poetry. The writer declared his suspicion about such separations, which he believes to be arbitrary. He seeks a language that allows the story to flow naturally (Couto 1998). The result is something in-between, a *poetic-prose*. This particular style has its roots in Mozambican literary tradition that houses in poetry (Ornelas 1996). Poetry flows from the text through the creation of new words. Couto explains: "Penso que são resultado da minha passagem por este trabalho de filigrana, de tratamento quase artesanal de palavra a palavra que penso que só a poesia nos pode ensinar" (Couto 1998, 1020).<sup>172</sup> The author makes use of the freedom allowed to poetry and the craftsmanship of the poet to transform language.

In *Flamingo* neologisms convey musicality and movement - as in "o barco-íris," "ondarilhando por aquelas águas" (52) (the "rainboat," "as it bobbed along through the waves") (34) - which again reveal the oral qualities of the narrative. Additionally, the narrative is populated with animals and incorporates yet this other world in language - see "emperuado" (25) ("dandified" (9) or "like a turkey") and "acachorrado" (37) (*dogged* or, as translated, "like a dog") (20). The Portuguese that emerges hereby is fed by the locality, the everyday experience in this particular place. Yet this is not a Mozambican Portuguese, but a Portuguese particular of a Mozambican writer that is also a practicing biologist, that has in Portuguese his mother tongue and that is also many other *worlds*.

Idílio Rocha coins Mia Couto's narrative an "ideolecto seu, belo e único" (quoted in Ornelas 1996, 37).<sup>173</sup> The term *idiolect* refers to a individual vocabulary, or the vocabulary proper of a community. Fredric Jameson (1985) coins it a private code (18). It is an appropriation of language that feeds from the local. Yet beyond that, following Roland Barthes (1956), the term points to the expression of ideology through language. Couto explains his craft beyond its linguistic significance: "Quando eu mexia nas palavras, queria que elas funcionassem para dizer uma outra coisa. Não era apenas uma operação estética, linguística, mas uma maneira de quebrar um muro para mostrar que, do outro lado, havia uma outra luz" (Couto 2006, 10).<sup>174</sup>

Associating with Roland Barthes' (1956) semiologic scrutiny, this *light* emerges out of a reading that deciphers the myths inscribed in language. It entails exploring what language has naturalized and how, namely the history and the position of the speaking subject that have been rendered universal and so, need no mention. It is the mashing of form and meaning that must be disentangled as "[i]t is this constant game of hide-and-seek between the meaning and the form which defines myth" (Barthes 1956, 104). Hereby, "to connect the mythical schema to a general history, to explain how it corresponds to the interests of a definite society, [is] in short, to pass from semiology to ideology" (ibid., 115).<sup>175</sup> Ornelas's analysis paraphrases this path, highlighting "o papel

<sup>172</sup> Transl.: "I think they are the result of my passage through this filigree work, of an almost artisanal treatment word for word, which I think that only poetry can teach us."

<sup>173</sup> Transl.: "own idiolect, beautiful and unique."

<sup>174</sup> Transl.: "When I changed words, I wanted that they worked to say something else. It was not just an aesthetic, linguistic operation, but a way to break a wall to show that on the other side, there was another light."

<sup>175</sup> Poignantly, Barthes illustrates his argument with the racialised image and imagination of empire: "I am at the barber's, and a copy of *Paris-Match* is offered to me. On the cover, a young Negro [sic] in a

desempenhado por Mia Couto na transcrição e na metamorfose do ideoleto português, os alicerces da construção de novos modos de pensar e de representar a realidade” (Ornelas 1996, 47).<sup>176</sup>

Altogether, the incorporation of orality and of the colloquial Portuguese of Mozambique, and the poetic language in prose, give expression to other worlds in language. This process is realized through free experimentation, games with language and recreation. For Mia Couto, writing, from poetry to short stories and prose, is “experimentar os limites da própria língua e ... transgredir no sentido de criar um espaço de magia” (Couto 1998, 1016).<sup>177</sup> The language that emerges – “uma língua que afinal às vezes é só minha” (ibid.)<sup>178</sup> - seeks interlocutors.

Mia Couto draws from the reception of *Vozes Anotecidas* to conclude: “provei que aquilo é uma fórmula que não era apenas uma coisa íntima, mas que tinha também uma comunicação” (ibid., 1019).<sup>179</sup> This is the dimension of language recreation that escapes Fredric Jameson’s (1985) postmodern conception of *idiolect* - that of the language of the individual that is an island - to reflect the process of recreation from the locality. According to Ornelas:

de um modo inusitado, dinâmico e renovador os textos do escritor apontam paradigmaticamente para uma nova recontextualização da realidade do país após muitos anos de apropriação da realidade moçambicana e de coerção linguística sobre o português local pelo poder colonizador. (Ornelas 1996, 45)<sup>180</sup>

The Portuguese language of Mia Couto feeds from Mozambican history and therefore also, but not only, from the relationship between Mozambique and Portugal. It represents and recreates it. This is an *idiolect* understood in its postcolonial condition and postcolonial possibility. It is thus a language that has a communication beyond the writer’s self.

Mia Couto breaks away from the rigid normative Portuguese borrowing from Mozambican Portuguese to create his new language. He stimulates this liberty: “[E]u

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French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolor. All this is the *meaning* of the picture. But, whether naïvely or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any color discrimination, faithfully serve under flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro [sic] in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (*a black soldier is giving the French salute*); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is a presence of the signified through the signifier.” Roland Barthes, “Myth Today,” in *A Roland Barthes Reader*, ed. Susan Sontag (London: Vintage, 1956), 101-102.

<sup>176</sup> Transl.: “the role played by Mia Couto in the transcription and the metamorphosis of the Portuguese idiolect, the foundations of the construction of new ways of thinking and of representing reality.”

<sup>177</sup> Transl.: “to experiment the limits of one’s own language and ... to transgress in the sense of creating a space of magic.”

<sup>178</sup> Transl.: “a language that, after all, is sometimes only my own.”

<sup>179</sup> Transl.: “I proved that that is a formula, which was not only an intimate thing, but it also had a communication.”

<sup>180</sup> Transl.: “in an unusual, dynamic and innovative way the writer’s texts point paradigmatically to a new recontextualisation of the country’s reality after many years of appropriation of the Mozambican reality and of linguistic coercion on the local Portuguese by the coloniser.”

defendo que, mesmo a nível individual, deve ser encorajada a posição de cada um de nós (independentemente de ser escritor ou não) seja um produtor do idioma e não apenas um seu utente” (quoted in Ornelas 1996, 45).<sup>181</sup> Yet for him the freedom taken with language should not abandon the norm. “[A]cho que a escola deve ensinar a norma mas deve também inculcar o gosto pela transgressão da norma – transgressão que não advirá da ignorância, mas exatamente do domínio que se deve ter duma língua” (Couto 1998, 1029).<sup>182</sup> He departs from the individual to the collective appropriation of the Portuguese language. His literary practice is paradigmatic to the process of recreation of a national language. Chabal (1996) had already coined *Terra Sonâmbula* as Mia Couto’s “effort, implicitly or explicitly, to contribute to the construction of a ‘national’ culture” (82) of “a country which has not yet formed itself into a cohesive society with a firm sense of identity (79). Portuguese is for Mia Couto (1998, 1029) the language of Mozambique for that it is the only possibility to express the country’s diversity, that is linguistic but not only. National literature, he further asserts, must in Mozambique be written in a “língua exterior, não nacional.”<sup>183</sup> Therefore, he adds, in a way, “o português já vai sendo uma língua nacional também”.<sup>184</sup> This process of claiming ownership of a language is what Mia Couto is exercising through literature. He explains:

Aquelas palavras transportam outras visões, outro sentimento, outra lógica que o português padrão está escondendo, está adormecendo. A idéia é esta: partir, fracturar as palavras, reconstruí-las e depois dizer assim: afinal, a janela que a palavra abre pode mostrar outros mundos... (Couto 1998, 1040)<sup>185</sup>

This enterprise of inflicting fractures in the norm and reconstructing it has given Mia Couto’s literature the renown of a libertarian practice. Ornelas argues:

A língua portuguesa, como é do conhecimento geral, apesar de ser em Moçambique a língua do opressor, a língua do colonizador e, portanto, da dominação, a língua da apropriação e da destruição de culturas autóctones, a língua de um império que causou inúmeros vexames, a língua do poder e da autoridade coloniais, ou seja, a língua que colonizou a terra e o povo moçambicanos, também é, depois de tudo e de uma forma bastante irónica, a língua de emancipação, da libertação. (Ornelas 1996, 44)<sup>186</sup>

For Ornelas “toda a renovação linguística dos textos de Mia Couto é, ao fim e ao cabo, uma expressão de autonomia e da emancipação da cultura,” it is a departure from the

<sup>181</sup> Transl.: “[I] contend that, even at the individual level, each one of us (whether a writer or not) should be encouraged to be a producer of the idiom, and not merely its user.”

<sup>182</sup> Transl.: “[I] think the school should teach the norm but should also instill the taste for the transgression of the norm – the transgression that will come not out of ignorance, but exactly out of the command that one must have of a language.”

<sup>183</sup> Transl.: “outside language, not a national one.”

<sup>184</sup> Transl.: “Portuguese is already being a national language too.”

<sup>185</sup> Transl.: “Those words carry other visions, another feeling, another logic that the standard Portuguese is hiding, is *asleeping*. The idea is this: to break, to fracture the words, to rebuild them and then say: after all, the window that the word opens can show other worlds ...” (my emphasis)

<sup>186</sup> Transl.: “As it is of common knowledge, the Portuguese language, despite being in Mozambique the language of the oppressor, the language of the coloniser and therefore of domination, the language of appropriation and destruction of indigenous cultures, the language of an empire that caused numerous vexations, the language of power and colonial authority, that is the language that colonised Mozambican land and people, is also, after all, and in a rather ironic way, the language of emancipation, of liberation.”

“modelo português” (Portuguese model) (ibid., 46).<sup>187</sup> This dissociation from the norm shows the way forward to the development of an own literature and language. Chabal (1994) coined it Mia Couto’s “*linguagem*” that “representa uma verdadeira inovadora direção para a escrita do português de Moçambique” (68).<sup>188</sup>

However important it is to read Mia Couto through his linguistic innovation and consequent distancing from the *Portuguese model*, this perspective has supported the incorporation of his writing by a voracious Portuguese centre. The neocolonial implications of this reading have been explored in recent literary criticism. Phillip Rothwell (2004) argues that Mia Couto has been hereby turned into a contemporary agent of the Portuguese empire based on culture – that, in turn, resonates with the concept of *Empire* (18-19).

Conceptualized by Hardt and Negri (2001), *Empire* stands for the late stage of liberal capitalism characterised by national boundaries yielding sovereignty to the world economy. *Empire* is the Grand Narrative in vogue that fetishises cultural difference and celebrates diversity within that rationale of neoliberal capitalism. This concept has been greatly influential but also subjected to attack from Latin Americanist critics of modernity for its Eurocentric locus of enunciation. This *zero point of view* (i.e. the West as universal) borrowed from orthodox Marxism assumes a linear course of history whereby colonialism has been surpassed (Valencia 2010, 3). However, “the model of power that is globally hegemonic today presupposes an element of coloniality,” which is organised according to a racial matrix (Quijano 2000, 533).<sup>189</sup> Juan Carlos Valencia highlights this criticism on “the persistence of coloniality in *Empire*,” which supports an understanding of scholarship on Mia Couto’s writings:

We have moved from a period of global colonialism to a contemporary period of global Coloniality (Grosfoguel 2008b) in which the heterogeneity of racialized modes of production persists. The fact that capital has nearly exhausted the external spaces for its realization and now has to open new terrains in its inside, thriving in the products of immaterial labour (services, cultural artefacts, knowledge and communication) does not mean that Coloniality has disappeared, but that it is in a process of reorganization (Mignolo 2002). Capital is now looking for post-territorial colonies to continue expanding (Castro-Gómez 2005b) and it does it with the Coloniality of power as its guiding principle, as it has done for more than five centuries. (Valencia 2010, 8)

Much scholarly analysis of Mia Couto’s oeuvre participates in this dynamic of coloniality. Rothwell (2004) calls attention to the fact that reading Couto “solely as a reaction to Portugal’s presence in Africa” (171) conceals the radical liberating aspect of his writing. Isis Butôt (2009) highlights the danger of this linguistic perspective to feed

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<sup>187</sup> Transl.: “all linguistic renewal of Mia Couto texts is, after all, an expression of autonomy and of cultural emancipation.”

<sup>188</sup> Transl.: “represents a truly innovative direction for the writing of Portuguese in Mozambique.”

<sup>189</sup> “What is termed globalization is the culmination of a process that began with the constitution of America and colonial/modern Eurocentered capitalism as a new global power. One of the fundamental axes of this model of power is the social classification of the world’s population around the idea of race, a mental construction that expresses the basic experience of colonial domination and pervades the more important dimensions of global power, including its specific rationality: Eurocentrism. The racial axis has a colonial origin and character, but it has proven to be more durable and stable than the colonialism in whose matrix it was established.” Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” *Nepantla: Views from the South* 1, no. 3 (2000), 533.

the celebration of the vitality and versatility of the European language (10). She detects the appropriation of Couto's literary language as expression of the *Portugueseness* that supposedly characterizes Mozambican culture as a whole (89-91). *Flamingo* incorporates the challenge to the linguistic subsumption of Couto's oeuvre with its explicit thematization of language. Mia Couto foregrounds the topic of language to talk about other things. Beyond linguistic experimentation, Couto's *linguagem* is also made of a narrative that fractures the western norm.

## Displaced narrative

In *Flamingo* each chapter presents a different form of narrative: letters, reports, narration of dreams and stories. Together they expose the attempt to fit an African narrative into a western norm and the appropriation of this narrative. Chabal (1996) argued that in *Terra Sonâmbula* Mia Couto presents a text that escapes the linear progressive movement of the "classical" European novel. Each chapter offers a version, a story that adds to knowledge/wisdom to those who "travel" the story. The late literature and history scholar posited that: "The point of the book, as it is in oral literature, is in the voyage, in the telling of the stories" (84). This argument applies to the structure of *Flamingo* as well. Yet further forms of dissociation and appropriation are present within each of the chapters.

Particularly the letters and reports reveal a narrative out of place. Mia Couto exploits this strangeness with irony. The village's power holders and their subordinates lower in the chain produce official and "less official" documents wherein the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric slips into the text, to be "rectified" by the newly fashioned Developmental terminology. This Portuguese incorporates also English as in "o internacional consultor" (34) ("international consultant") (18) and "[os] inautorizados visitantes" (65) ("unauthorised visitors") (46). The use of technocratic language exposes the process of appropriation of languages of power. It belongs here to predatory political practice that implicates local elites with the West, "os leões vindos de fora" (217) ("the foreign lions outside") (170) with "as hienas nacionais" (217) ("the local hienas") (170). These aesthetics shed light onto a conception of language as a means to the exercise of control. What is at stake is the ability to speak the language of the West and of the South of Mozambique, house to its elites. This is the language of modernity, exposed as rhetoric. It painfully conflicts with local practice, as expressed in the *administrador's* report: "O jornalista queria dar notícia, mas eu não autorizei. São coisas que dá vergonha em termos de civilização e da democracia" (173).<sup>190</sup> Modernity is thus the gatekeeper of the word that can be pronounced.

Beyond the games with technocratic language, Mia Couto uses other artifices to construct his displaced text. *Flamingo's* letters and reports mimic the clinical narrative of official documents. However dreams, premonitions, suspicions and fears make an entrance too. The incursion of this fantastic dimension contrasts with the western norm, disturbing the narrative. This fantastic dimension must however not be taken at face

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<sup>190</sup> Corresponding text in English: "The reporter from the local radio even wanted to do a news item on it, but I refused to allow it. Such things shame us in terms of civilisation and democracy." (136-137)

value as the manifestation or representation of an allegedly “authentic African past,” or as a purely unworldly aesthetic expression. Following Chabal (1996, 79) on Couto: “The author’s use of the fantastic is never gratuitous. It is deeply rooted in the mental world engendered by a society in the process of constructing itself as a modern post-colonial state while being ravaged by one of the most vicious and devastating armed conflicts recently to have stalked the African continent.” Additionally, a final disruption of the this worldly comment to the language of power is done through the introduction of personal notes into a narrative designed as ascetic. Confessions reveal shared prejudices and patrimonialism that accompany the abuse of power. Hereby Couto shows that “truth” lies outside rationality –understood as the rhetoric of western modernity. It is found in the intimacy of power (as when the prostitute meets the minister). Language serves here the purpose of covering up.

*Flamingo*’s translator has a place within these power dynamics. He is appointed to confirm authority to the village’s *administrador*. In the words of the administrator’s wife, self-titled The First Lady: “O que eu quero, em tanto que Ermelinda, é que eles fiquem a saber que nós, em Tizangara, temos tradução simultânea” (21).<sup>191</sup> He is supposed though to summarize arguments and documents, and not to share all information available. Language is treated as an unwanted instrument for it allows incursion into a terrain of corrupted politics. As there is no formal language barrier, one has to be built. The “official argument” that translation is required allows this ironic game.

Through such games, Mia Couto presents a social and political critique with humour. He argues that *Flamingo* speaks “contra a ganância dos poderosos, os fazedores da guerra, os que enriquecem à custa dos outros, os que têm as mãos manchadas de sangue” (quoted in Sousa 2001).<sup>192</sup> Hereby Couto makes use of the allowances made to literature in order to create ruptures in linguistic practice and beyond. According to Ornelas (1996) though the writer has an ambiguous attitude before the socio-political function of literature. Yet he identifies in Couto’s literature and commentary the assertion that “a arte pode ter e tem uma intenção utilitária e inscreve-se em uma rede de práticas sociais e no sistema cultural que a produz” (44).<sup>193</sup> Concurrently Mia Couto’s transformative linguistic practice and his displaced narrative present a Portuguese language that is *argued for* along his stories.

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<sup>191</sup> Corresponding text in English: “What I want, speaking from my own point of view as Ermelinda, is for them to realise that here in Tizangara, we have simultaneous translation.” (6)

<sup>192</sup> Transl.: “against the greed of the powerful, the makers of war, the ones who enrich themselves at the expense of others, those who have their hands stained with blood.”

<sup>193</sup> Transl.: “art can have and does have a utilitarian purpose and inscribes itself in a network of social practices and in the cultural system that produces it.”

## Conceptions of language

### Language rooted in the journey

In *Flamingo* the translator is needed to provide explanations to Massimo Risi, according to whom: “Eu posso falar e entender. Problema não é a língua. O que eu não entendo é este mundo daqui” (42).<sup>194</sup> Language comes out as a limited source of understanding, as it is detached from a place. It is only through the lived experience at Tizangara that the Italian will understand. He who “não tinha experiência de andar nos caminhos deste mundo” (106)<sup>195</sup> will learn to walk in that soil and speak its languages. This is also a journey towards encountering himself. The role of the translator is to accompany this process of learning languages. While Risi seeks quick answers that he himself can translate into *the language of modernity* (the UN report), the villagers require the translator to explain “nossas razões ... com o devido tempo” (40, 42).<sup>196</sup> Language therefore does not preclude one’s own journey.

*Flamingo* is a journey between worlds, through the encounter with its intermediaries. It happens in the place of such encounters, which is always a margin. The critical symbol of this locality is the *varanda* (veranda). The translator locates it: “À frente estava o mundo e seus infinitos; atrás estava a casa, o primeiro abrigo” (210).<sup>197</sup> For his mother, the *varanda*, given its location, is “o melhor lugar para se chorar” (210).<sup>198</sup> Mia Couto privileges the margin as the place where humanity manifests itself. It is the possibility to touch worlds and to live in a fluid position that enables one to encounter the true self and others. Sentiment is the universal dimension of Mia Couto’s narrative. “A lágrima nos universa, nela regressamos ao primeiro início. Aquela gotinha é, em nós, o umbigo do mundo. A lágrima plagia o oceano” (116).<sup>199</sup> This sentiment is rooted in childhood, in the place – itself a margin where worlds cross – and in the entanglement with others.

Childhood is a central theme in the writer’s literary production and an important source of inspiration. In conversation with Michel Laban (1998) Couto portrays his childhood as a time of unlimited experimenting of limits. In this quality it constitutes itself as a *fronteira*. This polymorphous term typifies more than only Couto’s childhood. It is rather a critical metaphor in Couto’s texts and his (self-defined) position in the literary field. In Portuguese, the term *fronteira* encapsulates both border and frontier. I will leave open the possibilities of the term and explore this ambiguity further down.<sup>200</sup>

In Couto’s literary reflection, the plural self and the plural worlds coexist and criss-cross. This concept has expression in several aspects of his literature, including the use

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<sup>194</sup> Corresponding text in English: “I can speak and understand. The problem isn’t the language. What I don’t understand is this world here.” (26)

<sup>195</sup> Corresponding text in English: “had no experience of travelling the roads of [this] world.” (79)

<sup>196</sup> Corresponding text in English: “our reasons ... in due course.” (24, 25)

<sup>197</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Before it lay the world and all its infinites; behind lay the house, the first source of refuge.” (165)

<sup>198</sup> Corresponding text in English: “[t]he best place for a cry.” (164)

<sup>199</sup> Corresponding text in English: “A tear puts us in touch with the universe, in a tear we return to our origins. That little drop in us is the navel of the world. A tear plagiarises the ocean.” (89)

<sup>200</sup> The richness and maleability of the term *fronteira* will be explicitly addressed again in the following chapter on a novel by José Eduardo Agualusa.

and the concept of language it carries. Language constitutes one of several possible margins or *fronteiras* between worlds. The most critical statement of *Flamingo* is then about what language is not, beyond its *fronteira* quality. It is not universal, but instead particular, plural and incomplete. In its particularity, language manifests the multifaceted character of identity. Each of *Flamingo*'s characters lives in more than one world. The *feiticeiro* (witchdoctor) transits between the sacred and the profane, the priest between Catholicism and African religious traditions, the translator between the city and his rural roots, the translator's father between life and death, and the Italian between modernity and the dream. Each of these worlds requires its own language, which is exemplified in the translator's arrival at his father's remote refuge: "Meus saberes de cidade serviam para quê?" (54).<sup>201</sup> Language must enable this transit. However each of these languages does not suffice to convey the plurality of the self and of lived experience. Literacy in Portuguese is one of such incomplete experiences. The translator says: "A escola foi para mim como um barco: me dava acesso a outros mundos. Contudo, aquele ensinamento não me totalizava. Ao contrário: mais eu aprendia, mais eu sufocava" (50).<sup>202</sup> Here Portuguese constrains because it has the ambition of universality and concurrently denies the lived experience in this world, the locality. The core of Mia Couto *idiolect* is in the idea of complementarity in harmony.

### Naming place & passage

Language manifests this plurality and intermediates the frequent passages through worlds. First of all, language is an intermediary between the world outside and the intimate world. The *velho Sulpício* (*old Sulpício*) protected his intimacy against such unwanted incursion. "Ficaria calado, o europeu não entraria em sua alma por via das palavras que ele proferisse,"<sup>203</sup> said the translator. And his father faced the Italian: "Não diga o meu nome!"<sup>204</sup> For him a name reveals one's true self: "O nome da pessoa é assunto íntimo, como se fosse um ser dentro do ser" (137-138).<sup>205</sup> Yet beyond, Mia Couto's *naming* reveals the encounter between the self and the outside; it tells one's story. This is the case for each of *Flamingo*'s characters, such as the prostitute Ana Deusqueira (Anna Godwilling) and the *velha moça* Temporina (*old-young girl* Temporina), as well as for the writer himself. Couto (1998, 1034) describes how, as a two year old living amongst the several cats that inhabited his building, he declared to his family: "Eu quero me chamar Mia."<sup>206</sup> Since then he kept this name: "Para mim, não tenho outro nome. Se me chamares de António não sei se me estás a chamar realmente a mim."<sup>207</sup> The name is therefore language in the context self/world, the "*responsabilidade social*" (social responsibility) rather than the "*responsabilidade legal*" (legal responsibility).

<sup>201</sup> Corresponding text in English: "What use was my city knowledge?" (37)

<sup>202</sup> Corresponding text in English: "School, for me, was like a ship: it gave me access to other worlds. But education didn't make me complete. On the contrary: the more I learned, the more stifled I was." (31)

<sup>203</sup> Corresponding text in English: "He would keep quiet. That European wasn't going to enter his soul through any words he uttered." (106)

<sup>204</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Don't say my name!" (106)

<sup>205</sup> Corresponding text in English: "a person's name is intimate, like a being within a being." (106)

<sup>206</sup> Transl.: "I want to be called Mia [Meow]."

<sup>207</sup> Transl.: "For me, I have no other name. If you called me António, I wouldn't know if you were really calling me."

Again, meaning here is only found in language as part of a located experience and above all in the implication with others: “a terra é um ser: carece de família, desse tear de entrelaçamentos a que chamamos ternura” (114).<sup>208</sup> Outside of this realm there is no name: “A cidade foi sendo tão abandonada que até as coisas foram perdendo seus nomes” (69).<sup>209</sup> Outside of this context there is no meaning: “Ele [o velho Sulpício] afinal, não falava o que dizia. Referia outro assunto. Cada coisa tem direito a ser uma palavra. Cada palavra tem o dever de ser nenhuma coisa” (139).<sup>210</sup> Language, in Mía Couto’s *Flamingo*, does not stand on its own.

It is actually outside and beyond language that truth and wisdom live. Firstly they house outside of the body of the text. In the *administrador*’s report: “P.S.: Em anexo, confesso” (174).<sup>211</sup> Secondly they house in the hiatus of language, outside modernity: “A sabedoria do branco mede-se pela pressa em responder. Entre nós o mais sábio é aquele que mais demora em responder. Alguns são tão sábios que nunca respondem” (184).<sup>212</sup> Wisdom is found in silence and above all in contemplation: “Conselhos de minha mãe foram apenas silêncios. Suas falas tinham sotaque de nuvem” (47); “Pensara ela por outras, quase nenhuma palavra” (116).<sup>213</sup> Thirdly, wisdom and truth are found outside of the material text, i.e. the text that is apprehended in a immobile form, as the taped voice. The *velho Sulpício* qualifies the recorder as “a máquina que fotografa vozes” (189), which reproduces “palavras que até pareciam eco” (192).<sup>214</sup> And they escape the written text: “O senhor lê o livro, eu leio o chão” (159).<sup>215</sup> Finally truth and wisdom escape the realm of spoken language as “[a] verdade foge de muita pergunta” (110).<sup>216</sup> These are the realms of modernity’s language, which are limited. Again the place to search for wisdom and truth is in one’s land: “Não sou eu que irei falar. Quem vai falar é este lugar” (218), said the *velho Sulpício*.<sup>217</sup> For him the sacred place talks, as it is the voice of those implicated with each other that talks: “A boca nunca fala sozinha. Talvez na terra desse branco. Mas aqui não. ... Na nossa terra o homem é os outros todos” (144).<sup>218</sup> And finally the voice that talks, that is neither individual nor

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<sup>208</sup> Corresponding text in English: “[t]he land is a being: it lacks a family, that weave of interdependent existences we call tenderness.” (87)

<sup>209</sup> Corresponding text in English: “The town had been gradually abandoned, so much so that things were losing their name.” (51)

<sup>210</sup> Corresponding text in English: “After all, he [old Sulpício] wasn’t speaking what he was saying. He was referring to something else. Every object has the right to be a word. It is the duty of each word not to be nothing at all.” (107)

<sup>211</sup> Corresponding text in English: “P.S.: As an addendum, I have a confession to make.” (137)

<sup>212</sup> Corresponding text in English: “The white man’s wisdom is measured by the speed with which he answers you. Among us, the wisest is the one who takes the longest to answer. Some are so wise they never answer.” (144)

<sup>213</sup> Corresponding text in English: “My mother’s advice consisted merely of silences. She spoke with the accent of a cloud” (29); “She was thinking by using other, non-existent words.” (89)

<sup>214</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the machine that photographs voices” (146); “[words that] seemed like an echo.” (149)

<sup>215</sup> Corresponding text in English: “You, sir, read the book, while I read the ground.” (125)

<sup>216</sup> Corresponding text in English: “truth escapes many questions.” (84)

<sup>217</sup> Corresponding text in English: “It’s not I who am going to talk. It’s this place that will do the talking.” (171)

<sup>218</sup> Corresponding text in English: “A mouth never talks alone. Maybe in that white fellow’s homeland. But here, no. ... In our country, one man is all the others.” (113)

collective, is experience and place mashed: “Há perguntas que não podem ser dirigidas à pessoas, mas à vida” (159).<sup>219</sup>

Moreover, Couto hints to what is hidden from speech and written text: “há muita coisa escondida nesses silêncios africanos” (76).<sup>220</sup> For the writer, modernity does not exhaust the meanings of Africa.<sup>221</sup> It is only its front side, whereas: “em casa africana tudo acontece nesse terreiro,” in the “pátio das traseiras” (136).<sup>222</sup> Wisdom is out of sight, beyond language, and is not pronounced: Sulpício asserts: “Do que mais me lembro jamais falo” (213).<sup>223</sup> For language than to become a source of understanding, it must encompass other forms than paper and tape. It must be freed to gain expression in movement and in context. One must then read and listen elsewhere. Ana Deusqueira reads the eyes: “O que mais vejo é pelos olhos, tudo está escrito no olhar” (85).<sup>224</sup> the translator’s mother reads through the *voo do flamingo* (*flight of the flamingo*): “E o pássaro ia desfolhando, asa em asa, as transparentes páginas do céu” (119).<sup>225</sup>

### The displaced language

In *Flamingo*, the concept of language is constructed upon the rejection of a narrow western rationality, which defines hegemonic modernity. Mia Couto finds meaning beyond the single norm, in the actual encounter between the West with the mythical, imaginary, and everyday Mozambican worlds. This *new way of thinking and representing reality*, borrowing from Ornelas above, brings about what Chabal (1996) coined the *African quality* already found in Couto’s first novel’s language and linguistic innovations but also and “primarily in terms of the novel’s cultural roots and cultural voyage which it undertakes” (83). It is, following Chabal the quality of conveying the African collective unconscious that blends the everyday experience with its particular African mythology and fantasy (ibid., 85). The Portuguese language that Mia Couto conceives, understood as a representation of *this* plural reality, is “African.” Yet this “quality” is expressly dissociated from an essentialist view of authentic (national or continental) identity. And here it is important to attend to Patrick Chabal’s explanation:

The word African is used advisedly and in a very specific sense. It does not refer to the so-called “traditional” African culture which we construe simplistically as the remnants of a mythical “timeless” pre-colonial, by which we mean pre-modern, past. But it is African in

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<sup>219</sup> Corresponding text in English: “It’s that there are questions which can’t be directed to people, but to life.” (125)

<sup>220</sup> Corresponding text in English: “there is a lot hidden away in those African silences.” (55)

<sup>221</sup> Here Couto is criticising, in particular, Marxism that dictated the realm of formal political relations after the independence. However it was dissociated from knowledges and practices in Mozambique. See: “Desculpe a franqueza não é fraqueza: o marxismo seja louvado, mas há muita coisa escondida nesses silêncios africanos” (76) (“‘Begging your pardon, but sincerity isn’t sinful: praise be to Marxism, but there is a lot hidden away in those African silences”) (55).

<sup>222</sup> Corresponding text in English: “In an African house, that’s where everything happens ... in the back yard.” (104)

<sup>223</sup> Corresponding text in English: “What I remember I never speak about.” (168)

<sup>224</sup> Corresponding text in English: “it’s through people’s eyes that I see most things ... everything’s written in a person’s look.” (63)

<sup>225</sup> Corresponding text in English: “And with each flap of his wings, the bird was slowly turning the sky’s transparent pages.” (92)

the sense of the new and modern culture which has evolved in the continent through the colonial period into the new world of independence. (Chabal 1996, 83)

Along *Flamingo*'s story the West is itself reconceived in its plurality. It is the recovery of his own mythology – in the tale of his childhood – that enables Massimo Risi to become whole and reach his humanity. He reveals his other worlds. The western language is able to convey this cultural plurality. Yet language is not equal with culture; it does not *speak* for the complexity of cultural formations across the globe.

Language, then, embodies an embeddedness in the local. It feeds from the worlds experienced in the locality. As Mía Couto has displaced other dichotomies, the natural/national versus foreign is also a distinction that becomes blurred. What is local here is not necessarily national. The stranger is the outsider, and yet there is also the stranger within each character. This is the very condition of the translator's father, in colonial times, fighting on the side of the Portuguese against his own people: "o inimigo lhe estava dentro. Isso que ele atacava era não um país de fora, mas uma província de si" (140).<sup>226</sup> And this is the postcolonial condition of otherness: "Antigamente queríamos ser civilizados, agora queremos ser modernos" says *velho* Sulpício, and his son *translates*: "Continuávamos, ao fim e ao cabo, prisioneiros da vontade de não sermos nós" (193).<sup>227</sup> Or rather foreignness is found in the strangers that we become, uprooted from our place and story: "os antepassados nos olham agora como filhos estranhos" (210).<sup>228</sup> Or even, foreigners are those strangers to our place, to our ways: "Chega um desses estrangeiros, nacional ou de fora" (156).<sup>229</sup> What qualifies the outsider is therefore a detachment from the local cosmology, rather than nationality in the narrow sense. The stranger is thus far away, where he cannot apprehend the complexity of the place: "Só não vê quem está longe" (85).<sup>230</sup> He is lost and solitary and, in this condition, fragile: "Ali, no desamparo da lonjura, ele era uma pessoa muito atropelável" (107).<sup>231</sup> The stranger remains in the deceitful site of appearances and surface. On the other hand, the outsider can become familiar, an insider. *Flamingo* ends with the encounter between Risi and the translator: "Pela primeira vez senti o italiano como um irmão nascido na mesma terra. Ele me olhou parecendo me ler por dentro, adivinhando meus receios" (224).<sup>232</sup> Yet, distance is also the property of other worlds. As each character transits between these universes, being far away and close by are possibilities that cohabit. The *feiticeiro* explains to Risi: "Os seus chefes estão lá fora, não é? Pois, os meus estão ainda mais fora" (156-157).<sup>233</sup> There are thus various dimensions to inside and outside.

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<sup>226</sup> Corresponding text in English: "the enemy was inside him. The target he was firing at was not a foreign country, but a province of himself." (109)

<sup>227</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Once upon a time we wanted to be civilised. Now we want to be modern," "When all was said and done, we continued to be prisoners of the desire not to be ourselves" (150).

<sup>228</sup> Corresponding text in English: "It's that our ancestors now look at us, their children, like strangers." (164)

<sup>229</sup> Corresponding text in English: "One of those foreigners turns up, either a local one or one from outside." (122)

<sup>230</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Only those far away can't see." (63)

<sup>231</sup> Corresponding text in English: "There, unhelped by distance, he was a very vulnerable soul." (81)

<sup>232</sup> Corresponding text in English: "For the first time I felt as if the Italian was a brother, born of the same land. He looked at me and seemed to read my inner thoughts, guessing my fears." (179)

<sup>233</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Your bosses are outside, aren't they? Well, mine are even further outside." (123)

This reflection on the boundaries of the community and of the self is critical for the construction of a concept of language vis-à-vis nationality.<sup>234</sup> Through appropriation, the language that is foreign becomes one's own – of the nation, and of the self. The foreign language can thus belong as much to the local, as to the outside – as in “o grito em ingles de fora” (115) (“a shout in a foreigner's [an outsider's] English”) (88). Hereby the divide between national languages is imploded. Language itself does not define the exterior space.

### The postcolonial language

The African languages spoken in Tizangara have primacy in reaching the interior space of Mozambican rural peoples. In *Flamingo* villagers express themselves naturally and instinctively in such languages: “Estava tão cheio com sono que, no princípio, falou em chimuanzi” (77).<sup>235</sup> They convey a fuller expression of their plural worlds, hidden beneath the surface of Portuguese: “O feiteiro deixara de falar português. Passou a usar a língua local, se exprimindo com os olhos cerrados” (150).<sup>236</sup> Here the Portuguese language remains foreign to the local experience. Understanding in the Mozambican village requires this local dimension, which is not accessible to the *foreign* language, be it Italian, English or Portuguese.

Yet, at the same time, these local languages lack authority in the power chain to the West in Mia Couto's story. Authorities in the village hide behind the lack of understanding of local languages. They draw from the low value attached to African *ordinary peoples* to disqualify their languages. “É que não entendo bem-bem esse dialecto desta gente” (87), says the *Ministro* about the uncomfortable revelations of the prostitute.<sup>237</sup> In the downward trajectory of this disqualification, Portuguese is the language of the Mozambican urban South, while rural Mozambicans speak “no-languages” or “dialects.” Within these dynamics, fluency in local languages is a recommended instrument of command. The *administrador* writes to his superior, the *chefe provincial* (Provincial Governor): “Bem eu tinha recebido a recomendação de Sua Excelência: aprender a língua local facilita o entendimento com as populações” (77-78).<sup>238</sup> However the low status of such languages and peoples prevail in the practice of dominance, as the *administrador* does not learn them. Portuguese is still identified as the imposed language of hegemony. In the lower end of this chain, power is exercised through the refusal to speak Portuguese. The translator's father is exemplary of this defiant attitude:

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<sup>234</sup> Rothwell coins Mia Couto as a “postmodern nationalist” who evolves into a postcolonial writing with *Flamingo*, by combining the project of blurring dichotomies with the restatement of the boundaries of the nation. The writer is hereby building the national imagination of an autonomous Mozambique. Phillip Rothwell, *A Postmodern Nationalist: Truth, Orality, and Gender in the Work of Mia Couto* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004), 210.

<sup>235</sup> Corresponding text in English: “He was so sleepy that, at first, he spoke in Chimuanzi.” (57)

<sup>236</sup> Corresponding text in English: “The witchdoctor had stopped talking in Portuguese. He went over to speaking the local tongue, expressing himself with his eyes closed.” (118)

<sup>237</sup> Corresponding text in English: “It's just that I can't understand this folk's dialect very well.” (65)

<sup>238</sup> Corresponding text in English: “I had indeed received Your Excellency's recommendation: learning the local language facilitates understanding with the people.” (57)

Da primeira vez que tentara falar-lhe, o administrador sofrera o peso do ridículo. Ele ali, todo modos e maneiras, licenças para cima, desculpas para baixo. E o outro nada, trancado na testa, lambendo a própria língua. Isto é: não falando português, mas a língua local. O velho Sulpício não tinha respeito por nenhuma presença (108).<sup>239</sup>

The translator explains: “Eu sabia: meu velho existia fora dos agrados governamentais. Mas o povo encontrava-lhe respeito, razão dos antepassados que ele dispunha na eternidade” (108).<sup>240</sup> The choice for local languages in the face of power reveals that authority at the local level derives from other sources, namely the bonds with land, place and its history.

### The private language

However, there is also an interior space beyond local language. There is the language of the self that is the language of the worlds each one crosses. *Flamingo's feiticheiro* tells Risi: “Não sei, não lhe posso explicar. Teria que falar na minha língua. É coisa que este moço não pode traduzir” (157-158).<sup>241</sup> This stands for the impossibility of translation of the totality of the self. But it is also the negation of allowance to translate both intimate and sacred worlds. This language feeds from the local but beyond it, it is one's own.

In Mía Couto's writing there is always another dimension to the outside and the inside. This makes the boundaries relative and difficult to grasp. There is always another language of another world that the self touches and crosses. From here emerges the concept of language as the material that fashions stories. “Só tenho fala para o que invento” says the *feiticheiro* Zeca Andorinho (158).<sup>242</sup> Language, thus, does not convey and is itself not a universal truth. When the Italian reveals the tale of his own conception and childhood steeped in religiosity, it is the turn of the translator not to believe. Ultimately all stories are inventions and versions. Equally stricken about the story of his own conception, the translator doubts his father: “Sulpício imaginava aquela estória, naquele preciso momento. Me fabricava descendente. Se eternizava, fosse em ilusão. Porém eu aceitava. Afinal tudo é crença” (167).<sup>243</sup> Hereby Mía Couto implodes the universality of the West as it is a story amongst stories: “Nós esperamos que vocês, brancos, nos contem vossas histórias” (110).<sup>244</sup> Modernity represents one of the several worlds that compose experience. “Nós, como condição humana, vivemos estas histórias dentro da História” says Mía Couto about the histories crossed in his

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<sup>239</sup> Corresponding text in English: “The first time he had tried to speak to him, the administrator had felt the weight of ridicule. There he was, all style and manners, if you please here, excuse me there. And the other fellow, not a word, his brow bolted, licking his own tongue. That is: not speaking Portuguese, but the local language. Old Sulpício didn't respect any presence.” (82)

<sup>240</sup> Corresponding text in English: “I knew it: my father dwelt far from the favour of those in government. But the people held him in respect, because of the collection of ancestors he could call upon from eternity.” (82)

<sup>241</sup> Corresponding text in English: “I don't know, I can't explain it to you. I'd have to speak in my own language. And that's something not even this young lad can translate.” (124)

<sup>242</sup> Corresponding text in English: “The only speech I've got is for what I invent.” (124)

<sup>243</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Sulpício was imagining that story at that precise moment. He was manufacturing a descendant out of me. He was eternalising himself, albeit as an illusion. But I accepted it. After all, everything is belief.” (132)

<sup>244</sup> Corresponding text in English: “We are waiting for you whites to tell us your stories.” (84)

other novel *O outro pé da sereia* of 2006 (The other foot of the mermaid) (Nunes 2006, 14).<sup>245</sup> These *histórias* fashion language and are manifested by it.

### *Linguagens*

Above all, there is no singular language. As the translator listened to the *velha-moça* Temporina's explanation of the three worlds with their respective names that lived in that village - *Tizangara-terra*, *Tizangara-céu* and *Tizangara-água* (*Tizangara-land*, *Tizangara-sky*, *Tizangara-water*) - he was himself lost: "Sorri, agora quem carecia de tradução era eu" (69-70).<sup>246</sup> The translator does not reach to the spiritual and natural dimensions of the place, which fits into his portrayal as uprooted. Yet *Flamingo* is a story of the restoration of the dimensions that compose the self. Its most subtle but also most powerful image is the translator's father learning the *língua dos pássaros* (164) ("bird language") (128) inherited from his wife's heartwarming fantasy. It is a language that connects Tizangara's *terra*, *céu* and *água*.

*Flamingo* ends with the departure of the translator's father, who assigns him the task of telling Tizangara's story: "Você fique, meu filho. ... Para contar aos outros o que aconteceu com o nosso mundo. Não quero que seja esse, de fora, a falar dessa nossa estória" (223).<sup>247</sup> Hereby Mia Couto rescues agency in making the history of this African country. Ornelas (1996) argues that the writer recurses to the imaginary of the Mozambican people to reconstruct a reality in their own terms:

O que significa é que a iniciativa na produção estética vai assentar em maior grau na representação da harmonia cósmica, ou seja, na reivindicação e/ou objectivação de uma realidade diferenciada mais próxima da *essencia* do moçambicano, uma realidade que tenha sido rasurada pelo colonialismo e pelas ideologias de importação. (Ornelas 1996, 50, my emphasis)<sup>248</sup>

Detaching what it is to be Mozambican from a primordial *essence* and associating it instead with its *African quality* enables a more appropriate understanding of the Coutian text. The imaginary that feeds Mia Couto's conception of language is shaped by modernity, myth and imagination through the (dis)encounters between Mozambique and the West. He rejects the western all-encompassing rationality, found in language as *língua*, as the singular representation of a presumed universal reality. Instead, he presents language in its plurality and instability, as it is a margin and *fronteira* rooted in oneself and in the locality. It is *linguaging* or *linguagens*.

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<sup>245</sup> Transl.: "As human condition, we live these histories inside History."

<sup>246</sup> Corresponding text in English: "I smiled. Now it was I who needed a translator." (51)

<sup>247</sup> Corresponding text in English: "You stay, son. .... So that you can tell others what happened to our world. I don't want the outsider here recounting this story of ours." (177)

<sup>248</sup> Transl.: "What it means is that the initiative in the aesthetic production will be based to a greater extent in the representation of cosmic harmony, that is, in the claim and/or the objectivation of a different reality closer to the *essence* of the Mozambican, a reality that has been erased by colonialism and the imported ideologies." (my emphasis)

## Conceptions *against* location

The Portuguese language that comes out of Mia Couto's linguistic transformations, disrupted narrative and the conceptions of language, manifests the post-colonial condition, as after colonial times, and postcolonial possibility to surpass colonialism. It is a language with a promise of liberation from colonial ghosts. Margarida Fonseca (2007) associated Mia Couto's work with border theory because of its possibility of overcoming the rigid dichotomies of western thought (45). Phillip Rothwell (2004) asserted the postmodern character of this operation which, above all, decanonizes the West. Hereby Couto transgresses the western centre through the demise of the meta-narrative that asserted its originality, singularity and universality. In line with Fonseca (2007), Mia Couto forwards a postcolonial alternative through the consistent attack on the idea of separated "pure cultures," recognizing instead "that frontiers are spaces that allow transcultural contact" (44-45). The Portuguese language that emerges is an expression of this (dis)encounter with Mozambican worlds.

However, any recourse to border concepts requires critical awareness. António Sousa Ribeiro (2005) asserted the epistemological productivity of the concept of the *fronteira* given its extremely rich metaphorical dimension. He cautioned however about the possibility of inscribing contradictory meanings to a "*signo puramente arbitrário*" (*purely arbitrary sign*) (469). Border concepts are then apt for symbolic appropriations that serve different political purposes. It is either the border as frontier (of white expansion) that restates the lines of colonial separation and affirms the canon, the border as limitless horizon for subversion and experimentation, or the border as borderzone or interstitial space of communication (466-467; 480-481).<sup>249</sup> Postcolonial studies tended to explore border metaphors in their emancipatory and utopian connotation.

Fonseca (2007) posited that Mia Couto's literature and commentary are more ambiguous - than most theory - in terms of questioning the actual possibility of transforming the imagination of the centre.

[W]hether at the level of public interventions, or at that of literary production itself, the Mozambican writer does not fall into naiveté vis-à-vis the concept of the border and of the potentialities implicit in its transgression revealing, with great critical acuity, a perception of the existing asymmetries, in terms of the cultural sovereignty, between the centre (western) and the periphery (most often covered under the generic designation of Third World). (Fonseca 2007, 55)

Rothwell (2004) has argued further that *Flamingo* operates the implosion of the separations imposed by western epistemology. Additionally, the novel presents a fierce critique to the very agents of the *Empire* –or, I would posit, of coloniality- both national and international elites that have contributed to Mozambique's loss of sovereignty, as it becomes integrated in global capitalism (20). This critical gaze makes the author's text,

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<sup>249</sup> On the different uses and connotations of the notion of the border, and particularly on the field of the Portuguese postcolonial, see: Vitor J. Mendes, Paulo de Medeiros and José N. Ornelas, "Os Usos das Fronteiras," *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies* Fall, (1998), xiii-xv. Border metaphors will be again explored within the context of Portuguese postcolonialism in the next chapter.

and this one in particular, more challenging than it might seem at first glance. It forwards both an epistemological and a political critique. The same awareness regarding power asymmetries is indeed reflected in the Coutian conception of the Portuguese language that is appropriated and transformed but that simultaneously gives continuity to social and cultural hierarchies in an entangled global world, in Mozambique and beyond.

However, the subaltern quality and challenging potential of Mia Couto's texts are not indisputable. Again here I refer to Sousa Ribeiro's (2005) critical contentions on the metaphorical uses of the border and their ideological implications. Ribeiro argues in favour of making use of this conceptual terrain for its emancipatory potential however from a clearly stated perspective and historical contextualization. It is paramount to contextualize the use of the border metaphors present in Mia Couto's text against the history of the Portuguese empire and colonial contact and the perspective of writer and reader.

Mia Couto affirms his own identity to be plural, wandering and in process. He is himself a crossing of cultures inspired in his childhood, which took place “nessa dualidade de casa e rua: a casa que me dava um suporte cultural europeu ...; e a rua que me trazia a outra parte, a parte africana do mundo” (Couto 1998, 1007).<sup>250</sup> Nevertheless, Couto points out that the crucial crossing reflected in his work is his position as African writer:

O meu *lugar de fronteira* entre culturas não deriva do facto de ser filho de europeus. Todos os meus compatriotas negros moçambicanos, escritores como eu, estão nesse mesmo lugar de confluência. Felizmente para eles. Esta ambivalência dos intelectuais, políticos e artistas africanos deve ser vista como algo positivo – uma *mestiçagem eficaz*, um instrumento para encontrar soluções próprias. ... Esta condição indefinida – este estar dentro e fora – é um lugar privilegiado num mundo que vai perdendo fronteiras. O ser-se ao mesmo tempo indígena e alienígena lhes dá uma posição de *visitante privilegiado*, de costureiro entre tecidos culturais diferentes. (Couto quoted in Fonseca, 54-55, my emphasis)<sup>251</sup>

According to Rothwell (1998) this position is intended to depict the end of clear-cut political ideologies – and borders - in Mozambique from the 1990s onwards, when the socialist government embraced free-market economy. Moreover, this position asserts that ideology has been hiding in such divisions: “Couto's world is one in which such clarity has been revealed as a source of obfuscation” (59). In this sense, *mestiçagem* fits the perspective of globalisation/hybridisation in the terms defined by Nederveen Pieterse:

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<sup>250</sup> Transl.: “in this duality of house and street: the house that gave me a European cultural support ... and the street that brought me the other part, the African part of the world.”

<sup>251</sup> Transl.: “My border [*fronteira*] place between cultures does not derive from the fact that I am the son of Europeans. All my Mozambicans black compatriots, writers like me, are in the same place of confluence. Fortunately for them. This ambivalence of African intellectuals, politicians and artists should be seen as something positive - an *effective mestiçagem*, a tool to find their own solutions. .... This indefinite condition - this being inside and out - is a privileged place in a world that is losing borders [*fronteiras*]. Being at the same time indigenous and alien gives them a position of *privileged visitor*, of couturier between different cultural tissues.” (my emphasis)

Globalization/hybridization makes, first, an empirical case: that processes of globalization, past and present, can be adequately described as processes of hybridisation. Secondly, it is a critical argument: against viewing globalization in terms of homogenisation, or of modernization/Westernization as empirically narrow and historically flat. (Pieterse 1995, 63)

This is a project of overthrowing the distinctions and exclusions erected by the territorial empire and its narratives and the national projects that followed it. It echoes what Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2005) defined as *globalização contra-hegemônica* (*counter-hegemonic globalisation*), or one such projects “que lutam pela transformação de trocas desiguais em trocas de autoridade partilhada” (79).<sup>252</sup> Yet, as Pieterse warns, given that hybridisation has been taking place *all along*, it is a counter-discourse only if it is contextualized. And it is a perspective that “only remains meaningful as a critique of essentialism” (Pieterse 1995, 64).

Despite being born out of such critical *mestiçagem*, the Coutian aesthetic allows co-optation into the category of African cultural merchandise. Hereby the text is simultaneously deciphering the colonial mythology and feeding a postcolonial myth. This very apparent disagreement characterises the refashioned and resilient coloniality. This is the current hegemonic narrative that has incorporated hybridity and diluted difference into a homogeneous global identity.

As already highlighted in the previous section, within the realm of the Portuguese language, *mestiçagem* resounds the trademark of Portuguese exceptionalist colonialism, a *benevolent force* out of which *racially harmonious societies* emerged. Miguel Vale de Almeida (2004a) analyses the various historical contexts and social uses of the concepts that have been assigned to the Portuguese postcolonial field, positing that any argument on miscegenation, hybridity or creolisation call for an approach devoid of naivety. These terms, he posits, constitute what became a category of commonality in the processes of shaping national identities in the Portuguese postcolonial field. They are however mostly used to denote the process of social whitening and cultural Europeanisation. Sheila Khan’s (2006) recent ethnographical research on Mozambicans in Portugal led her to conclude that the hegemonic culture does not translate the discourse of welcoming hybridism into a practice of interaction with other practices and cultures. Effectively, the promise of literature is quite distant from the experiences of the actual border between *Africa* and Portugal. Sousa Ribeiro (2005) critically makes recourse to Sousa Santos’ border metaphor, reminding the reader of the need to problematize the interpretations of the concept of *mestiçagem* that “tendem a obliterar o elemento de tensão e de conflito, que o mesmo é dizer, a esquecer a permanência das fronteiras” (470).<sup>253</sup>

In addition, although the distance of any writer to the border as margin is not in itself sufficient to characterize his/her literary project, it must necessarily be taken into consideration in any attempt at understanding the writer’s negotiated position in the field. Russell Hamilton (1999) noted that Angola, Cape-Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé e Príncipe are distinct from other African former colonies

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<sup>252</sup> Transl.: “that struggle to transform unequal exchanges into exchanges of shared authority.”

<sup>253</sup> Transl.: “tend to obliterate the element of tension and conflict, that is to say, to forget the permanence of borders [*fronteiras*].”

not only as individual nations but also as they carry a common singularity. Whites and *mestiços* from the urban middle classes belong to their cultural elites, particularly in the literary field. These luso-descendants have both social and cultural capital in Portugal (and Brazil), which is their privileged audience and market. Their literature is strongly associated with Portuguese/European culture, which is an important factor in their literary success and incursion into the literary canon. This readership and the association with authoritative publishing houses in Portugal locate them in the mainstream of contemporary *Lusophone literature* (Rothwell 1998) and therefore inside the hegemonic “postcolonial culture,” and the postcolonial cultural industry.

The dynamics of book production, circulation and availability are critical here. They are part of what I named in the Introduction of this dissertation “the economy of the postcolonial.” Portugal is the door to African literature written in Portuguese. Mia Couto explains that to get hold of African books, “passamos sempre por Lisboa” (quoted in Carvalho 2000).<sup>254</sup> The Portuguese language therefore enables access to a wider (western) audience. However, this very process subjects this literature to the power of the old colonial centre. Couto, aware of this subjection, attempts to subvert the dynamics:

Posso dizer sem vaidade que sou reconhecido na minha própria comunidade, em Moçambique. A Editorial Caminho criou ... uma editora moçambicana ... [N]os casos em que se publicam autores moçambicanos ... a edição se faz em Moçambique ou em Portugal, conforme é mais adequado. Essa dinâmica de editoras e de circulação de livros é um espaço da Lusofonia que me parece muito eficaz. (Couto 2006, 15)<sup>255</sup>

Mia Couto appropriates *Lusofonia* as an opportunity that the Portuguese language creates for Mozambican literature, and as a possibility of encounters on the basis of equality: “Não acredito nessa Lusofonia de cariz político, mas naquela que decorre do facto de cruzarmos as nossa histórias e de termos, de vez em quando, de dizer mal de nós próprios na mesma língua” (Couto 2006, 15).<sup>256</sup>

It remains though that the powerful player in this literary market is Portugal, and it might be soon overtaken by Brazil.<sup>257</sup> Thus *Lusofonia* reproduces the old colonial dynamics wherein African engagement entails submitting to a relation of subordination to a benevolent European/western centre. This is illustrated by Mia Couto’s participation in international events under the Portuguese flag. His prestige makes him a

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<sup>254</sup> Transl.: “we always go through Lisbon.”

<sup>255</sup> Transl.: “I can say without vanity that I am recognized in my own community, in Mozambique. [The Portuguese publisher] Editorial Caminho created ... a Mozambican publisher ... [In] cases that Mozambican authors are published ... the publication takes place in Mozambique or in Portugal, as is most appropriate. This dynamic of publishing houses and circulation of books is a space of Lusophony that seems to me very effective.”

<sup>256</sup> Transl.: “I do not believe in this political Lusophony, but in that one that results from the fact that we cross our histories, and that, from time to time, we have to say bad things about ourselves in the same language.”

<sup>257</sup> The law 10.639/2003, which made compulsory the inclusion of African and Afro-Brazilian history and cultures in the Brazilian school curriculum, has stimulated the the publication of titles in Portuguese authored by African writers. Walter Sebastião, “Editoras Especializadas em Cultura Africana e Afrobrasileira Ampliam Mercado com Ficção e Estudos Acadêmicos,” *Divirta-Se*, May 19, 2014. [http://divirta-se.uai.com.br/app/noticia/arte-e-livros/2014/05/19/noticia\\_arte\\_e\\_livros,154815/editoras-especializadas-em-cultura-africana-e-afrobrasileira-ampliam-me.shtml](http://divirta-se.uai.com.br/app/noticia/arte-e-livros/2014/05/19/noticia_arte_e_livros,154815/editoras-especializadas-em-cultura-africana-e-afrobrasileira-ampliam-me.shtml).

desired participant in such events. Through the appropriation of his literature into a newly fashioned Portuguese transnational identity, he serves the purpose of confirming the vitality of the centre. However, he himself assumes his otherness and the Portuguese language as strategies to *visit* the centre in order to transform it. Paradoxically, it is this very voracious centre that enables Couto to gain international renown.

These dynamics were well illustrated in the debate during the Paris International Book Fair of 2000. Portugal was the country-theme of the event, and Mia Couto participated as invitee. The writer refuted the accusation of neo-colonialism advanced by the literary scholar, novelist and Pessoa translator António Tabucchi, who was also invited to participate (and declined the invitation). For Couto, his very presence at the fair “cria riscos para ambas as partes,” for if Portugal can be accused of paternalism, he could be accused of having accepted a paternalistic relationship (quoted in Carvalho 2000).<sup>258</sup> But he rejects the accusation: “Se a colonização é darem-me voz no Salão do Livro, eu não me sinto colonizado” (quoted in Anonymous 2000).<sup>259</sup> This is an instance of appropriation of a relationship that carries colonial spectres.

Mia Couto is clearly aware of his position and voices it. However, this awareness does not impinge on a particular reception of his work. Butôt (2009) pointed out that “there is a certain limit to [the influence the author has over his message] in the sense that once into the world his work can be received in signifying-systems he may never have imagined” (102). Yet the author is part of the “interplay of factors,” or the dynamics between author-text-reader that determines the reception of literature (18). Far from getting into an impossible debate about the intentionality of the writer to feed a particular cultural narrative, in this case *Lusofonia*, it is more productive, attainable and relevant to focus on the metaphorical possibilities the text offers in the dialogue with the cultural narratives inscribed in the field.<sup>260</sup> Butôt argues that the language debate, which started in the literary field “seems to be held mostly outside of it, in a socio-cultural and political reality which heavily influences the reception of the literature it concerns” (18).

As previously indicated, *Minha patria é minha língua* (*My homeland is my language*) (Pessoa 1961, part 259) epitomizes the debate about the Portuguese language in Portugal. This maxim, authored by Fernando Pessoa’s heteronym Bernardo Soares in the context of the Portuguese Modernist project, became synonymous in contemporary public discourse with the centrality of Portuguese identity in the language. Mia Couto wittingly subverts the nationalistic meaning the phrase gained in Portugal, asserting that “a minha patria é a *minha* língua portuguesa” (my homeland is *my* Portuguese language). This maxim is paradigmatic of his literary production. The Portuguese language departs here from Lusitanian Portuguese. Couto offers yet another Portuguese language, found in one’s literary expression fed by other places and a history of crossings.

However, this emancipatory proposition is often overlooked, with Mia Couto himself categorized as Portugal’s *filho híbrido* (*hybrid son*) and trapped in the construct of

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<sup>258</sup> Transl.: “creates risks for both sides.”

<sup>259</sup> Transl.: “If colonisation is that I am given voice in the Book Fair, I do not feel colonised.”

<sup>260</sup> I am indebted here to a personal exchange with Mia Couto. This critical dialogue helped me formulate my own position in a disputed field of interpreting the writer’s positionality.

otherness, according to which *the other* has a plural identity while the metropolitan self is singular and original. In interview (Couto 2006, 13-14), Couto is asked if “[sua postura literária e filosófica] não decorre da circunstância do próprio Mia Couto ser feito de duas ‘águas,’ da cultura europeia e africana?”<sup>261</sup> He explains: “Todos somos feitos de várias intercessões, de várias vidas e culturas.”<sup>262</sup> Inquired on “o que é ser africano, na sua literatura,” Couto avoids fixation: “Sabendo que nunca vou sabê-lo, porque é qualquer coisa que está se movendo”.<sup>263</sup> Concurrently, he distances himself from the binary equation of Tradition versus Modernity: “Por exemplo, aquilo que se chama tradição africana, que é outra mistificação, está sempre a ser refeita pela modernidade.”<sup>264</sup> The writer persistently challenges the construction of Africa as particular and local and Europe as universal. Couto presents Portugal beyond its modernity, and plural: “Lisboa tem a mesma magia que qualquer lugar em África.”<sup>265</sup> It follows that the language his works *argue for* is plural; Lusitanian and Mozambican Portuguese being manifestations of this plurality.

Hereby Mia Couto counters the western frame that attempts to capture *mestiçagem* as his and peripheral. This debate offers an opening into the centre, which he makes use of in an attempt to create fractures within it. It is a dialogue permeated by colonial ghosts. This is an actual space of contact that, through the *dust of the empire*, encounters Mia Couto’s *linguagens*.

### **Concluding remarks: emerging & submerging in the *contact zone***

Rothwell (1998) has called attention to the need to reflect upon Mia Couto’s intended audience for an understanding of his literary project. Hereby he denotes that the writer directs his texts to the West. This point is only partly accurate, as Couto has a critical engagement in Mozambican culture and society. Referring to the other part of his audience that is western, Rothwell’s point has important implications, which refer back to that *African quality* that Chabal found in Mia Couto’s texts. Through the “portrayal” of one seemingly magical archetypical Africa deepened in orality, the writer invites the western reader to entertain her/himself with an aesthetical experience, which will invite her/him into an epistemological exercise. As Rothwell (1998) posited: “Western perceptions of reality [will be] called into question not by African cultures, but by the *interaction* of western and African cultures in a way that distorts the integrity and delineation of both” (61).

A dynamics of appropriation, transformation and resilient continuity are present in Mia Couto’s (dis)encounters with Portuguese contemporary culture. The fact that this contact occurs around and about language enables such games, as language offers a

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<sup>261</sup> Transl.: “[his literary and philosophical position] does not stem from the circumstance of Mia Couto himself being made of two ‘waters,’ the European and the African culture?”

<sup>262</sup> Transl.: “We are all made of several intersections, of several lives and cultures.”

<sup>263</sup> Transl.: “what means being African in his literature,” “Knowing that I’ll never know it because it is something that is moving.”

<sup>264</sup> Transl.: “For example that which is called African tradition, that is another mystification, is always being remade by modernity.”

<sup>265</sup> Transl.: “Lisbon has the same magic as anywhere in Africa.”

handy place for ideology to hide under an apparent neutrality. *Flamingo* unveils this neutral construction, revealing the West as one particular locality amongst those that compose a language. The radicalism of Couto's project is found in deciphering the myth erected by the imposition of western epistemology. He defies the very categorization of language. Hereby Mia Couto is addressing a postcolonial centre beyond Portugal. He speaks to *the West* as a metaphor of epistemological separation.

This separation is problematized throughout *Flamingo*. The novel ends in the abyss - *fronteira* between worlds - where a story of displacement concludes with two encounters. Sulpício departs from a “nação [que] fora todo engolida nesse vácuo” (219).<sup>266</sup> He assigns the translator the task of telling Tizangara's story. Hereby *Flamingo* offers itself as a story of re-finding roots, of re-encountering the dimensions that compose the self. The uprooted son for whom “o chão é papel, tudo se escreve nele” (190) was now able to tell a story without paper or a ground under his feet.<sup>267</sup> He meets his own plurality and his father. He became a Mozambican with agency in writing history. It follows the encounter between the translator and Risi, the *western outsider*, who reads the former through his gaze: “Ele me olhou parecendo me ler por dentro” (224).<sup>268</sup> This is the destination of a trajectory from dissociation to conciliation. Hereby *the West* meets Mozambique, sharing the intimate language of those who traversed a journey together: the *língua dos pássaros*.

For Mia Couto, *O Último Voo do Flamingo* “é uma escrita que aspira ganhar sotaques do chão, fazer-se seiva vegetal, e de quando em quando, sonhar o voo da asa rubra” (Couto 2001).<sup>269</sup> The expansive character of this text and the polysemous possibilities coming out of the (dis)encounters it highlights turn it into a place to reflect on past and hope for a future, a horizon. Seeking what is beyond what is recognised as limit, it is a frontier. Devoid of imperial or neocolonial voracity, it is a precarious and unstable place of contact traversed by tension and conflict. It is an intermediary zone within set historical borders, though not subsumed by them. It is a place not completely consumed by ideology and not fully intelligible or digestible. This fluid character gives it the possibility of novelty and therefore the transcendence of the boundaries of what is known as possible and definite.

As previously argued, the use of such border metaphors requires historical awareness, as they served colonial imperialism in the institution of its particular western locality as universal and canonic, and the Portuguese empire in inscribing itself as the centre of an imaginary transnational community. However, it is critical to reclaim this metaphorical space and resemanticize its vocabulary. With this in mind it seems proper to characterize Mia Couto's practice as one of the border in its emancipatory promise. The symbolic appropriation that the writer carries out places his text within a strategy of *counter-hegemonic globalization*. Yet this very characterization recovers the force with which such strategy dialogues, namely hegemonic globalization or the resilient and ever re-fashioned coloniality.

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<sup>266</sup> Transl.: “nation [that] had been completely swalled up in that emptiness.” (173)

<sup>267</sup> Transl.: “the ground is a sheet of paper, everything is written on it.” (147)

<sup>268</sup> Transl.: “He looked at me and seemed to read my inner thoughts.” (179)

<sup>269</sup> Transl.: “is a piece of writing that hopes to embrace the dialects of the land, become the sap of the plants and, from time to time, dreams of flying on the scarlet wing.”

## Chapter 9. José Eduardo Agualusa (dis)locating the Portuguese language: *O Vendedor de Passados* trespasses the border<sup>270</sup>

Passa-se com a alma algo semelhante ao que acontece à água: flui. Hoje está um rio. Amanhã estará mar. A água toma a forma do recipiente. Dentro de uma garrafa parece uma garrafa. Porém não é uma garrafa. (Agualusa 2004b, 198)

The same thing happens to the soul as happens to water – it flows. Today, it’s a river. Tomorrow it will be the sea. Water takes the shape of whatever receives it. Inside a bottle it’s like a bottle. But it isn’t a bottle. (Agualusa 2007a, 180)<sup>271</sup>

### Introduction

José Eduardo Agualusa is, together with Mia Couto, one such African writers who have been problematizing colonial resiliences in the terrain of the Portuguese language and literatures in Portuguese. His writing and positions invite reflection upon the metaphorical *fronteira* (Fonseca 2007, 46). Here I proceed with the analysis on the concept of *fronteira* initiated in the previous chapter, now investigating its meanings in Agualusa’s text. In Portuguese, *fronteira* coalesces the definitions of “border” and “frontier” (Canelo 1998), in the opening quote above *garrafa* (“bottle”) for the border as containment, and *água* (“water”) for the frontier as horizon, indicating openness and permeability. With this complexity and ambiguity in mind the chapter will carry out an analysis of this writer’s perspective to the Portuguese language, aiming to discuss the transgressive quality of Agualusa’s language imagination.

Eduardo Agualusa is, alongside the seasoned Pepetela and the younger Ondjaki, the most recognized Angolan writer of the moment. His works have been warmly received in Portugal and beyond, having been translated into twenty-five languages. The writer was awarded literary prizes in his native Angola, Portugal and the United Kingdom. His debut novel *A Conjura* (The Conspiracy) received the Prémio Sonangol Revelação de Literatura 1989 (Sonangol - National Fuel Society of Angola - Literature Revelation Award). The RTP Grande Prémio de Literatura (Grand Prize for Literature RTP - Portuguese Radio and Television) was awarded to the novel *Nação Crioula* (Creole). In 1999, *Fronteiras Perdidas* (Lost frontiers) won the Grande Prémio de Conto Camilo

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<sup>270</sup> An earlier version of this chapter was published as: Patricia Schor, "Eduardo Agualusa Dislocating the Portuguese Language: O Vendedor de Passados Trespasses the Border," in *Itinerâncias. Percursos e Representações da Pós-Colonialidade - Journeys. Postcolonial Trajectories and Representations*, ed. Elena Brugioni and others (V.N. Famalicão: Edições Húmus, 2012a), 335-356. A later version was published as: Patricia Schor, "Postcolonial Exceptionality and the Portuguese Language: José Eduardo Agualusa's The Book of Chameleons," *Frame, Journal of Literary Studies* 28, no. 2: The Postcolonial Cultural Industry (December, 2015), 51-69. <http://www.tijdschriftframe.nl/28-2-the-postcolonial-cultural-industry/1440/>.

<sup>271</sup> These citations refer to the same passage, the first taken from the original publication in Portuguese, the second from its translated version by Daniel Hahn. Further references to this novel are given after quotations in the text. Herein after it is referred to as *Passados*.

Castelo Branco (Grand Prize for Short Stories) by the Associação Portuguesa de Escritores (Portuguese Writers Association). In 2002, *Estranhões e Bizarrocos* (Bizarre people) won the Grande Prémio Gulbenkian de Literatura para Crianças e Jovens (Gulbenkian Grand Prize for Literature for Children and Youth). In 2007, Agualusa became the first African writer to receive the prestigious Independent Foreign Fiction Prize awarded for *O Vendedor de Passados* (The Book of Chameleons) by the British newspaper The Independent in collaboration with the UK Council of Arts.

Eduardo Agualusa is a coloured/“mixed-race” Angolan male. This gendered and racial *location* is an important factor in the reception of the author’s writing in the equally gendered and racialised literary market.<sup>272</sup> This *location* is both ascribed or given, and assumed or appropriated, in the figure of *the creole cosmopolitan*, which will be analysed in this chapter.

Agualusa left Angola to Portugal in 1977 as a teenager, has graduated in agronomy in Lisbon but soon dedicated himself to journalism and fiction writing. The writer shares residence between Lisbon and Luanda, having lived in Rio de Janeiro as well, where he (co-)owns the publisher Língua Geral. The publisher focuses exclusively on “autores lusófonos” (*Lusophone authors*) of the wide geography of the Portuguese language, having its motto as: “Nossa vocação é a palavra. Nosso território, a língua portuguesa” (Anonymous, “Língua Geral”).<sup>273</sup>

Eduardo Agualusa has a presence in the public sphere of this triangular space and, besides renown, he is also bestowed with a polemic status mainly in Portugal and Angola, due to his critical gaze to authoritarian practice and colonial continuities. David Brookshaw (2002, 21) qualifies the setting of Agualusa’s literature as the places where “Creole residues” of the former Portuguese empire are found. Francisco Melo (2006, 112) draws on the writer’s “vivência transcultural”<sup>274</sup> to position his literature in a culturally ambiguous terrain. Samantha Braga (2004) attributed to Agualusa’s oeuvre the quality of a “escrita mestiça” (*mestiça* writing) for its location in this very arena, but also for its force of critiquing and dislocating the historical narrative.

Iza Quelhas (2003, sections I-II) draws the thematic trajectory of his novels, from *A conjura* of 1989 to *Estação das Chuvas* of 1996 (The Rainy Season), from the “reflexão sobre um passado colonial presentificado na historiografia contemporânea” towards the “embates entre gêneros e discursos, geralmente ocultos por práticas autoritárias.”<sup>275</sup> It is in this critique and collusion of discourses that Eduardo Agualusa’s literature harbours its de-centring promise.

*O Vendedor de Passados* (2004b)<sup>276</sup> is one of his recent novels of particular interest to this query. It offers a postcolonial reflection centring on discursive practice. The title of

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<sup>272</sup> I have indicated in the previous chapter Russell Hamilton’s (1999) comment on the racial aspects of these dynamics.

<sup>273</sup> Transl.: “Our vocation is the word. Our territory is the Portuguese language.”

<sup>274</sup> Transl.: “transcultural life experience.”

<sup>275</sup> Transl.: “reflection on a colonial past, made present in contemporary historiography [towards the] clashes between genres and discourses, usually hidden by authoritarian practices.”

<sup>276</sup> The novel has been translated as *The Book of Chameleons*. José Eduardo Agualusa, *The Book of Chameleons*, trans. Daniel Hahn (London: Arcadia Books, 2007a), 180.

the original novel means literally “the salesman of pasts.” It tells the story of the Angolan albino Félix Ventura, a self-called genealogist who makes up and sells complete family trees, including “full proof of origin.” The story is narrated by a gecko living in the walls of Félix’s house in Luanda. Through observation of Félix’s visitors and clients, listening to his monologues and dreaming, the gecko Eulálio tells an adventurous and dramatic story. As the story unfolds, Félix gets entangled in the lives of two photographers: his client, “the foreigner” José Buchmann, and Ângela Lúcia, with whom he falls in love. This is a lively interruption in Félix’s otherwise detached routine of constructing “new pasts,” memories and identities for the Angolan political and business elite. It enables him to experience life beyond the books, which surround him, and the stories of life he meticulously invents.

As any of Eduardo Agualusa’s novels, this one is about the shifting and moving terrain of truth, and particularly the truth of History. As the protagonist Félix Ventura, genealogist and historian, is uncovered as a story teller, language emerges as a central element in the novel, an instrument in the transformation of story into historical fact. *Passados* invites reflection upon the craft of writing and the role played by language, be it for writing national history or life stories.

## Linguistic trade

The language of the novel is a Portuguese that subtly reveals its *African location*. It is however not the Africa conceived as original but its contemporary urban expression. The narrative is invaded by few Angolan words, such as “muadiê” (89) (guy) (83) which, originally from Kimbundu (meaning elder), became a slang in the streets of Luanda.

Yet, the most marked aesthetical feature of the text that can be attributed to Africa is the reference to its animals. Their overwhelming presence refers the reader to a particular locality. They place the narrative in context, that is Angola in Eduardo Agualusa’s memory. In interview, the writer affirms that he associates his childhood vacation’s with *galinhas* (chickens) (Agualusa 2004a).<sup>277</sup> Yet further they reinforce the literary quality of the text, giving it an aspect of reality, a consistency fed by noise, taste and smell. Here it is Félix Ventura’s childhood that is the primary source of such vividness:

A minha infância está cheia de bons sabores. Cheira bem a minha infância. Lembro-me, sim, dos gafanhotos. Lembro-me das tardes em que choviam gafanhotos. O horizonte escurecia. Os gafanhotos caíam atordoados no capim, primeiro um ali, depois outro acolá, e eram logo, logo, devorados pelos pássaros. A escuridão avançava, cobria tudo, e no instante seguinte transformava-se numa coisa ansiosa e múltipla, num zumbido furioso, num alvoroço, e nós

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<sup>277</sup> As in the previous chapter, I have privileged citations from the original novel, in Portuguese, whenever possible, in order to convey the rhythm of Agualusa’s literary language. Therefore, page numbers of citations in Portuguese refer to the original. The corresponding English citations from this novel are from the translated book.

corríamos para casa, a procurar abrigo, enquanto as árvores perdiam as folhas e o capim desaparecia, em poucos minutos, devorado por aquela espécie de incêndio vivo. (94)<sup>278</sup>

The dramatic character of the narrative, is due to the blend of animals with their surroundings, turning together into something alive:

Felizmente chovia. A chuva avançava através do céu iluminado e nós corríamos aos saltos diante daquela água grossa, muito limpa, bebendo o perfume da terra molhada. Com as primeiras chuvas vinham também os salalés. Volteavam a noite inteira em redor das lâmpadas como uma bruma, num zumbido doce, até perderem as asas, e pela manhã os passeios acordavam cobertos por um leve tapete transparente. (95-96)<sup>279</sup>

Here nature rules upon life, as above in “choviam gafanhotos” (“it rained locusts”). Furthermore, here life is more widespread than that according to western precepts. This language conveys an animistic viewpoint, as evident above in “os passeios acordavam” that literally reads as “the paths woke up” (“the path ... in the morning”). Inanimate things gain movement and will. However this might seem only as a liberty the writer took with language, this corresponds too with oral Portuguese in Angola.

Inquired whether his literature instigates linguistic transformation Eduardo Agualusa responds negatively. He sees in his literature the possibility of capturing changes that already occurred in colloquial language. It acts as “antena” (antenna) rather than “fonte” (source) (Agualusa 2006). The transformative force of his work does not occur in the linguistic sphere, but elsewhere. He proposes a new narrative. The core of *Passados* is in building a narrative that evokes emotions associated with life, that can be taken for truthful. This game of deceit is given expression in the ambiance of the narrative.

## Narrative as ambiance of truth

*Passados* is set in two *narrative places*, namely the mundane world and the world of dreams. The narrative of the dream-chapters differs from the others for its ambiance. It is mostly an issue of brightness and, as above, the abundance of light, or its scarcity, that reveal them as untrue. They are either opaque: “Uma tela, pendurada numa das paredes, iluminava o ar com uma vaga luz cor de cobre” (131),<sup>280</sup> or exceedingly bright:

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<sup>278</sup> Corresponding text in English: “My childhood is full of marvellous flavours. It smeled good too. Yes, I remember the locusts. I remember the afternoons when it rained locusts. The horizons would darken. The locusts would fall, stunned, into the grasses – one here, then another there, and they’d be eaten right off by the birds, and then the darkness would get closer, covering everything, and the next moment transforming itself into a nervous, multiple thing, a furious buzzing, a commotion, and we’d make for the house, running for shelter, as the trees lost their leaves and the grass disappeared, in just a few minutes, consumed by that sort of living fire.” (87-88)

<sup>279</sup> Corresponding text in English: “It rained, fortunately. The rain came through the illuminated sky and we’d go running – bounding – out to that thick, clean water, drinking in the perfume of the wet earth. And the first rains brought the white ants with them. All night long they’d spin about the lights like a mist, with a sweet humming, until they lost their wings, and in the morning we’d find the path carpeted with them, fine and transparent.” (89)

<sup>280</sup> Corresponding text in English: “There was a canvas hanging on one of the walls, which lit the air with a faint copper-coloured glow.” (121)

“O mar, à minha direita, era liso e luminoso, de um azul-turquesa, como só existe nos cartazes turísticos, ou nos sonhos felizes, e dele ascendia um aroma quente a algas e a sal” (85).<sup>281</sup>

The construction of the narrative as a set in a game, plays with the reader making one aware of the constructed nature of the tale. This game of *dis-location* is central in Eduardo Agualusa’s reflections on language.

## Conceptions of language

Bold assertions about the character or value of language lack in *Passados*. They must be made analogously to reflections about other elements of the novel. This interpretative course is supported by Eduardo Agualusa’s more explicit statements about language and literature, voiced through interviews. Still the main material for reflection is literary and the focus falls upon what the narrative tells in literary terms.

## Revealing the authoritative language

Eduardo Agualusa places his novels in what he identifies as the “shared universe of the Portuguese language” or the “mundo da lusofonia” (Agualusa 2008a).<sup>282</sup> In *Passados*, “the foreigner” character of José Buchmann reveals to the gecko his true *Lusophone genealogy*, in a dream.

A minha mãe morreu em Luanda, coitada, enquanto eu estava preso. O meu pai vivia no Rio de Janeiro, há anos, com outra mulher. Nunca tive muito contato com ele. Eu nasci em Lisboa, sim, mas fui para Angola canuco, ainda nem sequer sabia falar. Portugal era o meu país, diziam-me, diziam-me isso na cadeia, os outros presos, os bófiás, mas eu não me sentia português. (191)<sup>283</sup>

After further perambulation he concludes: “A minha vida era uma fuga. Uma tarde achei-me em Lisboa, um ponto no mapa entre dois pontos, um lugar de passagem” (191).<sup>284</sup> The Portuguese language is here a common home emptied of figures of authority. It is a *place of encounters* in the triangular space Angola-Brazil-Portugal. This conception rescues the language from a disputed terrain of nationality. It is a language that belongs to a *collective Portuguese postcolonial identity*. Yet here Portugal lost its status of origin, proprietor and the title of author. Instead, it has been

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<sup>281</sup> Corresponding text in English: “The sea, to my right, was smooth and luminous, turquoise blue, the sort of sea you only find in tourist brochures and happy dreams, and there was a smell rising from it, a hot smell of algae and salt.” (79)

<sup>282</sup> Transl.: “the world of Lusophony.”

<sup>283</sup> Corresponding text in English: “My mother – poor woman – had died in Luanda while I was in prison. My father had been living in Rio de Janeiro for years with another woman. I’d never had much contact with him. Yes, I had been born in Lisbon, but I’d gone to Luanda when I was tiny, even before I had learned to talk. Portugal was my country, they told me so in prison - the other prisoners, the informers - but I never felt Portuguese.” (172)

<sup>284</sup> Corresponding text in English: “My whole life was an attempt to escape. Then one evening I found myself in Lisbon – one of those in-between places on the map.” (172-173)

appropriated into cultural products of this wider space. This is ironically exposed when Félix Ventura's client, the *Ministro* (Minister), offers him a typical Portuguese gift: "Olha, trouxe-te ovos moles de Aveiro, gostas de ovos moles?, são os melhores ovos moles de Aveiro, para o caso *made in Cacuoaco*, de toda a África e arredores, aliás de todo o mundo, melhores até do que os legítimos" (121).<sup>285</sup>

The core of Agualusa's literature is in the uncovering of the constructed character of the single project of western modernity through debunking authoritative narratives. He wittily criticises the authenticity of History, revealing History as a story, one fed by the interests of the elite to perpetuate itself in power and to benefit from it. As Félix lends his services to the *Ministro* to writing the minister's memoirs, "Félix costura a realidade com a ficção, habilmente, minuciosamente, de forma a respeitar datas e factos históricos" (139).<sup>286</sup> From this making of History emerges national identity:

Assim que *A Vida Verdadeira de Um Combatente* for publicada, a história de Angola ganhará mais consistência, será mais História. O livro servirá de referência para futuras obras que tratem da luta de libertação nacional, dos anos conturbados que se seguiram à independência, do amplo movimento de democratização do país. (140)<sup>287</sup>

With irony Eduardo Agualusa deconstructs the artificial and power-led division between stories, criticising the primacy and authority attached to some of them, turned into History and Truth. Language acts here as an instrument of power. It serves the purpose of creating the illusion of truth. It is then by the use of the common places of the political discourse that a story is shaped into the mould to enter the official narrative. Language is revealed as a form devoid of content: an empty bottle.

Iza Quelhas (2003, section III) comments on *Estação das Chuvas*: "[Ao] problematizar as práticas que legitimam as identidades do histórico e do literário [o romance] também questiona a noção de centro, de origem e de estabilidade nas produções e interpretações produzidas por sujeitos nas formas de saber e poder instituídas."<sup>288</sup> This novel focuses on the paramount role that discourse practices have in constructing memories. In *Passados* memory emerges equally as a unstable and a-centric entity.

Analogously, as History loses its monopoly on truth and Truth itself enters a terrain of uncertainty, language cannot but follow this descending trajectory. Continuing the attack on established truths about language, Eduardo Agualusa renders it empty of its universal value. As Walter Mignolo (2000b, 226-294) has argued, the linguistic (and philosophical) models of the twentieth century have been built in complicity with

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<sup>285</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Oh and look, I've brought you some sweets, *ovos moles* from Aveiro – do you like *ovos moles*? These are the best *ovos moles* in Aveiro, though in fact they're 'Made in Cacuoaco', the best *ovos moles* in all Africa, in the whole world – even better than the real thing." (111)

<sup>286</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Félix would sew fiction in with reality dextrously, minutely, in such a way that historical facts and dates were respected." (127)

<sup>287</sup> Corresponding text in English: "As soon as *The Real Life of a Fighter* is published, the consistency of Angola's history will change, there will be even more History. The book will come to be used as a reference for future work on the struggle for the nation's liberation, on the troubled years that followed independence, and the broad movement of democratisation the country experienced." (127-128)

<sup>288</sup> Transl.: "By problematizing the practices that legitimize the identities of the historical and the literary, the novel also questions the concept of centre, of origin and of stability in the productions and interpretations produced by subjects in the instituted forms of knowledge and power."

colonial expansion. Their subject of enunciation is European, although taken as universal. They are monolingual and couple language with territory in one homogeneous whole (219).<sup>289</sup> Contrasting to this model and legacy, for Agualusa, the meaning of language is found in locality. Much as Lisbon itself, the Portuguese language is no more and no less than a “*lugar de passagem*” (191), literally “place of passage,” (“one of those in-between places”) (172-173). It stands on a common ground of a *shared past* – the history of Portuguese imperialism and the exchanges brought about through colonisation. The actual value of the language lies in the unique expressions of the *other* places traversed in the speaker’s life path.

The conception of life in movement and language as its plural representation is manifested in one of the dreams narrated in *Passados*, whereby Eulálio talks to José Buchmann in a train compartment. The gecko describes his counterpart during a short stop:

Ouvi-o discutir com as quitadeiras num idioma hermético, cantado, que parecia composto por apenas vogais. Disse-me que falava inglês, nos seus vários sotaques; falava também diversos dialectos alemães, o francês (de Paris) e o italiano. Garantiu-me que era capaz de discorrer com idêntica desenvoltura em árabe ou em romeno. (133)<sup>290</sup>

In this Babelian scenario, which also stands for the plurality of each of us, national languages seldom dispense of qualification, as it is their locality – revealed through the accent and the “dialect” - that attaches meaning to them. These are correlated to what Walter Mignolo (2000b) names “*linguaging*” – already addressed in the previous chapter - that is the appropriation of a national and/or foreign language by those that are marginalized by it. Hereby the “noises” and the “dust” of a mother tongue are carried into new usage of dominant languages. Mignolo argues for *linguaging* seen as a creative and liberating process, which is a critical difference with the conception of language (standing for State controlled language). Eduardo Agualusa does not propose linguistics as a terrain for experimentation as such, beyond the incursion of its *excess* (accent and “dialect”) and the echo of creative experimentation that takes place in colloquial language. More emphatically, he forwards the concept of the Portuguese language as the outcome of incorporation of other places/cultures.

The universe of the novel is *the shared space of the Portuguese language* which carries Africa within itself. *Passados* does not present a case for the adoption of African languages either. They belong here to other time, the time of Félix Ventura’s childhood at his father’s inherited farm in Gabela: “Para mim era como visitar o paraíso. Brincava o dia inteiro com os filhos dos trabalhadores, mais um ou outro menino branco, dali

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<sup>289</sup> The enlacement between language and empire is an important focus of analysis in anticolonial and postcolonial critiques in different geographies and languages. In his analysis, Mignolo borrows from Latin American and Caribbean sources - see his chapter “‘An Other Tongue’: Linguistic Maps, Literary geographies, Cultural Landscapes.” Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000b), 217-249.

<sup>290</sup> Corresponding text in English: “I heard him speaking with the fruit sellers in a tight, sing-song language, which seemed to me to be composed exclusively of vowels. He told me that he spoke English - in its various accents – and a number of German dialects, Parisian French and Italian.” (123)

mesmo, meninos que sabiam falar quimbundo” (93).<sup>291</sup> Kimbundu belongs then to the rural secured universe of childhood in Angola. It is a language confined to the space of memory, which will fade away in the life path of *Passados*' characters, all urban and cosmopolitan. It remains as traces of a language appropriated by and incorporated into Portuguese: a *língua mestiça* (*mestiça* language).

This *mestiça* character which, as previously discussed, is recurrent in the realm of *Lusofonia*, is undoubtedly Eduardo Agualusa's most notorious trade. It is associated with his own “mixed” condition of Angolan with a Portuguese paternal family side and a Brazilian family maternal side, with his Diasporic location *in-between* Angola, Portugal and Brazil and, as Mia Couto argues on his own location, the very “lugar de fronteira” (*fronteira* place) and “lugar de confluência” (place of confluence) that is that of an African writer (quoted in Fonseca 2007, 54). Agualusa's conception of *mestiçagem* evokes the “racial mixture” *specific* to Portuguese colonial experience – as “racial mixture,” aside of its doubtful conceptual standing, is itself not exclusive to Portuguese colonialism - but also the condition of living amidst several cultural systems.

Drawing from his previous award-winning novels *A Conjura* of 1989 and *Nação Crioula* of 1997, David Brookshaw (2002) characterises the literary space that Eduardo Agualusa inhabits as a “borderland.” This concept is borrowed from Gloria Anzaldúa's work, namely from *Borderlands/La Frontera* (Anzaldúa 1987). Black, Chicana and Third World feminism are foundational to the field of border studies, alongside anticolonial critique and postcolonial studies, which harbour in the constructed aspect of borders and their (political) implications. According to Brookshaw, Agualusa is located in the metaphorical space of the *borderland* for:

What intrigues him is the fact that these Creole communities were what differentiated Portuguese colonialism from other European variants, and these differences still survive today in territories once ruled by Portugal. At the same time perhaps what appeals to Agualusa in these mixed societies is the interstitial space they occupy, blurring borderlines, creating ambiguities and contradictions (and sometimes self-contradictions), which suggests that they are in continual gestation, or better, possess an endless capacity for re-invention. (Brookshaw 2002, 20)

Following from here it could be argued for the need to surpass “the border” as a metaphor and interpretative tool to analyse Agualusa's postcolonial aesthetics and ethics. Brookshaw (2002, 4) himself refers to Bill Ashcroft's conception of the “true post-colonial transformation,” which must “break down the borderline [between self and other], and forge a path towards ‘horizontality’”: “It is in horizontality that the true force of transformation becomes realized, for whereas the boundary is about restrictions, history, the regulation of imperial space, the horizon is about extension, possibility, fulfilment, the imagining of a post-colonial space” (quoted in Brookshaw 2002, 4). This reflection is very well suited to Eduardo Agualusa's literature for its diffuse lines of separation, its very open-ended-ness and refusal to built certainties. Brookshaw terms this location a “borderland” that functions as a frontier territory

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<sup>291</sup> Corresponding text in English: “I felt like I was visiting Paradise. I used to play all day long with the workers' children, and one or other of the local white boys from the area, who knew how to speak Kimbundu.” (87)

without borders, without containment. Horizontality is the borderland's possibility of emancipation from the (colonial) territorial frame.

In this sense, Agualusa conceives a language as a wall-less house, as it trespasses and challenges borders. Its horizontality qualifies it as *home* that is changing and moving, like any home and any locality, a place of passage. It is therefore natural that language does not manifest a supposed origin, but one's voyage. Félix Ventura, for instance, cannot fixate the identity of "the foreigner" through his speech: "Não consegui pelo sotaque adivinhar-lhe a origem. O homem falava docemente, com uma soma de pronúncias diversas, uma subtil aspereza eslava, temperada pelo suave mel do português do Brasil" (16).<sup>292</sup>

### **The Lusotropical language**

The senses of sound, smell and taste, here associated with the Portuguese language, play an important role in Eduardo Agualusa's constructed ambiance and characters. This is a distinctive aspect that places the novel in dialogue with *Lusotropicalismo*. Recapitulating, this doctrine, fashioned by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre in the 1930s, proposed recovering the value of the African and Amerindian contribution in the constitution of Brazilian society and culture (see Freyre [1933] 2001), positioning it against the hegemonic whiteness of the Brazilian national metanarrative. Instead, *Lusotropicalismo* posited the "malleability and adaptability" of the Portuguese to "the tropics" in their imperial enterprise, and their specific type of "benign colonisation" based on their "inclination to racial intermixing." A simplified version of the doctrine was appropriated by the Portuguese dictatorship in the 1940s and 1950s, serving as a justification to the maintenance of its colonies in Africa (Castelo 1998). In that period, in close ties with the *Estado Novo* (New State), Freyre widened the scope of his argument to characterise all societies colonised by Portugal (see Freyre 1953b). *Lusotropicalismo* had great influence in Brazil, Portugal and the newly independent African colonies (Cape Verde in particular), despite of its critiques, and it remains in the core of the current *Lusofonia*.

Following Freyre, it is through the senses evoked by the experiences of entanglement between the Portuguese and *their* colonial subjects in the tropical landscape that a "sincere expression of life" is manifested: "Na ternura, na mímica excessiva, no catolicismo em que se delicias nossos sentidos, na música, no andar, na fala, no canto de ninar menino pequeno, em tudo que é expressão sincera de vida, trazemos quase todos a marca da influência negra" (Freyre [1933] 2001, 343).<sup>293</sup> Correspondingly, *Lusotropicalismo* attached aesthetic claims to the Portuguese language, which was transformed through this contact:

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<sup>292</sup> Corresponding text in English: "I couldn't place his accent. He spoke softly, with a mix of different pronunciations, a faint Slavic roughness, tempered by the honeyed softness of the Portuguese from Brazil." (16)

<sup>293</sup> Transl.: "In our tender ways, in the excessive mimicry, in Catholicism where our senses delight themselves, in the music, in the walking, in the talking, in the lullaby nursing little boys, in all that is sincere expression of life, almost all of us bring the mark of the black influence."

Algumas palavras, ainda hoje duras ou acres quando pronunciadas pelos portugueses, se amaciaram no Brasil por influência da boca africana. Da boca africana aliada ao clima – outro corruptor das línguas européias, na fervura por que passaram na América tropical e subtropical. (Freyre [1933] 2001, 387)<sup>294</sup>

Omar Ribeiro Thomaz (2007, 54) contends that Freyre introduces the reader to a:

universo profundamente sensorial, povoado de cheiros, sons, sabores e imagens que, inevitavelmente evocam a memória do leitor. Memória não da experiência individual, mas aquela que diz respeito ao *mito*, às histórias que escutamos ... que nos levam [ao] tempo ... da nossa história coletiva e individual.<sup>295</sup>

This doctrine presents itself a literary quality and carries the aesthetical claim that Portuguese is a language that makes a literature of “vida, movimento *vária cor*” (Freyre 1953b, 81).<sup>296</sup> “*Vária cor*” (varied colour) is an expression borrowed from the epic of the “adventure of the Discoveries” *Os Lusíadas* (The Lusiads) ([1572] 2014) authored by the sixteenth century Portuguese poet Luís Vaz de Camões, who is the icon of Portuguese national identity linked to empire. This expression refers to the vivid colours of the “natureza dos trópicos” and those “naturais [dos trópicos]” that enchanted the Portuguese in their *loving* imperial enterprise (Freyre 1953b, 79).<sup>297</sup> Freyre appropriated this expression to indicate that miscigenation characteristic of Portuguese colonialism. These trades echo in Agualusa’s writing. David Brookshaw denotes the continuities of the doctrine in the writer’s other novel *O ano em que Zumbi tomou o Rio* of 2002 (The year Zumbi took Rio):

It is perhaps natural that Agualusa, whose fiction has sought to evoke the historic and cultural links between Portugal, Africa and Brazil, should ultimately see the old Luso-Tropicalist tradition of superficially harmonious race relations through miscegenation as a positive legacy. (Brookshaw 2007b, 167)

Yet, Brookshaw argues that the same novel champions a fierce critique of racial inequalities in Brazil, the accompanying colour prejudice and the hypocritical discourse that hides racism, hereby discontinuing with the *Lusotropical* myth. The writer could then be using the doctrine in order to surpass it, seeking its horizon.

Accordingly, Eduardo Agualusa’s literature could be called *post-Lusotropical*, that term coined by Miguel Vale de Almeida (2000b, 162, 183) addressed in the previous section of this dissertation: “O ‘pós-luso-tropicalismo’ seria, assim, uma ultrapassagem que não se esquece do que ultrapassou.”<sup>298</sup> It assumes the specific historical and social facts that originated the doctrine, namely Portuguese expansion, Brazilian and African colonisation and its residues and reminiscences. Yet it surpasses it through a constant

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<sup>294</sup> Transl.: “A few words, hard or bitter even today when pronounced by the Portuguese, were softened in Brazil by influence of the African mouth; the African mouth coupled with the weather – another corrupter of European languages, through the boiling process they have experienced in tropical and subtropical America.”

<sup>295</sup> Transl.: “deeply sensorial universe, populated by smells, sounds, tastes and images that inevitably evoke the reader’s memory; memory not of individual experience, but that which concerns the *myth*, the stories we hear ... that lead us to the time ... of our collective and individual history.”

<sup>296</sup> Transl.: “life, movement, varied colour.”

<sup>297</sup> Transl.: “nature of the tropics [and those] natural to the tropics.”

<sup>298</sup> Transl.: “‘Post-Lusotropicalism’ would then be an overtaking that does not forget what it overtook.”

vigilance to the resilient discourse of racial harmony and the praise of a supposedly Lusitanian centre that originates commonalities (*Lusofonia*). Additionally, it seeks new processes of construction of cultural meanings in the specific triangular and transatlantic flows.

Commenting on the same *O ano em que Zumbi tomou o Rio*, Samatha Braga (2004, 88) identifies in Agualusa a “reaproveitamento de material,” that is adopting existing text, to rewrite it, offering new text that subverts its original, hereby instigating “um olhar ácido sobre os modelos e sobre o que é conhecido.”<sup>299</sup> Further drawing from Brookshaw, Eduardo Agualusa could be argued to appropriate this *Lusotropical mestiçagem*, to rewrite it into a displacing text:

Within the fluid, anticorporative concept of identity that Agualusa seeks to promote, these apparent contradictions can perhaps coexist. ... It is probably true to say that [Agualusa is] interested in defying fixed notions of identity ... in relation to corporatist notions of “angolanidade” ‘Angolanness’ and “afro-brasilianidade” ‘Afro-Brazilianness,’ but also in what actually constitutes an Angolan. (Brookshaw 2007b, 168-169)

Here it is important to indicate that Eduardo Agualusa’s writing is also a response to a nationalist movement in culture and literature that accompanied the Angolan struggle for national liberation and the nation building project that followed it. In these contexts, heated debates on the *authenticity* of Angolan literature (*Angolanidade*) dominated the public sphere and greatly influenced the formation of the literary canon in parallel ways to what happened in Mozambique.<sup>300</sup> Agualusa’s anti-essentialism fits within this counter-nationalist project. Correspondingly, the writer is rejecting the very concept of national identity of the Portuguese language. In an interview to *Jornal de Notícias* he is explicit:

[JN:] Dizer-se afro-luso-brasileiro é a sua melhor definição de nacionalidade?  
[JEA:] Não simpatizo com a ideia de nações nem com fronteiras. Sou um não-nacionalista. Ou um anacionalista. Acho que o nacionalismo conduz quase sempre ao ódio ao outro, ao desprezo pelo outro, quando, afinal de contas, o outro somos sempre nós. (Agualusa 2007d)<sup>301</sup>

The writer would be attempting to deconstruct the very categories that serve as a pillar to the conception of a Luso-centric space. Yet, does he succeed? Here Brookshaw touches on the core question of Agualusa’s writing:

It may well be that Agualusa's hidden nostalgia for the creole worlds that issued from the Portuguese imperial encounter can be attributed to their being anti-essentialist, pragmatic and *chameleon* in both their cultural expression and in their cultural and political affinities. They do not, for it is against their nature, hark back to some pure, supposedly authentic state. But here, it is appropriate to distinguish between hybridity as a creative force, in the words

<sup>299</sup> Transl.: “reuse of materials” ... “an acid perspective onto the models and what is known.”

<sup>300</sup> For a succinct view of current analytical trends on the place of the nation in Angolan and Mozambican literature, see: Ana Mafalda Leite et al., ed., *Nação e Narrativa Pós-Colonial I: Angola e Moçambique - Ensaios*, Vol. I (Lisbon: Edições Colibri, 2012), 443.

<sup>301</sup> Transl.: “[JN:] Defining yourself an Afro-Luso-Brazilian is your best definition of nationality? [JEA:] I don’t sympathize with the idea of nations nor with borders. I am a non-nationalist, or an a-nationalist. I think that nationalism almost always leads to hatred to each other, to contempt for the other, when, after all, the other is always us.”

of Jan Nederveen Pieterse, “a destabilizing hybridity that blurs the canon, reverses the current, subverts the centre” (56), and the assimilationist model enshrined in Luso-Tropicalism and which served the purposes of Portuguese colonialism even as this was dying on its feet. Pieterse is talking of a hybridity that defies definition and as such remains independent of categorization and pigeonholing. (Brookshaw 2007b, 170, my emphasis)

The critical aspect of this interpretation is revealing creolization and hybridization as forces that not only dislocate both the colonial and the national narrative from their centre(s) disputing their authority, but implode every categorization, including that of a centre. This is the core of the promise of the borders. Yet, as previously discussed in this dissertation, this promise carries particular and ambiguous meanings in the history of Afro-Luso-Brazilian entanglement. The idea of Portuguese colonial exceptionalism took various shapes in the process of finding a foundation to the Portuguese “spirit of conquest” and its “civilising mission.” This mythology lives through in the postcolonial imaginary. Maria Canelo (1998) contends that Portuguese Modernism, which emerged at the time when African colonies became a core element in defining Portuguese national identity, has shaped a “Portuguese border identity.”<sup>302</sup> Hereby national identity was given universal appeal with an appearance of cosmopolitanism, as it was traversed by encounters with such variety of *others*. Yet the Portuguese, supposedly adaptable and creative, absorbed and erased such *others* restating their cultural superiority. These very trends are found in what Omar Ribeiro Thomaz (2007, 60) termed “*Lusotropical* eschatology.”

Discussing Mia Couto’s novel in the previous chapter, I have done recourse to Vale de Almeida’s (2004a) analysis of the various historical contexts and social uses of the concepts that have been assigned to this postcolonial field. The anthropologist contends that any argument on miscegenation, hybridity or creolisation call for an approach devoid of naivety. These terms, he posits, constitute what became a category of commonality in the processes of shaping national identities in the Portuguese postcolonial field. They are though mostly used to denote the process of social whitening and cultural Europeanisation. This analysis is fundamental for interpreting Agualusa’s text.

The *mulata* (mulatta) is an outstanding element that confirms a *Lusotropical* continuity in Eduardo Agualusa’s literature. The term refers to the “mixed-race” woman (*mestiça*), however with an explicit indication of her skin colour as racial marker. *Mestiça* is the woman born out of the - as a rule violent - “sexual encounter” between a European white settler and a native woman. *Mestiçagem* (in Spanish *Mestizaje*) is a gendered and racialised term synonymous with the process of mixing. According to Lourdes Martínez-Echazábal (2010, 257): “*Mestizaje*, the process of interracial and/or intercultural mixing, is a foundational theme in the Americas, particularly in those areas colonized by the Spanish and the Portuguese.”<sup>303</sup> The *mulata* is the *black mestiça*. She

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<sup>302</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ analysis of the Portuguese coloniser as hybrid and Portuguese culture as a frontier culture actualise this border identity. The resonance of *Lusotropicalismo* in the sociologist’s theories has been addressed in the previous section of this dissertation. *Onze Teses por Ocasão de Mais Uma Descoberta de Portugal*, 53-74).

<sup>303</sup> For a concise account on the significance of *mestiçagem* in Latin America and its particular culturalist fashion in Brazil, see Lourdes Martínez-Echazábal, “*Mestizaje* in Latin America,” in *The Creolization Reader: Studies in Mixed Identities and Cultures*, eds. Robin Cohen and Paola Toninato (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2010), 257-265.

is the synthesis of Freyre's new civilisation, "made of" the desire of the Portuguese man to "tropical women," as a rule African (but also Amerindian). She is the organic and fraternal link between coloniser and colonised. In *Passados* it is Ângela Lúcia that incorporates this mixed coloured synthesis. Her sensuality is presented through the colours of her skin: "Ângela Lúcia é uma mulher jovem, pele morena e feições delicadas, finas tranças negras à solta pelos ombros" (53); "Ângela Lúcia tinha a pele brilhante. A camisa colada aos seios" (169).<sup>304</sup>

It is then by the way of the "vertigem da primazia dos afectos e dos sentidos" (Vale de Almeida 2000a, 1-30, 3)<sup>305</sup> that Agualusa shapes the sensual *mulata*. She embodies the tension between the force of maintenance of the system of slavery and white settler's supremacy that *created* her and the utopia of a civilisation project. For this, Vale de Almeida argues "a figura social da mulata [como] um campo armadilhado" (ibid.).<sup>306</sup> This figure and social role is foundational in the Brazilian imaginary but also core in the common vocabulary of *Lusofonia*, as the anthropologist posited.

According to Lélia Gonzales (1984), whose work is cardinal to Brazilian Black feminism, the *mulata* works in the intersection of racism and sexism. She is associated with the *mãe-preta* (black mother) - the enslaved women who raised the settler's children - who is her colonial contemporary and the counter-image of racialised and gendered exploitation, the *mucama* - the enslaved woman as sexual object of the colonial settler - and the post-abolition *doméstica* - the domestic worker (224, 230). Gonzales posited that while the *mulata* is exalted as sexualised goddess in the constraints of (Brazilian) carnival performance, she is invisibilised and exploited as *doméstica* (228) in the mundane sphere of the everyday (230). This constellation of racialised and gendered representations and material positionalities reveals, as well argued by Gonzales, the ideology and desire of whitening (through the inculcation of western white values) and subjugation of black womanhood (237). This all within an atmosphere of loving care and mutual sexual desire. The *mulata* that is the black *mestiza*, is the *creole* in the feminine. "Created by the Portuguese," she is the embodiment of Brazil as accomplished *mixed* civilisational utopia.

Eduardo Agualusa harbours his literature in this very booby-trapped field. His utopia, given body and colour, is also a commodity in a cultural market that still consumes it as what Graham Huggan (2001) termed *the postcolonial exotic*, in a process of feeding the exceptionalist quality of the *postempire*. By rescuing the *Lusotropical* trademark of *mestiçagem*, the writer walks a fine line between the reaffirmation of a Portuguese hegemonic representation and its transgression. In a Brazilian interview Agualusa poses: "[O]s povos africanos são, de uma forma geral, muito abertos ao mundo e à novidade e, tal como os brasileiros, capazes de devorar tudo, de transformar e integrar todas as outras culturas. Isso é maravilhoso. É o futuro" (Agualusa 2006).<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Ângela Lúcia is a young woman, with dark skin and fine features, black braids falling loose on her shoulders" (49); "Ângela Lúcia's skin shone. Her shirt, clinging to her breasts." (152)

<sup>305</sup> Transl.: "vertigo of the primacy of affections and senses."

<sup>306</sup> Transl.: "the social figure of the mulatta [as] one booby-trapped field."

<sup>307</sup> Transl.: "African people are, in general, very open to the world and to novelty and, as Brazilians, they are able to devour everything, to transform and integrate all other cultures. This is wonderful. It's the future."

Correspondingly, the Portuguese language that is *mestiça*, *mulata*, *crioula*,<sup>308</sup> carries the forces of appropriation, incorporation and transformation. It is a voracious language that devours *other* cultures, to regurgitate them into a different version of itself. This eating language loses its centre along the meal. Every meal, a new *gestation*.

In his interviews Eduardo Agualusa sides explicitly with the Portuguese language as spoken in Brazil, for he believes it transformed itself into a language closer to Angolan Portuguese: “[O] português do Brasil é mais próximo do nosso precisamente porque houve aculturação, ou seja, porque os brasileiros adoptaram como suas largas centenas de palavras provenientes do quimbundo e do quicongo.” (Agualusa 2008b).<sup>309</sup> The language manifests an allegedly all-encompassing compatibility that surpasses it, as it is cultural, and settled in the very mixture. Asked about his conception of *Lusofonia*, Agualusa responds:

É algo que ultrapassa a língua. Incluí muitas outras referências que têm que ver com formas de *sentir* o Mundo, com a própria história comum de todos os países que falam Português ou onde se fala Português. Também tem que ver com a culinária, costume dizer que a lusofonia é um pouco uma “comunidade do bacalhau.” (Agualusa 2004a, my emphasis)<sup>310</sup>

Here again in a post-*Lusotropical* fashion, the writer rescues a commonplace of *Portugalidade*, that is an alleged commonality around a Portuguese centre, to allocate it to a supposedly shared a-centric space. Elsewhere, asked about Portugal reminiscences in Angola, Eduardo Agualusa identified: “A língua, evidentemente; o catolicismo, o futebol, o gosto pelo bacalhau e pela má-língua” (Agualusa 2007d).<sup>311</sup> Hereby the *shared space of the language* is detached of an original (canonic) authority, as commonness is found in the erroneous language practice. Furthermore, beyond language, Eduardo Agualusa finds this the *home* of a shared feeling (from “to feel,” “*sentir*” as in the quote). It is through *sentimento* that actual encounters take place. The language belongs to the cultural heritage of an entangled history that enable such *encounters*. This conception of the Portuguese language as expression of a world of experience and *sentimento* is explicit in recent interview to *Revista Sarará*:<sup>312</sup>

RS: Escrever em português faz diferença na sua literatura?

JEA: Claro, eu não conseguiria escrever em nenhuma outra língua. E também acho que teria bastante dificuldade em escrever sobre *mundos muito distantes da lusofonia*, ao menos com profundidade. Eu acho que assim como nós construímos a língua, também somos

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<sup>308</sup> Here I am not referring to the term *crioula* (*creole*) in its linguistic acception. As a cultural denomination, creole is correlated to *mestiça* and *mulata*.

<sup>309</sup> Transl.: “Brazilian Portuguese is closer to ours precisely because there was acculturation, that is, because Brazilians have adopted many hundreds of words from the Kimbundu and Kikongo as their own.”

<sup>310</sup> Transl.: “It’s something that goes beyond language. It includes many other references that have to do with ways of feeling the world, with the common history of all countries who speak Portuguese or where Portuguese is spoken. It also has to do with cooking, I use to say that Lusophony is somewhat a “community of cod.”

<sup>311</sup> Transl.: “The language, of course, Catholicism, soccer, the liking of cod and for the bad-language.”

<sup>312</sup> This new journal, with which Eduardo Agualusa collaborates, looks upon Portuguese literatures from a creole perspective, self-denominated as “a hint to the unexpected.”

construídos por ela. Seria um outro escritor se escrevesse em francês. (Agualusa 2008a, my emphasis)<sup>313</sup>

Yet here again the writer enters *Lusotropical* terrain. It is the commonality of feeling and absence of conflict between subjects in unbalanced relations – violently established through racist and patriarchal colonisation, capitalism and globalisation - that called much criticism to the idea of a *shared space of the Portuguese language*. Even if this space is subverted in its Lusitanian authority, the affirmation of such a commonality perpetuates the very core of Portuguese exceptionality.

### Language displacing the territorial self

Inquired on the role he attributes to language, Eduardo Agualusa argues it as common home for speakers otherwise different. Actual borders do not apply to it: “Não são as fronteiras que definem as identidades e a língua tem muita importância. Muito mais do que as fronteiras. O que é concreto é a língua. As fronteiras são invenções artificiais” (Agualusa 2007b).<sup>314</sup>

*Passados* acts this implosion of borders and consequent displacement in a radical fashion, as it borrows from and plays with Magical Realism. It opens with a citation from the Argentinian writer Jorge Luís Borges: “Se tivesse que nascer outra vez escolheria algo totalmente diferente. Gostaria de ser norueguês. Talvez persa. Uruguaio não, porque seria como mudar de bairro” (v).<sup>315</sup> Here the self is determined by the place. There is however the possibility of constructing representations of the self upon a chosen/fictional locality. The novel’s opening sentence accompanies this statement. Eulálio, Borges reincarnated as a gecko, tells: “Nasci nesta casa e criei-me nela. Nunca sai” (3).<sup>316</sup> The primary source of identity is here the home, the paradigmatic *place* that accompanies us along our lives. Yet this place will be built along the novel not only as subject to construction and playful manipulation but also as a moving entity. There is no centre to a *place* that is movement. There is no certainty in an identity built upon an invented *place*.

The language that surpasses (national) borders denounces here the geography of one’s life, its travel map. In the postcolonial *world of the Portuguese language*, *dust* and *noise* are windows into one’s moving home: the self born out of one’s journey. Yet, as this is the deceptive universe of story telling, these are other of the representations of the self that might be fictional. Language alone does not convey the aspect of reality that the particular sound of a place does. As much as the pronunciation and the accent reveal the

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<sup>313</sup> Transl.: “RS: Writing in Portuguese makes a difference in your literature? JEA: Of course, I couldn’t write in any other language. And I think that I would have a hard time writing about very distant worlds from Lusophony, at least writing in depth. I think that as we build the language, we are also built by it. I would be another writer if I wrote in French.”

<sup>314</sup> Transl.: “Borders do not define identity and the language is very important, much more than borders. What is concrete is the language. Borders are artificial inventions.”

<sup>315</sup> Corresponding text in English: “If I were to be born again, I’d like to be something completely different. I’d like to be Norwegian. Or Persian, perhaps. Not Uruguayan, though – that’d feel too much like just moving down the street...” (n.p.)

<sup>316</sup> Corresponding text in English: “I was born in this house, and grew up here. I’ve never left.” (3)

self, they are also powerful artifices in the construction of such a fantasy, which is well illustrated by Eulálio's observations:

Venho estudando desde há semanas José Buchmann. Observo-o a mudar. Não é o mesmo homem que entrou nesta casa, seis, sete semanas atrás. Algo da mesma natureza poderosa das metamorfoses, vem operando no seu íntimo. .... Não estou a sugerir que dentro de alguns dias irrompa de dentro dele, sacudindo grandes asas multicores, uma imensa borboleta. Refiro-me a alterações mais subtis. Em primeiro lugar está a mudar de sotaque. Perdeu, vem perdendo, aquela pronúncia eslava e brasileira, meio doce, meio sibilante, que ao princípio tanto me desconcertou. Serve-se agora de um ritmo luandense, a condizer com as camisas de seda estampada e os sapatos desportivos que passou a vestir. Acho-o também mais expansivo. A rir, é já angolano. (59-60)<sup>317</sup>

Literally, the accent belongs here to the outfit or *fantasia* (meaning both phantasy or imagination and dressing up). It is as much a manifestation of a constructed self as the clothing and the laughter. These common places of belonging, either to a nation or to a particular location, enable the collective consumption of the invention, its purchase as truth. Here Agualusa recurs to the constructed (colonial) in-dissociation (place as) national territory/identity, to reflect upon representations of the self as tools in a game of deceit.

*Passados* dwells on the topic of building fantasies, firstly individual and then collective. The very process of collectivisation and normalisation of fiction is in the core of the novel. Eduardo Agualusa collided in his main character the skills of creating identities and stories. This collusion reveals what Brookshaw (2002, 26) identifies in the writer's literature as both the subjective and constructed character of identity, and its consequent "prone[ness] to fluctuation, re-interpretation and fragmentation into plurality." This view enables reflecting upon *Passados* too, as a tale about the workings of language.

Hereby Agualusa is arguing identity as a story creatively fashioned by language, a text. In consequence, such identity is plural and not fixed, and its reception depends on different readings. The freedom to interpret and produce such identity that is text is strongly present in *Passados*, as José Buchmann appropriates his invented identity and engages in its further writing.

A writer in the making has in the novel a manual to the designing of her/his tale, the most critical of which lessons is the manipulation of verbiage for the construction of veracity. Furthermore, shaping a fantasy, which is in *Passados* synonymous to using language, either writing or telling, is a way of living of those haunted by the ghosts of the past, namely colonialism, independence struggle, armed conflict and authoritarian rule. It is an escape.

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<sup>317</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Now, I've been studying José Buchmann for weeks. Watching him change. He isn't the same man who came into this house six, seven months ago. Something – something of the powerful nature of a metamorphosis has been at work deep inside him. ... I'm not suggesting that in a few days a massive butterfly is going to burst out of him, beating its great multicoloured wings. The changes I'm referring to are more subtle. For one thing, his accent is beginning to shift. He has lost – he is losing – that pronunciation somewhere between Slavic and Brazilian, that was rather sweet and sibilant, that bothered me so much to begin with. It has a Luandan rhythm to it now, better to match the silk print shirts and sports shoes that he's taken to wearing. I think he's become more expansive too. To hear him laugh you'd think he was Angolan." (55)

## Language framing the elusive self

The word is then central to the construction of such tales; it gains expression in the act of naming. Naming represents here the very constitution of life in fiction. This is well illustrated in the chapter that Félix Ventura offers the foreigner his new identity, titled “O nascimento de José Buchmann” (37) (The Birth of José Buchmann) (35). The name is then a critical element in the construction of a character; it is its place of birth. In *Passados* names succinctly tell a story, as it is the case of Félix Ventura, who finds happiness when he actually engages in the adventurous experience of his own life; or of Ângela Lúcia, the angelical woman-child that emanates and captures light through photography; or even José Buchmann, that is the literary fiction of an extra-ordinary thus foreigner, and of a José, a man like any of us. But the name is ever more revealing in the phantasmagoric image of the prostitute, who is Alba in the mornings, Dagmar at dawn and Estela at night. Her very existence hints to the core of the tale that is about light in its plurality, artificial brightness but above all, about ghostly shadows. It is language, here the name, that awakens the ghost. As Félix Ventura tells the gecko about his encounter with Ângela Lúcia, associations catch Eulálio: “O nome, porém, acordou outro em mim, Alba, e fiquei subitamente atento e grave” (43).<sup>318</sup>

Still, the name is only representation, dissociated from the self. Eulálio reflects about what is in a name, either the imposition of a destiny or a mask crafted to hide and elude. He concludes: “A maioria [dos nomes], evidentemente, não tem poder algum. Recordo sem prazer, sem dor também, o meu nome humano. Não lhe sinto falta. Não era meu” (44).<sup>319</sup>

Beyond revealing the name as a surface and fiction, this dissociation between name and self characterises too the foreign language. Julia Kristeva (1991, 32) argues that the foreigner’s “verbal constructs ... are centred in a void, dissociated from both body and passions, left hostage to the maternal tongue. ... His conscious does not dwell in his thought. ... [It] shelters itself on the other side of the border.” Eduardo Agualusa focuses on foreignness that is one’s own other side, the foreigner within: “[Q]uando digo estrangeiro refiro-me ao espaço de outras línguas” (Agualusa 2007d).<sup>320</sup> In *Passados* there is no other side as such, as there is no foreign language. Centring his tale in this very dissociation and void, he is arguing that every language carries its foreignness. Its naturalness, the place of association between self and name, is what Kristeva identifies as property of the mother tongue. For Agualusa, whose mother tongue is a *lugar de passagem*, it is the spilling of the locality, the *excess* in language.

In *Passados*, not only Eulálio but most characters have more than one name, purportedly the real one and the invented name, crafted to evoke nobility, wealth or, contrarily an ordinary origin. Naming is here a requirement to escape one’s reality, past and heritage. Still again this plurality stands for the two halves of a fiction, where the real name is the ghostly memory and the fictional name, the fantasy. Additionally, the multiplicity of names hints too to the concept of multiple self, that is Eulálio gecko and

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<sup>318</sup> Corresponding text in English: “But her name swoke in me memories of Alba, and all of a sudden I was alert and serious.” (40)

<sup>319</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Most [names] have no power at all, of course. I recall my human name without any pleasure – but without pain either. I don’t miss it. It wasn’t me.” (41)

<sup>320</sup> Transl.: “When I say ‘foreign’ I am referring to the space of other languages.”

Eulálio man, that is the prostitute in her various shades of light. Yet again this multiplicity stands for the name as version, beautifully illustrated by the writer's comments on his own name:

Pouca gente sabe o que quer dizer "agualusa." Seria um termo da marinharia para designar um mar muito calmo. Ouvi várias versões, pessoas dizendo que é um mar muito liso, pescadores que me disseram que vem de água luzente. Há quem defenda a última versão, que é a "noctiluca," o fenómeno da água iluminada à noite. (Agualusa 2007b)<sup>321</sup>

The name is then an aesthetical object that attaches authenticity to invented identities and stories. Such object has the force to suggest reality and truthfulness. It is the sight, smell and texture of the object that give it such liveliness. It is this liveliness that must convince in order to establish a truth which is not already there, as there is no History or canon, only the particularity of the version.

Eduardo Agualusa demolishes the universal value of words. *Passados* argues for highly particular meanings. Childhood, here associated with happiness, becomes one's experience of time, attached to a locality:

Só somos felizes, verdadeiramente felizes, quando é para sempre, mas só as crianças habitam esse tempo no qual todas as coisas duram para sempre. Eu fui feliz para sempre na minha infância, lá na Gabela, durante as férias grandes, enquanto tentava construir uma cabana nos troncos de uma acácia. (96)<sup>322</sup>

The word manifests this particularity: "Nas aulas de catequese um velho padre de voz sumida e olhar cansado, tentou, sem convicção, explicar-me em que consistia a Eternidade. Eu achava que era outro nome para as férias grandes" (96).<sup>323</sup> Furthermore, the name is here conceptualised as *artifact*, as object that attaches authenticity to invented identities and stories. The photo is another of such objects, as the forged signature of José Buchmann's fictive mother. The spoken language, the photographic image or the written language are equally valid as proof of authenticity. They are understood as artifacts with the force to suggest reality and truthfulness. They enable the collectivisation of fiction, which becomes naturalised, normalised, gaining authority.

As Ângela Lúcia uncovers the picture of Félix's grandfather as of one alleged Fredrick Douglass (alluding to the nineteenth century African-American formerly enslaved and renowned abolitionist), he restates the authenticity of his genealogy: "Excluindo o retrato, a história que te contei é autêntica. Enfim, pelo menos, tanto quanto me

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<sup>321</sup> Transl.: "Few people know what 'Agualusa' means. It would be a term of seamanship to designate a very calm sea. I heard several versions, people saying it's a very smooth sea, fishermen told me that comes from splendid water. Some argue the latest version, which is the 'noctiluca,' the phenomenon of water lit up at night."

<sup>322</sup> Corresponding text in English: "We're only happy – truly happy – when it's for ever-after, but only children live in a world where things can last forever. I was happy ever after in my childhood, there in Gabela, in the long holidays, as I tried to build a fort in the branches of an acacia tree." (89)

<sup>323</sup> Corresponding text in English: "In catechism lessons an old priest with a faint voice and a weary gaze tried to explain to me what Eternity was. For me it seemed like just another name for my summer holidays." (90)

recorde” (126).<sup>324</sup> Language, equally, turns into the maker of a mere aesthetical object, and the art of the writer, as it is of the genealogist is to model it to perfection. Language aspires the creation of beautiful objects, such as the genealogical tree, which after completion Félix Ventura proudly admires.

Eduardo Agualusa affirms his aesthetical attachment to the word through his alter-writer Félix Ventura. In interview to *Jornal de Notícias* the writer acknowledges that: “Talvez tenha um pouquinho de mim, até porque é um homem apaixonado por livros, pela língua portuguesa. Um homem que gosta de utilizar arcaísmos” (Agualusa 2004a).<sup>325</sup> In another interview he affirms: “Faço um grande esforço para conseguir que aquilo que escrevo manifeste alguma elegância” (Agualusa 2007d)<sup>326</sup>

Beyond the perfection of the word that suggests truth through accuracy, beauty is here again found in the materiality of the word that recurs to the senses, the word as a living thing accompanying other living objects. José Buchmann explains to Félix Ventura:

Eu, sou-lhe sincero, sinto saudades do tempo em que as pessoas se correspondiam, trocando cartas, cartas autênticas, em bom papel, ao qual era possível acrescentar uma gota de perfume, ou juntar flores secas, penas coloridas, uma madeixa de cabelo. Sofro uma nostalgia miúda desse tempo em que o carteiro nos trazia as cartas a casa, e da alegria, do susto também, com que as recebíamos, com que as líamos, e do cuidado com que, ao responder, escolhíamos as palavras, medindo-lhes o peso, avaliando a luz e o lume que ia nelas, sentindo-lhes a fragrância, porque sabíamos que seriam depois sopesadas, estudadas, cheiradas, saboreadas, e que algumas conseguiriam, eventualmente, escapar à voragem do tempo, para serem relidas muitos anos depois. (107-108)<sup>327</sup>

Here it is the sight, smell and texture of the letter that give life to the word. This array of material qualities also inhabit the spoken universe.

### Language calling the others

The lively and plural spoken universe in *Passados*, beyond the text and the western canon, better captures Angolan sensorial experience:

[A Velha Esperança] nunca leu Bakunine, claro; aliás nunca leu livro nenhum, mal sabe ler. Todavia, venho aprendendo muita coisa sobre a vida, no geral, ou sobre a vida neste país,

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<sup>324</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Apart from the bit about the portrait, everything I’ve told you about my background is quite true. Or at least, as much of it as I remember.” (116)

<sup>325</sup> Transl.: “Maybe he has a little bit of myself, because he is a man in love with books, with the Portuguese language. A man who likes to use archaisms.”

<sup>326</sup> Transl.: “I make a great effort so that what I write manifests a certain elegance.”

<sup>327</sup> Corresponding text in English: “But to tell you the truth, I do miss those days when people communicated by exchanging letters – real letters, on good paper, to which you might add a drop of perfume, or attach dried flowers, coloured feathers, a lock of hair. I feel a flicker of nostalgia for those days, when the postman used to bring our letters to the house, and we were glad, surprised to see what we’d received, what we opened and read, and at the care we took when we replied, choosing each word, weighting it up, assessing its light, feeling its fragrance, because we knew that every word would later be weighted up, studied, smelled, tasted, and that some might even escape the maelstrom of time, to be re-read many years later.” (99)

que é a vida em estado de embriaguez, ouvindo-a falar sozinha, ora num murmúrio doce, como quem canta, ora em voz alta, como quem ralha, enquanto arruma a casa. (11)<sup>328</sup>

And further, language continues its dissociation from a supposed authority, universality and singularity. Animal sounds and noises turn into languages that are the manifestation of the plurality of the self, which is, has been or will be an animal or plant of a sort. Here again, the singular Modern self is reflected upon, as José Buchmann adds to the row of languages and “dialects” of his proficiency: “- Falo inclusive o blaterar -, ironizou: - a linguagem secreta dos camelos. Falo o arruar, como um javali nato. Falo o zunzum, o grilar e olhe, acredite, até o crocitar. Num jardim deserto seria capaz de discutir filosofia com as magnolias” (133).<sup>329</sup>

Housing his literature in the universe of a single language, Eduardo Agualusa evokes the plurality of the spoken world. Yet beyond the word, it is other plural aspects of language that carry meaning, namely all that detaches it from a universal form. In *Passados*, god is manifested in Eulálio’s dreams:

Continuei sentado ali, muito tempo, com a certeza de que se me esforçasse, se ficasse inteiramente imóvel, desperto, se me tocasse a alma, eu sei lá!, de certa maneira o fulgor das estrelas, conseguiria escutar a voz de Deus. E então comecei realmente a ouvi-la, e era rouca e chiava como uma chaleira ao lume. Esforçava-me por entender o que dizia quando vi emergir das sombras, mesmo à minha frente, um perdigueiro magro, com um pequeno rádio, desses de bolso, preso ao pescoço. O aparelho estava mal sintonado. Uma voz de homem, profunda, subterrânea, lutava com dificuldade contra o tumulto eléctrico: - O pior pecado é não amar – disse Deus, a voz macia de um cantor de tango: - essa emissão tem o patrocínio das Padarias União Marimba. (49-50)<sup>330</sup>

The sublime is here presented as a voice of difficult comprehension. It is found midst the mundane and chaotic world overly populated by meaningless language and noise. It is then in the unexpected place of a dog’s neck that Eduardo Agualusa chooses to hang the message that constitutes the heart of his novel: Live! This is the life beyond the common places of language, outside of the ready for consumption format of the word, it is life discretely presented in soft music fashion, yet it is life for it implies incurring risks, the life of the daring. All such manifestations of plurality through language are

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<sup>328</sup> Corresponding text in English: “[Old Esperança] had never read Bakunin, of course; never read a book at all, come to that, barely knows how to read. But I’m always learning things about life in general, of life in this country – which is life in a state of intoxication – from hearing her talk to herself, sometimes in a gentle murmur, almost like a song, sometimes out loud like someone scolding, as she cleans the house.” (11)

<sup>329</sup> Corresponding text in English: “‘I can also speak Groan,’ he joked, ‘the secret language of the camels. I speak Grunt, like a true-born wild boar. I speak Buzz, and the Chirp language of the crickets – and even the Caw of the crows. On my own in a garden I could discuss philosophy with the magnolias.’” (123)

<sup>330</sup> Corresponding text in English: “I remained, just sitting there, for some time, quite sure that if I could concentrate, if I could keep perfectly still, alert, if the brilliance of the stars could touch my soul – oh, I don’t know – in some particular way, I would be able to hear the voice of God. And then I did really start to hear it, and it was hoarse and hissed like a kettle on the fire. I was struggling to undersatnd what it was saying when out of the shadows – right in front of me – appeared a dog, a skinny setter, with a little radio, one of those pocket-radios, attached to its neck. It was badly tuned. A man’s voice – deep, underground – was struggling against the storm of electric sounds: ‘The worst of sins is not to fall in love,’ said God, with the soft voice of a tango-singer: ‘This broadcast has been sponsored by the Marimba Union Bakeries.’” (45-46)

recurrent in Agualusa's literature. Iza Quelhas comments about *Estação das chuvas* of 1996:

Ao deslocar o eixo e suas possibilidades de construção de sentidos para uma multiplicidade de autores e seus enunciados, a instância autoral focaliza o outro em suas manifestações linguajeiras, trazendo também para a representação do eu que narra uma alteridade internalizada na imagem do híbrido no mesmo. (Quelhas 2003, section II)<sup>331</sup>

The polyphonic aspect of this other novel is then an equally critical aspect of *Passados*, yet this is polyphonic in a rather intimate fashion. It presents every character as an instance in the diluted comings and goings between our own varied dimensions, manifested themselves as voices, in language. Returning to foreignness, the other is here internalized in the self. Interviewed on his more recent novel *As Mulheres do Meu Pai* of 2007 (My father's women), Agualusa argues on the role of such evocation of alterity:

Uma das coisas boas da literatura é esse exercício de alteridade, pôr-se na pele do outro. Isso pode tornar-nos melhores pessoas, porque só quando você acredita que é o outro compreende o que o outro sente. Isso torna-nos mais tolerantes. É muito mais difícil eu imaginar que sou uma lagartixa. (Agualusa 2007b)<sup>332</sup>

*Passados* is an exercise in pushing the boundaries of tolerance of the engaged reader. It is through identifying with the gecko's feelings, and familiarising with his ghosts, that the reader encounters the other self: Eulálio. He is one of us. In dreams, he speaks our language. He might even be each and every one of us.

### **In the margins of language**

Félix Ventura relies on the otherness of languages to affirm their unreliability to a José Buchmann that reflects upon the strange stories told by the beggar- *ex-agente do Ministério de Segurança do Estado* (ex-agent of the Ministry of State Security), Edmundo Barata dos Reis:

Luanda está cheia de pessoas que parecem muito lúcidas e de repente desatam a falar línguas impossíveis, ou a chorar sem motivo aparente, ou a rir ou a praguejar. .... É uma feira de loucos esta cidade, há por aí, por essas ruas em escombros, por esses musseques em volta, patologias que ainda nem sequer estão catalogadas. Não leve a sério tudo que lhe dizem. (162)<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Transl.: "By shifting the axis and its possibilities of meaning construction for a multitude of authors and their utterances, the author focuses on the other in his language manifestations, also bringing to the representation of the self that narrates an otherness internalized in the image of the hybrid in the self/same."

<sup>332</sup> Transl.: "One of the good things of literature is this exercise of alterity, putting yourself in the shoes of the other. This can make us better people, because only when you believe that you are the other that you understand what the other feels. This makes us more tolerant. It is much more difficult for me to imagine that I am a lizard."

<sup>333</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Luanda is full of people who seem completely lucid but suddenly burst out speaking impossible languages, or crying for no apparent reason, or laughing, or cursing. ... It's a fairground of lunatics, this city – out there in those ruined streets, in those clusters of *musseque*

Here again it is in the language devoid of authority, the language that is not recognized as language, but as manifestation of a *patologia não catalogada* (a pathology that hasn't been recorded), that a hint to the truth is offered. It is then outside of what qualifies language as such that a real message lies. It is in the laughter of Eulálio that is the only sound he is able to utter. It is in the sounds of animals, it is in the gemidos (moans) pronounced at the actual encounter between Félix Ventura and Alba Lúcia.

It is mostly outside of the realm of the word that encounters take shape, through *sentimento* (feelings). These are dramatic instances of revelation. The writer reinforces hereby the aspect of language as rhetorical instrument for deceit. The word that abounds is the word that hides. It is then the silence between Ângela Lúcia and José Buchmann in their first encounter at Félix's house, that hints to something truthful amongst them, or not...

Félix voltou à cozinha para preparar a sobremesa. Os dois convidados continuaram um diante do outro. Nenhum falou. O silêncio entre eles era cheio de murmúrios, de sombras, de coisas que corriam ao longe, numa época distante, escuras e furtivas. Ou talvez não. Provavelmente ficaram calados, um em frente ao outro, porque nada acharam para falar, e eu imaginei o resto. (82)<sup>334</sup>

There are telling silences. It is the shadows of language that suggest something real, which here too, is a category questioned. Further beneath this labyrinth of fantasies lies a critique to the brute memory of oppression in Angola and Portugal. In this context, silence is a survival strategy for those who are (forcefully) persuaded not to speak the truth. Over a dinner arranged by Félix Ventura, José Buchmann tells Ângela Lúcia about his life abroad: "Fui para Portugal nos anos sessenta, estudar direito, mas não gostei do clima. Fazia muito silêncio" (81).<sup>335</sup> Portugal under dictatorship is then compared to the slippery world of changing political ideologies of post-independence Angola. Here too the unspoken word stands for the proscription of dissidence. The ideology of power is the only authorized language. It is only the "insane" Edmundo Barata dos Reis who dares to speak it:

Transformou-se em poucos meses num estorvo ideológico. Um tipo incômodo. Não tinha vergonha de gritar – "sou comunista!", numa altura em que os seus chefes já só murmuravam, baixinho, "fui comunista", e continuou a bradar, "sou comunista, sim, sou muito marxista-leninista", mesmo depois que a versão oficial passou a negar o passado socialista do país. (158)<sup>336</sup>

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houses all around town, there are pathologies that haven't even been recorded. Don't take anything they tell you too seriously." (147)

<sup>334</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Félix returned to the kitchen to prepare dessert. The two guests remained, seated opposite one another. Neither spoke. The silence that hung between them was full of murmurings, of shadows, of things that run along in the distance, in some remote time, dark and furtive. Or perhaps not. Perhaps they just remained without speaking, sitting there opposite each other, because they simply had nothing to say, and I merely imagined the rest." (79)

<sup>335</sup> Corresponding text in English: "I went to Portugal in the sixties to study law, but I couldn't stand the climate. It was too quiet." (74-75)

<sup>336</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Within a few months he would be changed into an ideological nuisance. An awkward sort of fellow. He wasn't ashamed of shouting 'I'm a communist!' at a time when his bosses would only murmur, in hushed tones, 'I used to be a communist...' and he'd keep yelling out – 'Yes, I'm a communist, I'm really very Marxist-Leninist!' even at a time when the official version had begun to deny the country's socialist past..." (144)

Eduardo Agualusa places a critique to language as power within a broader criticism of political practice, imperial and postcolonial nationalist. Commenting on his other novel *O Ano em que Zumbi tomou o Rio*, David Brookshaw (2007b, 164) names the writer “a ferocious critic of [Angola’s] current regime” for its political elites’ betrayal of the ideals that guided the independence struggle and “its growing association with authoritarianism.” This critical gaze identifies in language the voice of authority, and in the non-language, that is what hides, the voice of those that must silence, the voice of the excluded.

Elsewhere, Brookshaw (2007a, 19) argues that Eduardo Agualusa gives voice to “minorities who sit uncomfortably within the restrictions of postcolonial nationalism in the lusophone world.” In *Passados*, Félix Ventura incorporates the colourless invisible subject, thus voiceless. His presence evokes the marginal and vulnerable status of albinos in Angolan society. The writer tells about this character: “Em todos os meus livros existem personagens portadoras de deficiências físicas. Interessa-me dar voz a essas pessoas, que de uma forma ou de outra são marginalizadas pela sociedade, são hostilizadas e enfrentam preconceitos” (Agualusa 2008b).<sup>337</sup> Literature exercises here the function of revealing objectified subjects, giving them voice.

Centring on the craft of story telling, the novel deals with language as an instrument of conveying a message rather than as a place of actual encounter and dialogue. Félix Ventura’s main interlocutor, the gecko Eulálio, serves as the means through which he tells his story and reflects upon it. Language is, in this context, a place of encounter with the self. Eulálio is the *Eu lá* (“I over there”), who is actually plural, the alter egos with whom Félix enters in dialogue: his previous self, his elderly self, his animal self, his hidden self, his sublime self (god), and his double. It is someone with another perspective on his life, as evident when he observes the dialogue between Félix and José: “Colocara-me exactamente sobre eles, pendurado do tecto, de cabeça para baixo, de forma que podia observar tudo em pormenor” (148).<sup>338</sup> This inversed gaze corresponds to the exercise of alterity, previously argued, that is literature in hands of Eduardo Agualusa.

Furthermore, the conversations between Félix and Eulálio remain as a secure refuge against incurring the risk of establishing relationships. It is only when Eulálio dies that Félix decides to leave home and go towards the encounter of his beloved Ângela, in Brazil. Correspondingly, the other main characters engage in non-dialogical situations with Félix Ventura. His dear photographer emerges, already in their first encounter, as a listener: “Ângela Lúcia possui um talento raro: é capaz de manter acesa uma conversa sem quase participar nela” (128).<sup>339</sup> Her conversations with Félix will later reveal themselves as an engagement in playful games of seduction. In a similar fashion, Félix’s stranger-client José Buchmann participates in the game of inventing stories, however differently to Ângela, he hardly listens to Félix, but talks. This eloquence

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<sup>337</sup> Transl.: “In all my books there are characters with physical disabilities. I am interested in giving a voice to these people who, in one way or another, are marginalized by society, are harassed and face prejudices.”

<sup>338</sup> Corresponding text in English: “I’d positioned myself directly above them at this point, hanging upside-down from the ceiling, in order that I might watch every detail.” (135)

<sup>339</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Ângela Lúcia possesses a rare gift, an ability to remain engaged in a conversation without hardly speaking at all.” (117)

expresses an escape of his actual past and history. Language is instrumental in enabling this manoeuvre.

### Language evoking ghosts

*Passados* centres on the forged making of stories and identities as a means to avoid facing the past of one self and of a nation. Fashioning fantasies is for Félix Ventura/Eduardo Aqualusa a way to chase away the ghosts of the past. Literature, which is here synonymous with lying and forging, is a consolation and a shield against incurring the risks of living, as Eulálio's mother taught him to live an austere life: "A realidade fere, mesmo quando, por instantes, nos parece sonho. Nos livros está tudo o que existe, muitas vezes em cores mais autênticas, e sem a dor verídica de tudo o que realmente existe. Entre a vida e os livros, meu filho, escolhe os livros" (102).<sup>340</sup>

Eulálio paraphrases her warning, evoking the powerful image of the young man driving his motorbike, eyes closed, arms stretched; he collides against a truck: "Morre feliz. A felicidade é quase sempre uma irresponsabilidade. Somos felizes nos breves instantes e que fechamos os olhos" (102).<sup>341</sup> Literature is then proposed as a secure surrogate to life, a shield against pain. Language serves the purpose of this literature of forgery through evoking those images. Yet, it offers too the very possibility of experiencing life, passionately, in a blind and liberated fashion. For Eduardo Aqualusa, "[e]screver é como dançar, é como fazer amor, só resulta verdadeiramente quando nos esquecemos de nós" (Aqualusa 2007c).<sup>342</sup>

In the core of *Passados* is a message for incurring the risks of life that hides beyond the ghosts that haunt us. At the beginning of the novel Eulálio recalls the memory that accompanies him. His father sent him to *Madame Dagmar*, to introduce the son into sexual life. Yet in her presence the gecko, then a young man could not dissociate himself from the image of his father's sexual relations with the prostitute.

Imaginei-a com o meu pai na penumbra afogueada daquele mesmo quarto. Foi um relâmpago, uma revelação, vi-a, multiplicada pelos espelhos, soltar o vestido e libertar os seios, ví-lhe as ancas largas, senti-lhe o calor do sangue quente, e vi o meu pai, vi as mãos poderosas do meu pai. Ouvi a sua gargalhada de homem maduro a estalar contra a pele dela, e a palavra chula. Vivi aquele exacto instante, milhares, milhões de vezes, com terror e com asco. Vivi até ao ultimo dos meus dias. (35-36)<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Reality can hurt us, even those moments when it may seem to us to be a dream. You can find everything that exists in the world in books – sometimes in truer colours, and without the real pain of everything that really does exist. Given a choice between life and books, my son, you must choose books!" (94)

<sup>341</sup> Corresponding text in English: "He dies happy. Happiness is almost always irresponsible. We're happy for those brief moments when we close our eyes." (94)

<sup>342</sup> Transl.: "Writing is like dancing, it is like making love; it only results truly when we forget ourselves."

<sup>343</sup> Corresponding text in English: "I imagined her with my father in the burning gloom of that same room. In a lightning-flash, in a revelation, I saw her, multiplied by the mirrors, undo her dress and release her breasts. I saw her wide hips, I felt her heat, and I saw my father, I saw my father's powerful hands. I heard his grown-man's laugh slapping against her skin, that vulgar language. I've lived that precise moment thousands, millions of times, with terror and revulsion. I lived it to the very end of my days." (33)

It is the very fact that memories are populated with images, that gives them a degree of what we perceive as reality, and their power. Slavoz Zizek (1997, 1) evokes a similar image of sexual tint to reflect about the workings of ideology through relying on fantasy and, particularly on its ghostly fashion. He comments that his wife's supposed sexual encounter with another man seemed acceptable to a rational and tolerant man like himself, "... but then, irresistibly, images start to overwhelm me, concrete images of what they were doing (why did she have to lick him right *there*? Why did she have to spread her legs *so wide*?), and I am lost, sweating and quivering, my peace gone forever."

A particular (hegemonic) take on masculinity is present in both Agualusa's and Zizek's exerts above, which bring to light the naturalisation of traditional gender roles manifest in such fantasies, in the ideology that shape them, and in the sort of "daring life" that they envision. This presence – "the standard situation of male-chauvist jealousy" in Zizek's (ibid.) words - can be interpreted as a critique of (racialised) patriarchy or its surreptitious affirmation.

In *Passados*, the power of the word is to evoke such sensorial images out of the reminiscences of encounters. It is the *artifactuality* of the word that realizes its ideological strength, here the power of veracity, as evident in José Buchmann explanation to Eulálio, in dream: "Uma goiabeira em flor, por exemplo, perdida algures entre as páginas de um bom romance, pode alegrar com o seu perfume fictício vários salões concretos" (131).<sup>344</sup> The writer conceives here the word as creator of fantasies we forcibly evoke in search for happiness, or ghosts that will haunt us.

The dramatic height of *Passados* turns around the revelation of the actual story whereby all central characters are entangled. The "old tramp" Edmundo Barata dos Reis enters the novel smoothly, amusing all with his tales of the past, but he soon brings havoc. José Buchmann recognises dos Reis as the "ex-agent of State Security" who tortured Buchmann, himself the political dissident Pedro Gouveia in his past life. Dos Reis also killed Gouveia's wife and stood beside his companion agent that maimed Gouveia's baby daughter, who turns out to be Ângela Lúcia. Out of the tale of the torturer burning a cigarette into the flesh of the just born baby girl, emerges the ghostly image that has haunted his accomplice, dos Reis: "Ainda hoje quando deito e adormeço, sinto aquele cheiro, ouço o choro da criança..." (177).<sup>345</sup> This image will haunt Eduardo Agualusa's readers.

*Passados'* characters are escaping their haunting pasts for one or other reason. Ventura's clients seek to erase their history in order to buy acceptance into the new political regime and prestige, according to the new norms of neoliberal Angola. Hereby this novel fits into the African postcolonial literature that does recourse to fantasy as an inquiry into the memory of its history, and as a reminder of the coping strategies needed to face its brutality, past and present. As Patrick Chabal (1996, 79) argued about Mia Couto's literature, here too the use of the fantastic dimension is not gratuitous. Commenting on Eduardo Agualusa's *Fronteiras Perdidas*, David Brookshaw (2002,

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<sup>344</sup> Corresponding text in English: "A guava tree in bloom, for instance, lost in the pages of a good novel, can bring delight with its fictional perfume to any number of real rooms." (121)

<sup>345</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Even today when I lie down to sleep, the smell is still there, the sound of the child crying..." (159)

22) argues that the writer's tales "explore our dependence on fantasy to explain or compensate for our mundane existence." The adherence to language as an instrument to add the force of the senses, smell and sound, amplifies the power of memory. Agualusa calls one to face this living past in order to build a future.

Returning to language as the moving home of the plural self, Eduardo Agualusa ends *Passados* with Félix Ventura affirming himself to be an animist, for whom the soul flows like water: "Hoje está um rio. Amanhã estará mar" (198).<sup>346</sup> "Eulálio será sempre Eulálio, quer encarne (em carne), quer em peixe" (198).<sup>347</sup> Analogously, language is form, the bottle; it is not the self, not the moving soul. It enables rescuing images in order to create dreams. *Passados* ends with: "Eu fiz um sonho" (199).<sup>348</sup>

The making of a dream, that paraphrases Martin Luther King's iconic speech doing recourse "à memória a imagem a preto e branco" (199) is here a metaphor to one's engagement in building happiness.<sup>349 350</sup> Agualusa reveals the emancipating power of language beyond the service of political ideology. It has the force to produce stories crafted upon unsettled and ambivalent material, namely identities in movement made out of memories in metamorphosis. This is the language of the *other*, the "stranger within ourselves," that is not settle in the fixed localities of national identity and belonging. This internalised alterity is turned into a force of liberation for the one conscious of her/his own ambiguity and multiplicity. S/he is Julia Kristeva's "happy cosmopolitan":

One who is a happy cosmopolitan shelters a shattered origin in the night of his wandering. It irradiates his memories that are made up of ambivalences and divided values. That whirlwind translates into shrill laughter. It dries up at once the tears of exile and, exile following exile, without any stability, transmutes into games what for some is a misfortune and for others an untouchable void. Such a strangeness is undoubtedly and art of living for the happy few or for artists. And for others? I am thinking of the moment when we succeeded in viewing ourselves as unessential, simple passers by, retaining of the past only the game... A strange way of being happy, or feeling imponderable, ethereal, so light in weight that it would take us so little to make us fly away... (Kristeva 1991, 38)

### The eating language

This accomplished cosmopolitanism corresponds to the *creole* condition for Eduardo Agualusa: "Um crioulo, neste sentido cultural, que não tem a ver com raças, é um homem do mundo, da modernidade, alguém capaz de transitar com o mesmo à vontade por todas as cidades e por todas as culturas" (Agualusa 2008b).<sup>351</sup> Yet the internalisation of alterity that gave birth to Agualusa's *creole cosmopolitan* is perverse

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<sup>346</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Today it's a river. Tomorrow, it will be sea" (180).

<sup>347</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Eulálio will always be Eulálio, whether flesh (incarnate) or fish." (180).

<sup>348</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Yes, I've made a dream" (180).

<sup>349</sup> Corresponding text in English: "[to the memory of] that black and white picture" (180).

<sup>350</sup> "I Have a Dream" was delivered by Reverend King on 28 August 1963, at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington D.C..

<sup>351</sup> Transl.: "[I am] a creole in this cultural sense that doesn't have to do with races. It is a man of the world, of modernity, someone capable of feeling at home in all cities and all cultures he traverses."

too, as it turns his marginal identity invisible. Agualusa is presenting a libertarian and ethereal identity while hiding *the other*. Vale de Almeida (2004a, 10) argues that the discourse of creolisation turned the black African into a ghost that diluted her/himself in the racial mixture. In *Passados* it is Félix Ventura that incorporates the ghost of race. The writer shaped this identity as a metaphor to the constructed character of national and racial authenticity. In this operation he gives protagonism to the otherwise marginal (and threatened) Angolan albino. Yet, concomitantly, he does away with race, which is a critical element in the constitution of subalternity in the Portuguese postcolonial geographies.

Eduardo Agualusa's fluid *mestiçagem* leans toward the trademark of Portuguese exceptionalist colonialism. In an assimilationist fashion, it hides the black African and her/his marginal position. Hereby the writer is erasing the borders in an attempt to overcome them. In a Brazilian interview Agualusa affirms: “[O]s povos africanos são, de uma forma geral, muito abertos ao mundo e à novidade e, tal como os brasileiros, capazes de devorar tudo, de transformar e integrar todas as outras culturas. Isso é maravilhoso. É o futuro” (Agualusa 2006).<sup>352</sup> The writer borrows from Brazilian Anthropophagic Modernism, which countered the supremacy of western models. He subverts the hegemonic power relation, offering instead an active cannibalistic “native,” absorbing from the West and making her/his own original culture.

As previously indicated, Eduardo Agualusa identifies Angolan Portuguese with Brazilian Portuguese due to the latter's *African marks* (from Bantu languages). The Portuguese language that is Brazilian and *creole* ingests and annihilates its progenitor and alleged centre, transforming into livelier versions of itself. This language, crafted with smells, sounds and sights, shapes weightless images that one cannot capture. In *Passados* they are the clouds and the light that Ângela Lúcia registers in picture. From Brazil, she sends Félix Ventura “a imagem de um mão de criança, lançando um avião de papel” (198).<sup>353</sup> It is an image of transitionality and movement. It is a horizon where a utopia emerges, *Lusotropically*.

## Concluding remarks: common home within a bottle

According to António Sousa Ribeiro (2005) the richness of the metaphorical border is due to its arbitrariness of meaning, which can be used to fixate and delimit and/or to liberate from boundaries, depending on the symbolic appropriation made. A fundamental aspect of critical reflection in the Portuguese postcolonial field that is being carried out in this dissertation is to call attention to the particular metaphorical appropriations of the border. The richly conceived language that emerges out of Eduardo Agualusa's text is both *fronteira*-border or *garrafa*; and *fronteira*-frontier or *água*.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Transl.: “African peoples are, in general, very open to the world and to new things and, like the Brazilians, capable of devouring everything, to transform and integrate all other cultures. This is wonderful. It is the future.”

<sup>353</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the image of a child's hand throwing a paper airplane.” (180)

<sup>354</sup> The terms “*fronteira*-border” and “*fronteira*-frontier” are borrowed from Rui Cunha Martins (cited in Ana Margarida Fonseca, “Between Centers and Margins - Writing the Border in the Literary Space of the

The libertarian promise of this text lends it to be characterised as a borderland, fluid as water, emancipated from the fixed territorial frame and the official history of the Angolan nation and the Portuguese empire. Agualusa's text offers the possibility of overcoming (post-)colonial divisions and seeking a utopia through horizontality. Ribeiro, whose scrutiny of border-like metaphors is critical for this analysis, refers to one amongst the several meanings given to the horizon as theme, that is Nietzschean, which supports comprehending this promise. Here the border appears to delimit a line between the duty of forgetting the past and the burden it imposes in the present. The horizon is then a condition for building a future (Ribeiro 2005). This is a horizon, or frontier, that stands for liberation from the confines of boundaries. It is, however, dependent on a notion of delimitation. Ribeiro enlightens this aspect of containment in the border metaphor. He departs from Georg Simmel to reflect on the frame as border. The frame acts a closure to the exterior and a concentration in the interior. This process of demarcation sheds light on the structuring element of the borders, which enables their very transgression (ibid.). It follows that only through the possibility of visualising *the other* and that which separates us, can a relationship other than domination or exploitation be established. It must necessarily be a relationship that does not act the assimilation of *the other* or her/his obliteration.

Eduardo Agualusa's conception of the Portuguese language enables a reflection on the Portuguese empire and its reminiscences in the transnational space. It proposes a horizon (water, *água*), a civilisation utopia that faces the future. It also offers incursion into a given frame (bottle, *garrafa*): the Portuguese language as border trespassed by *its postcolonial others*.

Another critical aspect in the postcolonial query is situating the narratives that play with the metaphor of the border. As argued previously, contextualising and historicising the appropriation of this metaphor in the spaces of articulation where it emerges avoids the naivety that has characterised both border studies and a strand of postcolonial theories; it demands a departure from the utopian aspect of the border (Ferreira 2007; Ribeiro 2005). This entails narrating the asymmetries that cut across postcolonial encounters – or, better, (dis)encounters - which delimit the universe of possible negotiations, leaving a mark in the meanings produced.

Eduardo Agualusa's narrative is ambiguous. Its conservative disposition is found in the strong association with a Portuguese postcolonial "location." Establishing a dialogue with the tradition of Portuguese exceptionalist narratives, the conception on the Portuguese language that emerges here gives continuity to the Portuguese imperial trademark. Its creolisation feeds the benevolent centre that tolerates African incursion. The hybridity born out of this *place of encounters* manifests the Portuguese making of a universal civilisation. These brand marks refer back to Brazil as a model of Lusitanian making that would be exported to Africa, the Third Portuguese Empire. Agualusa's language conception appropriates the material of this *Lusotropical* narrative, using it as artifact to shape the narrative into an emancipatory text. However, the text also re-

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Portuguese Language," in *Postcolonial Theory and Lusophone Literatures*, ed. Paulo de Medeiros, Vol. 1 (Utrecht: Portuguese Studies Center - Universiteit Utrecht, 2007), 43).

enforces the Lusitanian matrix of this *hybrid model*. Therein, the “diluting appetite of the border” erases Africa.<sup>355</sup> The text is thus not post- but still *Lusotropical*.

Its transgressive force, on the other hand, is found in the demise of the singular project of western modernity. Hereby language loses its universal meaning: in itself it is only form. It is conceived as a place of passage whose value is found in its hinting to the localities it traversed. Furthermore, it reveals the artificial character of national and individual identities, subverting the centre. Here language acts as a critical instrument in deconstructing the authoritative text it inhabits from an insider’s perspective. This language is a common home without boundaries, borders or nationalities, without the primacy of origin and the authority of property. It is a Portuguese language *made in Cacauco* – Luanda, Angola. It is an orphaned Portuguese language in continuous transformation. In this sense Agualusa confronted what Walter Dignolo (2000b, 371) has coined the “territorial logic” that coupled language to the empire.

For Eduardo Agualusa the Portuguese language has suffered a process of *aculturação*, having incorporated African cultures. It is a voracious language that transformed itself through such encounters. Cultural diversity manifests itself within the Portuguese language, it carries its own foreignness, its own alters. *Lusofonia*, for Agualusa is a space for the meeting of a commonality that is cultural, although diverse. It establishes rather triangular than dichotomist dynamics, here again de-centric. Yet it is *sentimento* that enables turning this plural home into a place of encounter.

The common home manifests the moving nature of life and of the self, all the places it traversed, multiplicity. Meaning is then found in the particular association with a local. Yet all localities evoked by language might be false. The association self/place is used in the novel in a play of building illusions. The name is here plural, as it manifests the various selves, the various voices, and yet it might be a fiction.

Language is a powerful instrument in the construction of fantasies and in the evocation of ghosts. Eduardo Agualusa resorts to the *artificiality* of the word to build images that accompany one’s life and guide one’s living. Here another critical element in the writer’s literature emerges, that is arguing language as a manifestation of ideology. He is revealing the constructed character of narratives at a time of rewriting Angola’s national history after socialism, upon the negotiation of a violent memory of both the struggle for national liberation and the following civil war.

Simultaneously, in *Passados*, Agualusa is calling one to write her/his own story, and take on the risk that is experiencing life through the senses that language can so skilfully evoke. The writer is appealing to the emancipatory potency of the border as borderland, that is realised when the subaltern appropriates narrative elements that render her/his marginal, and manipulates them as to escape this very condition. In the novel it is Ângela Lúcia who claims such agency, taking vengeance on Edmundo Barata dos Reis and leaving the country. Tracing her voyage through the postcards she sends, Félix Ventura abandons the safe confines of his house, of his craft of storyteller and past maker, and of the conversations with the gecko Eulálio, dead by now. Ventura finally *ventures* himself to Ângela Lúcia’s encounter, in Rio de Janeiro.

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<sup>355</sup> Concept borrowed from Rui Cunha Martins (ibid., 43).

Altogether, reading Eduardo Agualusa involves sharing the common home of *Lusofonia* from its different localities within, and being complicit with a utopia. His accomplice reader, engaged in the writing of her/his own dream, incorporates a cosmopolitanism that is here synonymous with a *creole* condition. It is ethereal and liberating. Her language is Eduardo Agualusa's *língua dos sentidos* (language of the senses), an artifact in the construction of tales, the authority of which he is questioning, the centre of which he is invading. Her\His language is a *casa de passagem*, beyond any Lusitanian centre, seeking its horizon through *mestiçagem*.

This is an appealing project that carries its own ghost in a *Lusotropical* utopia. While seeking new horizons, it reinforces the current Luso-centric hegemonic representation. The language, unessential, mixed and ethereal, hides its cannibalistic force. Along Eduardo Agualusa's literary journey, the Portuguese language dilutes *Africa*. It gets bottled and labelled *Brasil*.

## Chapter 10. António Lobo Antunes *after* language in the entrails of the postempire: *O Esplendor de Portugal*

cabeças, grinaldas de intestino, bastões de couro, de verga, de borracha mergulhados no intervalo das nádegas, nucas esmagadas por pedras, órbitas extraídas com uma colher, um garfo, uma pontinha de faca, os cipaiais avançando a soprar como os cachorros do mato, a mulher nua sem mãos *sem língua* sem peito sem cabelo (Antunes 1997d, 201, my emphasis)

heads, garlands of intestines, pieces of leather, of metal, of rubber shoved in between their buttocks, napes of necks that had been crushed by stones, eyeballs that had been scooped out with a spoon, a fork, the end of a knife, the native soldiers creeping toward him panting heavily like wild dogs, the naked woman with no hands *no tongue* no breasts no hair (Antunes 2011b, 277, my emphasis)<sup>356</sup>

### Introduction

Lobo Antunes is a celebrated Portuguese writer. He studied psychiatry, and served as medical doctor to the Portuguese army in Angola between 1971 and 1973, during Angola's struggle for national liberation. In 1979 he published his first novel, one of several of his that thematised the "colonial war" in Angola. Antunes combined psychiatry and literature until the mid-1980s, when he abandoned medicine, to dedicate himself exclusively to writing.

Antunes' oeuvre has been the object of a myriad of doctoral dissertations, books and journal articles and thematic issues, beside conferences dedicated entirely to it, mainly in Portugal but also abroad. Besides having a wide readership in Portugal, Antunes is one of the most translated Portuguese authors. Lídia Jorge is a white female Portuguese writer of comparable stature and international prestige who also thematises and problematizes Portugal's colonial past, in particular of the war, and its current relationship to the legacy of empire. Jorge's novels are written from a female gaze and protagonism is given to female characters. She is equally an author whose oeuvre figures in the curricula of postcolonial studies and literature in Portugal. However Lobo Antunes is bestowed with an authority and illustriousness that remain unmatched. Luis Madureira pointed out back in 1995 that: "Lobo Antunes has been called one of the great Portuguese novelists of our time. Even though this assessment is usually made in blurbs disseminated by publishing houses, his stature as the (post)modern metropolitan chronicler of the African colonial wars is usually considered summatial" (Madureira 1995, 20). Maria Alzira Seixo indicates that since the publication of *O Manual dos Inquisidores* (1996) (*The Inquisitors' Manual*) the critique of Antunes, which had been split between "exuberâncias de apreço" and "considerações reticentes em função de comportamentos editoriais e pessoais" moved towards a "consagração unânime" (Seixo

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<sup>356</sup> These citations refer to the same passage: the first taken from the original publication in Portuguese, and the second from its translated version by Rhett McNeil. Further references to this novel are given after quotations in the text. Herein after it is referred to as *Esplendor*.

2002, 281).<sup>357</sup> The author has been awarded a series of prestigious (inter-)national prizes, amongst others the Grande Prémio de Romance e Novela da Associação Portuguesa de Escritores in 1986 (Great Prize for Romance and Novel of the Portuguese Writers' Association), the Prize of the União Latina (2003), the Prize Fernando Namora (2004), the Grã-Cruz da Ordem de Santiago (2004), the Jerusalem Prize (2005), the Prize José Donoso (2006), the Camões Prize for Literature (2007), the Prize Terenci Moix (2008), the Juan Rulfo Prize (2008) and the Nonino Prize (2014). In 2008, responding to the recurrent question about not having been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, Antunes said: "Mas repare, só este ano, pareço um cavalo: ganhei o Ibero-Americano, o Terence Moix [Espanha], o Camões pelo meio, agora foi este Juan Rulfo, a coisa francesa [Comendador da Ordem das Artes e das Letras]" (Antunes 2008, 22).<sup>358</sup>

*O Esplendor de Portugal* (1997) is Antunes' twelfth novel. Ana Paula Arnaut extends Antunes' own classification of his novels to include this one in his third cycle, namely the cycle that tackles power, and the exercise of power in Portugal (Arnaut 2009, 16)<sup>359</sup> or better in "uma certa sociedade portuguesa e seus espaços-tempos colaterais" (ibid., 36).<sup>360</sup> This novel hosts important tropes encountered throughout the author's oeuvre and, of particularly relevance for the purposes of this analysis, it centres on *cultural translation* in the troubled (dis)encounter between the Portuguese and *their* Angolan (post)colonial subjects. Language displays and performs the game of hide-and-seek of imperial history that enables the tale of a benevolent colonialism to remain at the core of Portuguese national identity *after* the empire.

According to Maria Alzira Seixo:

O Esplendor de Portugal é decerto o mais total e incisivo destes romances [que Lobo Antunes dedicou à questão colonial], ao perspectivar esta matéria, pelo menos se considerarmos a voz de queixa ou alheamento oriunda da África, isto é, a voz dos que lá nasceram e de lá partiram, ou que ficaram para partirem pela morte, que a sua permanência de vários modos veio a causar. (Seixo 2002, 319)<sup>361</sup>

The novel narrates the events in anticipation of 24th December 1995 in Portugal and Angola simultaneously. In Almada (Portugal), Carlos, one of the three siblings of a family of Portuguese settlers to Angola, and his wife Lena, await his brother Rui and sister Clarisse for the Supper (*Santa Ceia*) after a 15-year period of absence. All three "returned" to Portugal at the time of the Angolan civil war. In Angola, his mother Isilda abandons the family cotton farmhouse in Chiquita (Baixa do Cassanje), in the company

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<sup>357</sup> Transl.: between "exuberance of appreciation" and "reticent considerations due to editorial and personal behavior" moved towards a "unanimous consecration."

<sup>358</sup> Transl.: "But note, this year alone, I am like a horse: I won the Ibero-American, the Terence Moix [Spain], the half of the Camões, now this Juan Rulfo, the French thing [Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters]."

<sup>359</sup> The first cycle is *aprendizagem* (learning) and the second is epopees. Ana Paula Arnaut, *António Lobo Antunes* (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2009), 19.

<sup>360</sup> Transl.: "a certain Portuguese society and its collateral time-spaces."

<sup>361</sup> Transl.: "*The Splendour of Portugal* is certainly the most complete and incisive of these novels [that Lobo Antunes dedicated to the colonial question], to approach this matter, at least if we consider the voice of complaint or estrangement originated in Africa, that is, the voice of those born [in Africa] who left, or stayed to leave through death, which was caused in various ways by their stay."

of her *empregadas* (servants) Maria da Boa Morte and Josélia, attempting to escape the civil war fighters. The narrative zigzags across critical episodes of family life as memorised by its characters, traversing colonial times from 1978, through the struggle for national liberation, until Christmas Eve of 1995, in the midst of the Angolan civil war. Two generations of this family, mother and children, tell their story of (un)settlement in Angola and Portugal, in the days of imperial colonialism and its aftermath.

In essence, in the author's words: “[*O Esplendor de Portugal* é] sobre uma mãe, que está em Angola, e três filhos que ela pôs no barco para cá em finais dos anos setenta.”<sup>362</sup> He comments that the book was more than well received by critics in Portugal: “Já reparou que, com este livro, se fez a unanimidade em Portugal?” (Antunes 1997c).<sup>363</sup>

The historical context in which the novel is embedded, and which permeates its pages, is one of the dispute for control of Angola between Lisbon and the colonial settlers, of international involvement in Angola's struggle from both sides of the Cold War, the demise of colonialism, independence and return of colonial settlers to the former metropolis. Antunes is telling the story of a family of Portuguese colonialists in Angola and a fragment of Portuguese imperial history. This is a narrative of the disparity between imperial fantasy and colonial violence, of their improbable and yet nevertheless actual cohabitation. It is about the messiness of the imperial enterprise, as Antunes explains:

É disso tudo que eu falo, da compra dos Bailundos cá de baixo da maneira como os chefes colaboravam com o negócio, dos cubos de gelo pelo rabo acima para aqueles que não queriam trabalhar, dos enforcamentos que ainda vi. Era muito brutal tudo aquilo, muito estranho para um portuguêsinho qualquer da Metrópole. (Antunes 1997c, 39)<sup>364</sup>

And it is about imperial hierarchy (sexual, origin/class and race/colour), whereby the colonial settler “carries the burden” of the Portuguese empire, in the words of the writer:

[*O Esplendor de Portugal* f]ala dos colonos brancos em África, das suas complexas relações com os negros e das suas ainda mais complexas relações com os brancos de Lisboa. Após a independência das colónias, regressam à metrópole e continuam a viver aqui como se estivessem em África. (Antunes 1997a, 4)<sup>365</sup>

It is an exclusively Portuguese tale, as the imperial subject is its enunciator, and the story takes place within the centre of the imperial narrative (colonial *Africa*).<sup>366</sup> It

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<sup>362</sup> Transl.: “[*The Splendour of Portugal* is] about a mother, who is in Angola, and three children that she put on the boat to come here in the late seventies.”

<sup>363</sup> Transl.: “Have you noticed that with this book, unanimity was made in Portugal?”

<sup>364</sup> Transl.: “I talk about all this, the purchase of Bailundos from here below the way the chiefs collaborated with the business, of ice cubes by the arses up for those who did not want to work, of the hangings that I still saw. It was all very brutal, very strange for a little Portuguese of the Metropolis.”

<sup>365</sup> Transl.: “[*The Splendour of Portugal*] talks about the white settlers in Africa, about their complex relationships with blacks and their even more complex relationships with the whites of Lisbon. After the independence of the colonies, they return to the city and continue to live here as if they were in Africa.”

<sup>366</sup> As argued previously, “Africa” is, in the postempire, an imaginary phantasmagoric place.

reveals the empire's constitutive and problematic formula, namely benevolence and the civilising mission alongside violence. The novel proposes language as the vehicle for the cultural translation that the colonial settler is continuously performing in order to rhyme barbarism and civilisation.

The reading is arduous and one longs to know about Christmas Eve, expecting and hoping for a family affair *less* marred by violence. Antunes does not respond to this longing and betrays the promise of an appeasing happiness imbued in imperial nostalgia. According to the writer, "it costs dearly to seek a lie and find the truth. . . . The only way it seems to me to approach the novels that I write is to catch them in the same manner that one catches an illness" (Antunes 2011a, 16, 15).

Antunes' writing is visceral: "Acho que, no fundo, escrevo com o corpo todo" (Antunes 2006c, 138)<sup>367</sup> and demands the same investment from the reader: "Quero que o leitor, durante a leitura, fique todo mergulhado" (ibid., 141).<sup>368</sup> This immersion serves the purpose of self-knowledge geared towards the maturation of the infantile imperial subject. His novels, he affirms, must be read as "an initiation to the wilderness where the visitor will have his flesh consumed in solitude and in happiness" for "the encounter with fatal darkness, indispensable to the rebirth and renovation of the spirit" (Antunes 2011a, 16).

In *O Esplendor de Portugal*, Christmas is a trap into the empire and its afterlife. This is a novel of imperial nostalgia; it is made of it and problematizes it. It is a graphic account of Portuguese colonialism, the rotten entrails of which are *offered* to the reader on a silver plate.

This novel exposes the violence of the colonial enterprise, including the violence of narrating the empire from this positionality, in this sense the violence of language. I will explore this literary construction of a "situation" beyond language, for its violence defies the rules of contact/*encounter* among human beings. This chapter will delve into this situation, which I coin *after language* - for it has been negated - in the postempire that is itself a situation of negation, for coloniality lives on in the *post* of imperial debris.

## Narrative

*O Esplendor de Portugal* presents aspects of the narrative that have become Antunes' trademarks, including lack of punctuation, the interruption of a narration or speech by another one, juxtaposition, repetition, and going back-and-forth.<sup>369</sup> The text is therefore

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<sup>367</sup> Transl.: "I think, deep down, that I write with the whole body."

<sup>368</sup> Transl.: "I want that the reader gets all submerged while reading."

<sup>369</sup> See Ana Paula Arnaut's "Apresentação" (15-52): "apresentação fragmentária da narrativa" (24), "prolixidade de vozes e de pontos de vista," "movimentos retrospectivos e laterais" (32). In *Esplendor*: "suspensões semânticas inusitadas," "frases entrecortadas" (41), and "desmembramento de frases" (42). Ana Paula Arnaut, *Antônio Lobo Antunes* (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2009), 255. Transl.: "Introduction:": "fragmentary presentation of the narrative" (24) "prolixity of voices and points of view," "backward and sideways movements" (32). In *Esplendor*: "unexpected semantic suspensions," "broken sentences" (41), and "dismemberment of phrases."

disorderly and untidy, which lends it an effect of introspection and intimacy. It is apparently unpolished. The story, despite its narrative turns and detours, progresses steadily by accumulation. Each chapter adds memorised fragments of family history and of the history of the empire, which enable piecing the puzzle together. Ana Paula Arnaut terms the composition *As Naus* (1988) (*The Return of the Caravels*), another of Antunes' novels, as "um xadrez narrativo" (Arnaut 2009, 34).<sup>370</sup> According to Antunes, this is a manner of "escrever por detrás, às avessas" in the same fashion as in other novels, whereby "histórias-vivências se recuperam do(s) passado(s) para o presente" (quoted in Arnaut 2009, 34, 33).<sup>371</sup>

Memory, desire, past, present, and life in Portugal and Angola stand side-by-side and are mixed. This convoluted temporality serves the purpose of exposing colonial continuities. According to Arnaut, the impression left in the reader is that "não saímos de um eterno presente onde convergem ecos vários de passados e de vozes mais ou menos distantes" (ibid., 32).<sup>372</sup> The narrative seems anachronistic but it is not. It brings to the fore the afterlife of the empire, the imperial legacy enacted through repeated practices (patterns) and tropes, which guarantee its passing on from generation to generation, until death. According to Paulo de Medeiros, *Esplendor* is exemplary of this strategy:

[A] permuta temporal entre um passado que nunca deixou de ser presente e o presente que só o é em virtude desse mesmo passado; um presente que acaba por se confundir com o passado, numa estratégia de escrita com grande poder. (Medeiros 2007a, 147)<sup>373</sup>

Beside this exchangeable temporality, Antunes crafts a narrative that is radically fragmented. The novel shows how memory works, namely by association: "o cabo confundindo o passado com a memória" (222-223).<sup>374</sup> The narration of events is often interrupted by fragments of the past. A pleasant moment might be disrupted by a past or present violent event. This interference, an unwanted eruption, reveals violence as naturalised but inscribed in memory. On other occasions, when violence surmounts the affordable for the imperial gaze, a pleasant memory is rescued, as a purposeful discontinuation, which performs an escape.

Moreover, the narrative is flooded with repetitions and unanswered rhetorical questions, which indicate a haunting: "Sempre soubeste que eu era preto, não soubeste, Lena?" (93).<sup>375</sup> Repetitions also denote an enclosure in a narrow self-centred space where the

<sup>370</sup> Transl.: "a narrative chess game."

<sup>371</sup> Transl.: "Write backwards, in reverse"... "stories-experiences are recovered from the past(s) to the present."

<sup>372</sup> Transl.: "We do not go out of an eternal present where diverse echoes of the past and of more or less distant voices converge."

<sup>373</sup> Transl.: "[The] time exchange between a past that never ceased to be present and the present that is only present because of that very past; a present that ends up confusing itself with the past, in a writing strategy with great power."

<sup>374</sup> Corresponding text in English: "the corporal confusing the past with his memories." (308) Hereafter, citations to *O Esplendor de Portugal* will only be followed by the page number. As in the previous chapters, I have privileged citations from the original novel in Portuguese, whenever possible, in order to convey the rhythm of Lobo Antunes's literary language. Therefore, page numbers of citations in Portuguese refer to the original. The corresponding English citations from this novel are from the translated book by Rhett McNeil.

<sup>375</sup> Corresponding text in English: "You always knew I was black didn't you Lena?" (127)

characters seek refuge. In this *enclave* or compound, the settler closes her/his eyes and ears to what happens *outside*. This enclosure enables the denial of the imperial *lesser side*.

The fact that there are four narrators in *Esplendor* lends the text to be read as polyphonic. The matriarch Isilda exposes the workings of the empire in its daily mischievous administration and its façade of parties, dinners and socialite life. Her daughter Clarisse is *offered* as the social image of female promiscuity and despising social conventions. The son Carlos embodies the troubled mid-way positionality of the *mestiço* - born out of an illicit relation between his father, Portuguese, white, and a black Angolan woman - within and in charge of his white family. And there is the son Rui, of uncertain paternity, who personifies the forceful contention of (human/colonial) violence, as he is institutionalised for his epilepsy and anti-social episodes of rage. This collective of dystopian characters constitute a selective polyphony as, in fact, *Esplendor* is made out of voices of the empire.

Discussing the autobiographical weight of Antunes' novels, Ana Paula Arnaut rescues one of his interviews, which I appropriate for making the case of the positioning of the oeuvre: "A propósito dos meus livros, fala-se muito de escrita polifónica. Penso que não: é sempre a mesma voz que modula, que muda, que se altera. É uma única voz que habita o livro e tem uma densidade humana muito grande" (quoted in Arnaut 2009, 38)<sup>376</sup>

Elaborating on the same biographical question, Maria Alzira Seixo places Antunes' fiction in the situation of the Portuguese contemporary circumstances (the "colonial war," the *Revolução do 25 de Abril* - Revolution of 25 April 1974 - the post-revolutionary period) but also particularly in the lived experience of the author (ambiences of childhood and youth, family characters, medicine, psychiatry, broken marriage, himself having served in the "colonial war" in Angola) that is mirrored in his characters (Seixo 2002, 91). In a way, we can consider Antunes' fiction as testimonial and exemplary of a life experience that has served as raw material for shaping collective memory, despite and indeed because of the big chunks erased, which come back with a vengeance. According to Paulo de Medeiros:

Na escrita de Lobo Antunes também dois elementos quase se confundem, o registo autobiográfico ou de índole semi-autobiográfica, e a ficção, dando lugar a um imaginário único e marcadamente pessoal que ao mesmo tempo é também extremamente representativo da colectividade. (Medeiros 2007a, 139)<sup>377</sup>

The apparent polyphony in *Esplendor* shapes a collectivity out of mere cohabitation, devoid of interaction, in spite of language. The novel is rather a collection of monologues. There is no actual communication or attachment but introspection whereby the individual emerges as self-sufficient. Effectively, language does not enable contact but reinforces separation. The characters are either purposefully on their own,

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<sup>376</sup> Transl.: "As for my books, there is much talk of a polyphonic writing. I don't think so: it is always the same voice that modulates, that changes, that alters itself. It is a unique voice that inhabits the book and has a very high human density."

<sup>377</sup> Transl.: "In the writing of Lobo Antunes two elements get almost mixed up, the autobiographical register or of semi-autobiographical character, and fiction, giving room to a unique and distinctly personal imaginary that at the same time is also extremely representative of the collectivity."

alone and unaware, or sadly solitary, such as the mother Isilda rehearsing the address of imaginary advice to her absent children: “e eu como se falasse com eles ... a pedir que se agasalhassem ... a enviar mais abraços” (60).<sup>378</sup>

They are doomed to the matrimonial forceful cohabitation of unrelated individuals: “as frases azedas ou a mudez ofendida, auto-suficiente” (84).<sup>379</sup> The conversation is actually an introspection: “Chamava-a [à mãe morta] baixinho quase sem som, dentro de mim” (101).<sup>380</sup> The interlocutor is often phantasmagorical: “De conversa com os finados ... no deserto ... convencida que os mortos lhe respondiam, que mais alguma coisa poderia conversar com ela para além do mar ... cada búzio com um ecozinho lá dentro – Eu eu eu eu eu” (154).<sup>381</sup>

Discussing another of Antunes' novels, *A Ordem Natural das Coisas* (1992) (*The Natural Order of Things*), Ana Paula Arnaut refers to an interview where Antunes points out the operation of substituting “diálogos pelos monólogos sobrepostos” (Arnaut 2009, 40).<sup>382</sup> In *Esplendor* the same applies, whereby intercalated voices engage in a deaf dialogue.

The workings of language are paradigmatic for other aspects of the dysfunctional relationship between the characters. They co-habit, through a shared memory, but their conviviality is not marked by human contact or touch. The drunken patriarch Amadeu has lost his paternal touch in sorrow, while Clarisse fears contamination by her epileptic brother: “o meu pai ... sem se aproximar, incapaz de pegar em mim ... a Clarisse com vontade de tocar-me como se toca numa ferida esquisita” (159-160).<sup>383</sup> Yet there is also a colonial prescription not to contact or touch colonial subjects/*servants* for that would constitute breaching the established hierarchy: “a Josélia a aproximar-se sem se atrever a tocar-me porque uma jinga não toca na patroa” (179).<sup>384</sup>

Hereby Antunes reveals the painful limitations of communication, either constitutive or self-imposed. Language exposes the very impossibility of a (verbal) encounter: “O nosso sonho é sempre sermos entendidos sem termos de falar. Queremos que o outro nos entenda sem dizermos uma palavra” (Antunes 1997b, 5).<sup>385</sup> Silence is an aspiration for language “performs” rather than fosters actual human contact. Commenting on *Exortação aos Crocodilos* (1999) (*Exhortation to the crocodiles*), Antunes stated that

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<sup>378</sup> Corresponding text in English: “and me pretending to talk to them ... telling them to keep warm ... sending them my love again.” (79)

<sup>379</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the unkind comments or the offended silences, self-sufficient.” (114)

<sup>380</sup> Corresponding text in English: “I’d softly call her [the dead mother’s] name, silently, inside my head.” (138)

<sup>381</sup> Corresponding text in English: “conversing with the dead ... in the desert ... positive that the dead would reply to her, that something aside from the sea itself would talk to her ... every little echo in every conch shell ‘I I I I I’.” (211-212)

<sup>382</sup> Transl.: “dialogues by overlapping monologues.”

<sup>383</sup> Corresponding text in English: “my father ... without coming near me, unable to hold me ... Clarisse with a morbid desire to touch me the way one touches a terrible wound.” (219-220)

<sup>384</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Josélia coming near me but not daring to touch me because a Jinga doesn’t touch her boss.” (246)

<sup>385</sup> Transl.: “Our dream is to be always understood without having to speak. We want that the other understands us without us saying a word.”

this was his best novel thus far: “É onde estou mais perto do silêncio, da vida, das pessoas, de uma simplicidade que nunca atingirei” (Antunes 2000, 28).<sup>386</sup>

Altogether, Antunes stages a purposeful attack on the narrative form (canon), whereby a non-linear and fragmented text conveys the impression of chaos, which is enhanced by the voices that interlace but do not touch. The lack of punctuation heightens the overburden of the narrative into the reader. The narrative transmits the fears and neuroses of the characters and of the times as experienced by them. With regard to Antunes' “ritmo torrencial e excessiva carga,”<sup>387</sup> Ana Paula Arnaut refers to Clara Ferreira Alves' criticism of his *Auto dos Danados* (1985) (*Act of the Damned*) for its “excesso a todos os níveis” (quoted in Arnaut 2009, 20).<sup>388</sup> The author purposefully engages with excess as a literary strategy. Language gains life, will and a violent materiality.

And the surprise comes from the realization that there is no narrative in the usual sense of the term but only long concentric circles that contract and apparently suffocate us. And they suffocate us apparently so that we can breath better. (Antunes 2011a, 16)

Arnaut calls attention to the effect of estrangement that meets the reader of such apparently disorderly texts, conveying an impression of entropy. She argues that the subversive reunion of such innovative elements (form and contents) compose dense stories, which have *more body* and *more soul* (Arnaut 2009, 17). Such dense stories are shaped with dexterity through the use of language freed from naïve embellishment and social convention. Antunes uses colloquial language and narrates as if the story is unfolding at the moment when the eye sees it, at first glance. In other words, it is such as if this was an unguarded (or undisciplined) narrative. According to the author himself, value is found in abdicating virtuosity in favour of efficacy (Antunes 2000, 27). As several of Antunes' public statements, this one must be taken with suspicion. The efficacy of his writing is established by the thoughtful construction of a *hyper-realistic*, actually of a baroque narrative. Still, the text apparently follows the talking and walking in the world, which mimics the process whereby memory and experience are formed. It is a highly personal account that does not respect the prescribed narrative of the novel. Yet, is Antunes construing another canon hereby? He says:

You will only understand what I conveniently called novels, just as I could have called them poems, visions, what have you, if you see them as something else. Each of you must renounce your own key, the one we all have with which to open life, our own and that of others, and use the key that the text gives you. (Antunes 2011a, 15)

In my understanding, Antunes is moving beyond the requirements of novel writing. He is defying the canon through non-conformity.

Because my novels are much simpler than they appear: they are, as novels in general, the experience of cannibalism through continual hunger, and the struggle against incalculable but practical adventures. The problem is they lack what is essential: the intense dignity of a whole creature. (Antunes 2011a, 17)

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<sup>386</sup> Transl.: “That's where I'm closer to silence, to life, to people, to a simplicity that I'll never reach.”

<sup>387</sup> Transl.: “torrential pace and excessive load.”

<sup>388</sup> Transl.: “excess at all levels.”

Ana Paula Arnaut points to Antunes' wish - stated in successive interviews - to "transformar a arte do romance" (quoted in Arnaut 2009, 23).<sup>389</sup> She identifies here lines of continuity but also, and more importantly, of rupture with traditional fiction (inspired by the work of the acclaimed Portuguese writer José Cardoso Pires), namely the fragmented narrative, the collage of voices, and the characteristic post-modernist refusal to impose a pre-established order for comprehending the world (ibid., 24-25).

Antunes *can* attack the canon, for he belongs to it, and institute another authoritative literary form, as he is a white Portuguese man and a member of the bourgeoisie. He positions himself alongside the western literary canon, frequently citing as literary companions/influences: Camões, Cortazar, Tolstoi, Conrad, Stendhal, Turgueniev, Pushkin, Brontë, Lewis Carroll, Dickens, Thackeray, Wilkie Collins, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, and George Elliot. Asked about his (allegedly Jewish) roots, Antunes affirmed "O meu país é o país de Tchecov e de Velazquez" (Antunes 2005, 122).<sup>390</sup>

The praise Antunes received from literary and wider intellectual circles in the western world affirms his membership status. The author is presented by critics as a literary phenomenon that departs from the raw material offered by Portuguese history and culture, arriving at the core of a wider space, namely the West. Eunice Cabral posits that Antunes' novels, and in particular his early work, exhibit constant references not only to Portuguese but to western culture (Cabral 2006, 22). The author's membership of the establishment has not been threatened by his cunning experimentation. Antunes does that with rigour and flair, in Arnaut's words, a "virtuosismo linguístico narrativo" (Arnaut 2009, 41).<sup>391</sup> The author is an *eschatological aesthete*.

## Conceptions of language

*O Esplendor de Portugal* is about the boundaries of language and representation. It is not about the limits of language per se (as for the unspeakability of violence) but about the perversity of cultural translation, for the narrator/translator has a particular positionality in the asymmetrical power relation with *the other*. The boundaries of language are policed so that only what is expressed exists. Language stands here for the vacuous quality of that what is represented, the myth and fantasy of a *good colonialism*, and it exposes its true face. The imperial subject that is each of the voices in the novel, and all combined, is either running away from the fact of the empire like the three wise monkeys covering their eyes, ears and mouths, or immersed in its blood and faeces – and often both. The tropes that emerge out of the text around the topic of language manifest the limits of hiding in plain sight, allowing the author to explore the mechanism of occluding imperial violence while shedding light on it.

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<sup>389</sup> Transl.: "transform the art of romance."

<sup>390</sup> Transl.: "My country is the country of Chekhov and Velazquez."

<sup>391</sup> Transl.: "narrative linguistic virtuosity."

## The hollow language

In *Esplendor*, language is the costume of the Portuguese colonial settler's bourgeoisie. It is an aspect of its vanity, which Antunes links with the female characters and social codes of the settler's life in the colony. Therefore language is mere noise, where hollowness is associated mainly with the white feminine in the performance of civility and domesticity. The narration of recurrent dining rituals foregrounds criticism to the frivolity of bourgeois European life transposed to the colony: "as pessoas numa conspiração de sorrisinhos" (361).<sup>392</sup> Commenting on *O Manual dos Inquisidores* (1996), Antunes posits that the novel only portrays a certain social class:

[E]ste romance pretende mostrar mulheres snobes. Mas eu não inventei nada, absolutamente nada. Apenas me limitei a recuperar personagens da camada social onde nasci. O romance é um retrato dessa camada social superior: esses homens, essas mulheres ocas. (Antunes 1997b, 5)<sup>393</sup>

In *Esplendor*, settler women perform plays with language as a hollow object in order to conform to white femininity: "Porque sou mulher e me educaram para ser mulher, entender fingindo que não entendia (bastava trocar as palavras para uma espécie de distração divertida)" (102).<sup>394</sup> Isilda incorporates the hollowness of the secluded life of the empire and its façade. Language is fixated as a property of the feminine, and *as such*, it is presented in the novel as being devoid of meaning. When choosing a gravestone to her mother, Isilda is guided by this absence: "escolhi [o anjo] do livro, que um livro, mesmo sem nada escrito, custoso de folhear, sempre entretém um bocado" (221).<sup>395</sup>

Language is vanity. The object mirror often figures in the novel, bringing to light this critique of *the crust*, of the outside skin devoid of content, of characters devoid of humanity, and of the empire that is an empty building. Language here is no expression of an inner self but only appearance and reflexion. The gaze of the colonial settler is the projection of her/his white imagination, fantasy and desire onto a *blank* cloth, i.e. Angola:

e o que se nota no espelho é tremura de ausência, um eco de nada, o poço onde uma cara de afogado que não é a minha retira com um pedaço de algodão o lápis de pálpebras que não me pertencem buscando-se entre as manchas da idade e o ácido do estanho que corroe o vidro. (49)<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> Corresponding text in English: "all these people involved in a conspiracy of whispers." (506)

<sup>393</sup> Transl.: "This novel aims to show snobbish women. But I did not invent anything, absolutely nothing. I only limited myself to retrieve characters from the social layer where I was born. The novel is a picture of this higher social layer: these men, these hollow women."

<sup>394</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Because I'm a woman and they taught me to be a woman, which is to say that they taught me to understand while pretending that I didn't understand (all you have to do is feign detached amusement instead of talking)." (139)

<sup>395</sup> Corresponding text in English: "I chose the one [angel] with the book because a book, even if there's nothing written in it, takes a while to leaf through, and always keeps one entertained for a while." (306-307)

<sup>396</sup> Corresponding text in English: "what you notice in the mirror is a tremor of absence, an echo of nothingness, a well where the face of a drowning victim, which isn't mine, is withdrawing from the scene with a cotton ball and an eyeliner pencil that aren't mine looking for each other amid the traces of old age and the acid from the tin that's corroded the mirror." (62)

Another meaning of the mirror in the novel is the incongruence between the perceived reality (imperial fantasy) and the reflection offered, which is not necessarily amelioration but a deformation. Interviewed about his *Que farei quando tudo arde?* (2001) (*What Can I Do When Everything's on Fire?*), Antunes comments on the novel as a quest for identity: “É um jogo de espelhos, mas o problema é que todos os espelhos são ligeiramente deformados, quanto mais não seja somos canhotos nos espelhos, não somos completamente nós” (Antunes 2001, 16).<sup>397</sup> Maria Alzira Seixo indicates the persistence of this disparity between the character's perceived reality and the outside world as a *descoincidência* (discoincidence):

Essa descoincidência (que nos romances sobre a guerra colonial aparece como estranheza da personagem em relação a si própria e em relação aos outros e ao ambiente circundante) manifesta-se também ... na relação da personagem consigo mesma. (Seixo 2002, 361)<sup>398</sup>

The novel explores this disparity through the reliance on the common places of the Portuguese empire. The ubiquity of this particular vocabulary naturalises imperial hegemony. Hereby racism and Whiteness, Eurocentrism/Lusocentrism, sexism and elitism/class domination are embedded in ordinary talk, establishing what is a habit, normative, natural: what effectively constitutes the order of this world. According to this order, delivering a *mestiço* progeny entails getting far away from whiteness, which means falling down the colonial hierarchy: “não queria engravidar de mim para não trazer a vergonha de um mestiço na barriga (90).”<sup>399</sup> This order establishes the status of black women as the settler's property: “Uma jinga que herdei da minha mãe ... não tanto por dó mas por inércia, preguiça, comodismo, hábito” (178).<sup>400</sup> Following this order, blackness is located outside the realm of normality and normativity, which is white and European. It dooms the black subject to servitude: “Pelo menos não sou preta como tú, sou normal ... podias ser meu criado (143).”<sup>401</sup>

Antunes uncovers the actual (reflex) image of the settler and the imperial order at the moment that this order is violently interrupted. It leaves an indignant and nostalgic settler:

à cata de uma cidade de brancos como eu onde pudesse ser branca a Maria da Boa Morte pudesse ser preta, o mundo redescobrisse a sua ordem antiga ... a segurança e a paz para além do espelho (250); a convencer os africanos que eram iguais a nós e de quem os africanos troçavam com desconfiança respeitosa (173); a morte, quando toda gente sabe que só os pretos morrem (132).<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> Transl.: “It is a game of mirrors, but the problem is that all mirrors are slightly deformed; even we are not left-handed, in the mirrors we are; we are not completely ourselves.”

<sup>398</sup> Transl.: “This descoincidence (that in the novels about the colonial war appears as strangeness of the character in relation to herself and in relation to others and to the surrounding environment) also manifests itself ... in the relationship of the character with herself.”

<sup>399</sup> Corresponding text in English: “she never wanted me to get her pregnant because she didn't want the shame of having a mulatto baby in her womb.” (123)

<sup>400</sup> Corresponding text in English: “a Jinga whom I inherited from my mother ... not so much out of pity but out of inertia, out of laziness, out of convenience, out of habit.” (244)

<sup>401</sup> Corresponding text in English: “At least I'm not black like you, I am a normal white person ... you could have been my servant” (195).

<sup>402</sup> Corresponding text in English: “searching for a city full of white people like me where I could be white, where Maria da Boa Morte could be black, where the world could regain the order of the days gone by ... a sense of security, a sense of peace [beyond the mirror]” (348); “trying to convince the

The author purposefully stains the pages of the novel with an uncensored imperial narrative. This narrative confronts the widespread story of Portuguese colonialism as soft and friendly. Antunes seeks to expose this flawed story:

It is necessary that our trust in common values dissolves page by page, that our deceptive interior cohesion gradually loses the meaning that it does not possess and yet that we gave it, in order that another order be born from that shock, perhaps bitter but inevitable. (Antunes 2011a, 16)

In discussing Antunes' novel *Fado Alexandrino* (1983) (published in English with the same title), Luís Madureira accurately calls attention to the attack on the empty signifiers of the "fascist imperial mystique," but also of "the revolutionary fantasy" (borrowed from Eduardo Lourenço). For Madureira, these narratives become "wish fantasies" in Antunes' novels. In a Lacanian reading, the literature scholar notes that the *civilising mission* and equally the April Revolution turn into pure fetish, standing for a lack, an object that is absent. In *Fado Alexandrino*, the revolutionary narrative "remains nothing: an absence incessantly displaced and disguised as something else" (Madureira 2011, 238, 239, 242).

[T]he April Revolution appears bereft of historical meaning, reduced to one in an infinite chain of exchangeable signifiers mobilized to name a desire for totality that cannot but fall short of its object. In Antunes's fiction, Portugal's quest for universality seems as illusory as the *estadonovista* [New State's] yearning for the resurgence of an etiolated imperial glory. (Madureira 2011, 227)

*Esplendor* presents the hollowness of the colonial narrative and its illusive demise with the Revolution, through the overexposure of its resilient rhetorical commonplaces. The gap that is disclosed here is however not only an unintended lack but also the outcome of a deliberate occlusion. This gap is therefore filled up; the occlusion is hidden away and disguised through *cultural translation*.

In *Esplendor* the narrators are in a constant act of *cultural translation*. They pose themselves as actual mediators, or those with the required authority to interpret the *world around* them and the characters that *surround* them. They have recourse to such imperial commonplaces to *guide* the reader through reality. Their *travel guide* appears before our eyes as *radically* imperial and graphically violent. At the same time its recurrent tropes are those that belong to the Portuguese narrative of imperial exceptionality (i.e. non-violent and not racist). *Lusotropicalismo* (or its negation and inversion as evidence of it as fraudulent) informs such an *explanation*: "uma raça detestável e híbrida que aprisionavam por medo na África ... explicava o meu pai ... não só por ignorância mas por amor à África" (244).<sup>403</sup> The settler reads her/his condition as semi-peripheric: "éramos os pretos dos outros da mesma forma que os pretos possuíam os seus pretos e estes os seus pretos ainda em degraus sucessivos descendo ao fundo da miséria, aleijados, leprosos, escravos de escravos, cães, o meu pai

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Africans that they were equal to us, the Africans were suspicious of him and made fun of him, respectfully" (238); "as if death what an absurd idea really existed, when everyone knows that only black people die" (181-182).

<sup>403</sup> Corresponding text in English: "an odious, hybrid race that the Europeans tried to keep locked up far away from them in Africa ... my father used to explain ... not just out of pure ignorance but because of our love for Africa." (339-340)

costumava explicar” (243).<sup>404</sup> The viewpoint of the narrator-translator is that of those who aspire to metropolitan whiteness: “vivemos uma espécie de caricatura da vida deles ... do que queriam tornar-se, os brancos de Lisboa” (246).<sup>405</sup>

From this perspective, an understanding of the crumbling empire is offered: “Pronto a África é dos jingas não é minha acabou-se e venderam-na aos americanos ou alugaram-na aos russos enriquecendo de uma vez conosco, os pretos deles, explicava o meu pai” (355).<sup>406</sup> And the *metropole* is the reference for this explanation and destiny for the imperial subject whose shifting position is well described according to the imperial vocabulary: “o dinheiro da África que em Lisboa vale menos que búzios ... a ilusão do dinheiro e do poder, explicava meu pai” (375).<sup>407</sup> This explanation borrows from the imagery of Portugal as a subaltern empire and semi-peripheric country, and of the Portuguese as bridging subjects between Europe and Africa.<sup>408</sup>

estes fazendeiros tão desgraçados como eu, tão importantes aqui onde não existia ninguém senão nós e os africanos e tão nada em Lisboa onde existia tudo menos nós, os africanos que não passavam de africanos e nós que não passávamos de algo intermédio entre os africanos e eles, todavia mais próximos dos africanos de que deles. (301)<sup>409</sup>

From this perspective, the colonial settler engages in the act of translation that sees in a black child a belligerent threat to imperial rule. In this way a black boy is *murdered by translation* in the most unbearable passages of the novel: “o garoto bailundo a fitar o cabo a fitar o meu pai a fitar-me a mim que roubou um saco de feijão como nos roubou Angola” (202).<sup>410</sup> Hereby, the abject act of taking the life of a child is soothed by the settler’s explanation. This explaining places such an abhorrent act within the settler’s universe. According to this imperial grammar, it is plausible to kill a black child with impunity and without moral reproval just for what he embodies and represents. It is painfully made clear how the novel works with the perversity of the performance of language as cultural translation. Hereby the white colonial settler “explains,” shaping the historical canon, erasing the African other; framing the other that exists merely as mirror to the settler self. Language emerges as an active vector of dehumanisation and invisibilisation.

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<sup>404</sup> Corresponding text in English: “we were blacks to them the same way that blacks owned other blacks and those blacks owned other blacks still, in descending steps that led all the way down to the depths of misery, cripples, lepers, the slaves of slaves, dogs, my father used to explain.” (338-339)

<sup>405</sup> Corresponding text in English: “our lives are a sort of caricature of their lives ... to what they wish they could become, the white people in Lisbon.” (343)

<sup>406</sup> Corresponding text in English: “All right Africa belongs to the Jingas it’s no longer mine it’s over, then selling it to the Americans or renting it to the Russians, getting rich off of us in one fell swoop, we’re their blacks, my father used to explain.” (496)

<sup>407</sup> Corresponding text in English: “this African money that in Lisbon is worth less than conch shells ... the illusion of money and power, my father used to explain.” (526)

<sup>408</sup> These tropes were analysed in the section on Postcolonial Theory.

<sup>409</sup> Corresponding text in English: “these plantation owners, just as miserable as me, so important here where no one else existed except for us and the Africans and so worthless in Lisbon where there was everything except for us, Africans who were nothing more than Africans and us who were nothing more than some intermediate thing between the Africans and them, yet closer to the Africans than to them.” (420)

<sup>410</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the Bailundo kid staring at the corporal staring at my father staring at me, the kid who stole a sack of beans the same way he stole Angola from us.” (277-278)

Language serves to shape the canon by repetition. The imperial gaze is hereby established as a *common understanding* bestowed with authority and naturalness (normalcy/normativity). Names and the act of naming have a fundamental role in this process. The name confirms the pecking order of the empire; that is, a hierarchy built on the basis of gender, race, origin and class. Those higher in the ladder are entitled to name those lower down. According to this hierarchy, which is above all racialised, the other is the marginal white subject or those conditionally white, namely *Esplendor* settler's progeny: the *unruly woman* (Clarisse), the *madman/boy* (Rui) and the *mestiço* (Carlos). The *preto* is effectively outside of the boundary of humanity and language.

Language naturalises white supremacy and the patriarchal ordinance, while banalising colonial violence, both physical and otherwise. The names that populate the vocabulary of *Esplendor* operate according to the tenets of racialised colourism, sexism, ableism and origin/classism. The term/colour "white" recurs throughout the narrative, as it forms the core of the Portuguese imperial imagination. White is the colour of domestication of *blacks*, which is ostentatiously paraded in dining rituals: "à cabeceira da mesa num casarão pilhado servida pelo Damião ou Fernando ... luvas brancas" (39).<sup>411</sup> The insistence of abiding to the colonial code whereby black servants wear white gloves stands for the resilience of imperial fantasy (nostalgia) despite the visible erosion of the empire: "o Damião de fralda branca, luvas brancas e botões danados, eu na Chiquita a levantar-me para os receber com uma lagarta cozida ou um cacho de formigas na palma" (133).<sup>412</sup>

White is the colour of the (disintegrating) order of the ruler, its dress code: "mercenários sul-africanos belgas franceses espanhóis alemães ... assistência de oficiais de farda branca ... numa época em que quase todos os automóveis eram brancos ... a Josélia a Maria da Boa Morte e eu sem laço branco nas tranças, acoradas no chão" (172).<sup>413</sup> The colonial settler holds onto white(ness) in a quest for reassurance about the imperial world setup amid chaos: "- Sou branca ou não sou branca, mãe?" (248).<sup>414</sup>

The term/colour "black" and its particular derogatory form *preto*, is another rhetorical recurrence in *Esplendor*. Black indicates the place of the objectified subject. Borrowing from Afro-Pessimism, the position of the subject has been founded as white (and male), both constructed categories that order the world and position subjects differently in a power scale. The black subject – constitutively the enslaved female but *then* also the enslaved male - is defined by *thingness*, for *it* has been historically constituted as property and remains so in the *afterlife of slavery*. Its name is a curse that must be concealed by *Lusotropical* rhetoric: "os escravos a quem embora continuassem

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<sup>411</sup> Corresponding text in English: "at the head of the table in a mansion that had been looted, waited upon by Damião or Fernando ... white gloves." (50)

<sup>412</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Damião in his white uniform, white gloves, and gold buttons, me in Chiquita standing up to greet them, offering them food, a bite of grilled lizard or a bunch of ants in the palm of my hand." (182)

<sup>413</sup> Corresponding text in English: "South African Belgium French Spanish German mercenaries ... officials in white uniforms ... at a time when almost all the cars were white ... Josélia, Maria da Boa Morte, and me without a white bow in my braided hair, squatting on the ground." (236)

<sup>414</sup> Corresponding text in English: "'I'm white aren't I white Mom?'" (345)

escravos chamávamos portugueses de cor” (103).<sup>415</sup> The black subject is an object. *The Black* as a *not being* is untouchable for it occupies a space outside of the realm of the human.<sup>416</sup> This space, which is moveable at the times of *innocence* (childhood), gets fixated right after: “e suspeitei pela primeira vez que a Maria da Boa Morte e eu não éramos iguais por minha madrinha me não chamar de preta nojenta” (126).<sup>417</sup>

Within the space of *the Black* on the other side of the boundary, the black/Angolan woman is assigned a particular position where the names and markers of exclusion intersect. The black woman in *Esplendor* is the ultimate sexual object: “dar conta de que minha mãe ser mulher deixar de ser mãe para se tornar mulher de tal forma que me apetecia, como às bailundas, rondá-la, tocá-la, farejá-la, tratá-la mal” (229).<sup>418</sup> This object slips smoothly from the category of thing to animal: “- Não conheces criaturas simpáticas?” (314).<sup>419</sup> It remains an other to womanhood, reserved for the white feminine, who doubts of the security of her name/status if she “turns native”: “três mulheres porque sou mulher ou pelo menos porque fui mulher” (106).<sup>420</sup> The category human has a defined temporality in the novel. Once the African woman was a person with a name. Here too childhood refers to a time of *imperial innocence*: “a Maria da Boa Morte que mandei vir da senzala ao casar-me por ser a empregada que me recordava o nome e já não dizia Isilda, dizia patroa, senhora” (130).<sup>421</sup>

The organising principle informing the act of naming is made evident in the place attributed to the quasi-white half-poor, where gender, class and race are entangled. There are those who can rightfully claim the name and those who lack credibility in doing so. There is a hierarchy operating inside whiteness. Clarisse reflects about Carlos and his wife Lena, the descendant of Portuguese settlers that ended up in the poor Angolan *musseques* (shantytowns): “uma espécie de primos da província ou de antigos criados que subiram na vida e não nos tratam por menina já, tratam-nos pelo nome, embora tratar-nos pelo nome lhes soe falso ou a pecado” (367).<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> Corresponding text in English: “slaves that even though they were still slaves we called Portuguese people of colour.” (140)

<sup>416</sup> The theorisation proposed by Afro-Pessimism has been briefly dealt with in the Introduction to this dissertation. There I have relied on concepts offered by Hortense Spillers, Frank Wilderson and Saidiya Hartman, to which I am referring here. See: Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987); Frank B. Wilderson, “Gramsci’s Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society?” *Social Identities* 9, no. 2 (2003), 225-240.; and Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

<sup>417</sup> Corresponding text in English: “and for the first time I began to suspect that Maria da Boa Morte and I weren’t equals, since my godmother hadn’t called me a repulsive little black girl.” (172)

<sup>418</sup> Corresponding text in English: “it made me take notice of my mother as a woman, she stopped being my mother and turned into a woman, so much so that I wanted to get close to her, the way I did with the Bailundas, to smell her, touch her, treat her badly.” (318-319)

<sup>419</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Don’t you know any sweet young things?” (438)

<sup>420</sup> Corresponding text in English: “three women because I’m a woman or at least I was a woman.” (144)

<sup>421</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Maria da Boa Morte whom I brought up to the house from the workers’ quarters after I got married because she was the one servant we had whose name I still remembered and she no longer called me Isilda, she called me Mrs., she called me ma’am.” (178)

<sup>422</sup> Corresponding text in English: “they were like cousins who live in the country or elderly servants who had moved up in the world and no longer address you as young lady they address you by your name even though it sounds unnatural or uncouth when they say it.” (513-514)

The term/colour *mulatto* is another of the rhetorical recurrences guided by colourism in *Esplendor*. Colourism, which is the attribution of higher value (and status) to those of lighter skin colour, has an important role in determining the social location of subjects in the Portuguese empire.<sup>423</sup> Different to the places allocated to whites and blacks, the *mulatto* inhabits the place of the unspoken (rule) of the empire: “Clarisse ... a chamarme o que nunca me chamavam, o que todos conheciam e evitavam falar” (72).<sup>424</sup> The *mulatto* is the malleable middle field of Portuguese imperialism, who is haunted by blackness. The black object is a narrative space that serves to exercise control upon the *mulatto*: “se fosse preto podia andar descalço sem me ralharem ... e ninguém na escola me chamava de nomes nem batia” (98).<sup>425</sup>

Colourism matches name and racial ranking of the mixed-coloured subject: “o Carlos escondido ao meio de nós com medo de o descobrirem entre os brancos, se chamarem uns aos outros, o chamarem, lhe baterem com a coronhada – mulato, mulato... o mestiço do Carlos” (281);<sup>426</sup> “a minha avó ... tratando-o conforme tratava os bailundos, na mesma impaciência exasperada” (182).<sup>427</sup> As the *mulatto* betrays the alleged whiteness of the empire, it can only come into existence (through the act of naming) in the confines of the domestic space. This utterance dangerously confronts the colonial settler with his stained whiteness: “– Não sou avó de um mestiço as folhas do jornal encolheram-se como se o meu pai definhasse atrás delas ... – O que é ser mestiço mãe?” (310)<sup>428</sup>

The name reveals what is consistently denied, facing the *mulatto* with the cognitive dissonance (*desconciência*) installed by the *Lusotropical* rhetoric, and indicating his *rightful place* in the imperial order. The utterance forces the *mulatto* to confront the overdetermined character of his racialised body:

as feições e a pele e o cabelo que nenhum branco aceitava e descobri em mim no dia em que a Maria da Boa Morte me disse na cozinha, não me tratando por menino como aos meus irmãos, tratando-me por tu ... como se valesse o mesmo que eu, fosse minha igual – Tú é preto ... eu sem entender. (90)<sup>429</sup>

<sup>423</sup> Colourism highlights the differential distribution of benefits to those of lighter-skin with a spectrum from what is socially and historically considered “black” to “white.” For a founding definition of colourism, see: Alice Walker, *In Search of our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 397. I borrow Walker’s definition but highlight that the place of a subject within the scale between whiteness and blackness differs according to different geography and history.

<sup>424</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Clarisse ... calling me a name that nobody ever called me, a name that everyone knew and avoided using.” (97)

<sup>425</sup> Corresponding text in English: “because if I was black I could walk around barefoot and no one would scold me ... and no one would call me names or beat me up at school.” (133-134)

<sup>426</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Carlos hidden among us, scared that they’d find him among the whites and call each other over, call out to him, beat him with the butt of their guns ‘Mulatto mulatto’ ... Carlos the mulatto.” (392)

<sup>427</sup> Corresponding text in English: “my grandmother ... treating him the same way she treated the Bailundos, with the same exasperated impatience.” (249)

<sup>428</sup> Corresponding text in English: “– I am not the grandmother of a mulatto’ the pages of the newspaper shrank, as if my father were withering away behind them ... ‘What’s a mulatto Mom?’” (433)

<sup>429</sup> Corresponding text in English: “there was a different appearance and skin and hair that no white person would ever accept, one that I discovered in myself on the day that Maria da Boa Morte told me in the kitchen, she didn’t address me as a ‘child’ the way she did my brother and sister, she called me ‘you’ using the informal *tu* ... as though she and I were the same, as if she were my equal ‘You’re black’ ... me not understanding.” (122)

This *anti-Lusotropical* enunciation threatens the nucleus of the imperial myth. It is as if the racial position of the *mullato* would not operate if not named, since he is a settler (and therefore allegedly white). Its assertion is therefore only tolerated if uttered by a rightful holder of whiteness, the one that may respond to his childhood query: “É verdade que sou preto?” (92).<sup>430</sup> Maria da Boa Morte responds and pays for this act of naming (responding) with torture. She will not utter it again: “– Por favor menino” (92).<sup>431</sup> Conversely, the army officer, lover of Isilda, may declare it as he pleases, a recurrent declaration which became inprinted in Carlos memory: “nunca Carlos, rapaz, a Clarisse era Clarisse, o Rui era Rui, eu – *Tú és preto* era rapaz por a Maria da Boa Morte dizer” (96).<sup>432</sup>

In accordance with this regime, not everyone can equally assert all names. The stakes are high for there is much investment in hiding the *descoincidência* that is foundational to the empire. The mulatto holds this fragile mythology in place. Carlos is the host of cognitive dissonance. He is a foreign/stranger to the language of the empire that does not speak his “actual” self:

me surpreendia com o meu nome ... chamavam um Carlos que era eu em elas não era eu nem era eu em eu ... e o Carlos deles não existia para mim, lembrei-me que em Luanda ou na fazenda ... eram as únicas ocasiões em que de fato dormia com o eu em eu, dormia comigo repetindo Carlos Carlos até a palavra Carlos esvaziada de nexo não significar nada salvo um som ... pele que se larga, não o eco de um eco mas um corpo sem vida fora da vida deles, e então podia fechar os olhos ... e dissolver o meu eu em mim. (114-115)<sup>433</sup>

Carlos personifies the clash between the *hyper-Lusotropical* narrative and the *anti-Lusotropical* assertion. He is the fracture or the hiatus that constitutes the Portuguese empire. Ana Margarida Fonseca encounters in *Esplendor* “a desmistificação da apologia luso-tropicalista do mulato”<sup>434</sup> in the explanation of Amadeu (Carlos’ father) about the *habit* of Angolan women to accept the sexual invitations of white men, for otherwise they risk being shot or found hanging somewhere (Fonseca 2003, 290).

Antunes forces on the reader the realisation of the abyss between the worldliness of the empire and its narrative. Language speaks the empire and its imperial objects. Its material life is forcibly concealed: “quem respondia era o eu deles que falava e o eu em eu calava-se em mim e portanto sabiam apenas do Carlos delas não sabiam de mim e eu permanecia um estranho, um estrangeiro” (120).<sup>435</sup> This world is made out of strictly

<sup>430</sup> Corresponding text in English: “‘Is it true that I’m black?’” (125)

<sup>431</sup> Corresponding text in English: “‘Please child.’” (126)

<sup>432</sup> Corresponding text in English: “‘never Carlos, just ‘kid,’ Clarisse was Clarisse, Rui was Rui, I ‘You’re black’ was just ‘kid’ because Maria da Boa Morte had said.” (130)

<sup>433</sup> Corresponding text in English: “I used to be surprised by my own name ... they were talking to a version of Carlos that was just the me inside them it wasn’t me and it wasn’t the me inside me ... and their Carlos didn’t exist for me, I remembered that the times in Luanda or on the plantation ... were the only times when I really slept with me inside me, the only times when I slept with myself repeating Carlos Carlos Carlos until the word Carlos was purged of all connections and no longer signified anything, just a sound ... a skin that could be shed, not the echo of an echo but a body that had no life outside of their lives, and then I could close my eyes ... and dissolve my own me into myself.” (155-156)

<sup>434</sup> Transl.: “the demystification of the *Lusotropical* apology of the mulatto.”

<sup>435</sup> Corresponding text in English: “it was someone else who responded to them it wasn’t me who responded it was their version of me that spoke, the me inside me kept quiet inside me and so they only ever knew of their version of Carlos, they knew nothing of me and I remained a stranger.” (164)

regulated acts of naming. The name confirms reality, and the relation with the world is nominal. The imperial subject is the perpetrator of the act of not naming, of ignoring and denying, which enable this cognitive erasure. In this universe of carefully construed imperial order, it is critical to name selectively. Here language actually defines the realm of existence.

Beyond establishing the realm of being, the name is a *title*. It is there to install and enforce the rule, and signals the changing order, namely from infancy, when the settler and *the Black* share a pseudo-non-hierarchical space: “nessa altura a Maria da Boa Morte não me chamava senhora chamava-me Isilda” (123),<sup>436</sup> to maturity, when the titles are acquired: “tratando a minha mãe e eu por madame, o meu pai por cavalheiro, humilde, feia, triste” (195);<sup>437</sup> from the imperial regime to its inversion, when the settler loses her/his title:

– Camarada ... para mim distinguindo-me das criadas num instinto certo de bicho ... não por senhora nem por patroa, por tu ... o cabinda não de igual para igual, mas de superior para subordinado, o dono dos escombros da fazenda para a prisioneira que era eu. (107)<sup>438</sup>

However, the settler carries her/his title on her/his white body. Her/his body *is*, or used to be, her/his title. In solidarity to her former proprietor, Josélia denies her prior title attempting to spare her of the fate of colonial settlers: “Ao explicar aos cachorros do mato – Não é patroa, é comadre” (226).<sup>439</sup> Antunes hosts the narrative in the time of imperial ruination, when the title of the colonial settler lost its surplus value, for *the Black* does not understand it, as *it* is an animal outside of the territory of language.

In spite of, or actually because of, the ruination of the imperial edifice, the colonial settler insists on her/his prerogative of allocating titles: “a tropa fandanga do Governo ou do que os africanos adoram chamar Governo” (81);<sup>440</sup> “a tropa do Governo com um cabinda de alpercatas e óculos escuros intitulando-se alferes” (75).<sup>441</sup> Ruination has occurred because naming fell into the wrong hands:

Não pode ser Luanda ... ruínas ... uma cidade a que chamavam Luanda ... copiada de Luanda. ... atores que mascaram de cadáveres, trapos que mascaram de crianças ... cães que mascaram à pressa de cães...a arrancarem os intestinos postiços dos atores ... Luanda

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<sup>436</sup> Corresponding text in English: “back then Maria da Boa Morte didn’t call me ma’am she called me Isilda.” (168)

<sup>437</sup> Corresponding text in English: “calling my mother and me ma’am, calling my father sir, humble, ugly, sad.” (268)

<sup>438</sup> Corresponding text in English: “‘Comrade’ ... to me, singling me out from the servants with unerring animal instinct ... he didn’t call me lady or ma’am, he called me you, *tu* ... the Cabindan didn’t address me like an equal but as a superior would address his subordinate, the owner of this plantation in ruins to his prisoner, which I was.” (145-146)

<sup>439</sup> Corresponding text in English: “explaining to the wild dogs ‘She’s not my boss she’s my godmother’.” (314)

<sup>440</sup> Corresponding text in English: “this unruly troop that takes orders from the government or that thing that Africans love to call government.” (110)

<sup>441</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the government troops had a Cabindan man who wore espadrilles and sunglasses and who called himself lieutenant.” (101)

verdadeira ... as pessoas autênticas ... mendigos com chagas como deve ser ... o menino do lago sem cabeça ... tudo forjado é claro, tudo a ver se me enganaram. (342-343)<sup>442</sup>

Here again Antunes alludes to the dissonance between a material reality and the fantasy of the empire. In these circumstances the colonial settler disbelieves the language and doubts the authenticity of titles, which s/he was once the sole subject bestowed with authority to confer.

*Esplendor* denounces the meaningless of titles, which turn out to be fabricated. The title of the novel is paradigmatic of this mechanism that exposes the mere nominal relationship to reality. Asked about the genealogy of another of his titles, namely of *Ontem não te vi em Babilônia* (2006) (Didn't see you in Babylon yesterday), Antunes responds: "Não faço a menor idéia de como é que aquele título se relaciona com aquelas personagens. Até que ponto é que o nome António se relaciona comigo?" (Antunes 2006c, 140).<sup>443</sup> Elsewhere the author argues that he was simply enchanted by the magical aura of this name, and has again recourse to his own: "Sei lá, acho que António não é um nome bom para mim, devia ter outro nome qualquer. Só se devia dar o nome às pessoas quando elas já são grandes" (Antunes 2006b, 47).<sup>444</sup> He is here commenting on a name as a gift that is uncalled for, a historical heritage, even a burden. Antunes says he got his name from his grandfather; and their commonality stopped there (Antunes 2006b, 50).

In *Esplendor*, Antunes indicates that the settler's name is nothing when bereft of power. As the imperial founding moment is that of appropriation of territory, its relationship to territory must be established by force. When the settler does not hold the property of colonial land, s/he ceases to exist. In the novel, the colonial settler is haunted by the fear of leaving the place once occupied without her/his signature. Angola devoid of the mark of the name of the empire would constitute imperial demise, the settler robbed of her/his heritage, the memory of the empire erased from the very territory and therefore from history. The cemetery - "o verdadeiro coração do mundo" (74)<sup>445</sup> - becomes the final host to the imperial remnants: "o túmulo de um colono sem nome" (48),<sup>446</sup> "lousas e lousas sem nenhuma ordem nem datas nem relevos nem nomes no meio do capim" (74).<sup>447</sup> The imperial investment in naming is such that the colonial settlers' doom is definitely constituted before their eyes in face of their (always already pending) anonymity. The collapse of the empire materialises for the settler through her/his namelessness and oblivion.

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<sup>442</sup> Corresponding text in English: "This can't be Luanda ... ruins of buildings ... a city they call Luanda ... a copy of Luanda ... actors masquerading as corpses, rags masquerading as children ... dogs hastily dressing themselves up as dogs ... tearing out the fake intestines of the actors ... the real Luanda ... the real people ... real beggars with real sores the way it should be ... a child depicted next to a lake, his head now missing ... everything forged of course, everything done up to see if I'd fall for it." (478, 479, 480)

<sup>443</sup> Transl.: "I have no idea how that title relates to those characters. To what extent does the name António relate to me?"

<sup>444</sup> Transl.: "I don't know, I think António is not a good name for me, I should have any other name. A name should only be given to people when they are already grown up."

<sup>445</sup> Corresponding text in English: "the true heart of the world." (99)

<sup>446</sup> Corresponding text in English: "a grave of an unnamed colonist." (61)

<sup>447</sup> Corresponding text in English: "gravestones scattered everywhere without any order or dates or carved figures in relief or names in the middle of the grass." (100)

Commenting on the dissociation between that novel and its title, Eunice Cabral posits that:

esta falta de vínculo entre o romance propriamente dito e o seu “nome” é significativo [sic]. De facto, uma das razões de ser da arte é a resistência à comunicação, à mediação que submerge todos os fenómenos na homologação e no nivelamento, é a afirmação intransigente da autonomia da proposta artística. Neste caso, os romances de António Lobo Antunes resistem de um modo ostensivo à tendência dos circuitos da comunicação, a da dissolução dos conteúdos, pela afirmação de um outro tipo de discurso fundado na palavra que institui um mundo do “desinteresse interessado, o estético.” (Cabral 2006, 22)<sup>448</sup>

In my reading, this autonomy is also a non-conformist denouncement of the power to attribute meaning to a hollow signifier. In *Esplendor*, Antunes charges those who hold the power over language; those who do the naming. Without running the risk of subsuming the author’s literary project to a political endeavour, I wish to shed light on its dimension of questioning power dynamics through the artifice of literature. Analogously, power works through delimiting the realm of language and establishing what is beyond it. In *Esplendor*, there is no true outside, only artifice.

### **The other language, that is not**

In the novel, *speaking languages* stands for the privilege to name and (self-)attribute titles. It performs access to a world beyond this one, which only serves to solidify force here, in this very inescapable place of the empire, as there is no other: “os diplomas que ele próprio escrevia num espanhol inventado a que chamava espanhol, um francês inventado a que chamava francês, um latim inventado a que não chamava de nada e argumentava ter sido entregue por um cardeal de Roma” (324).<sup>449</sup>

There is then nothing beyond this universe and gaze, which position the narrator at the centre of storytelling and history-making. *Esplendor* is a narrative of self-containment and navel-gazing. The universe is Lusitanian (metropolitan). Beyond that, nothing and no one is apt for apprehension. Outside of this language there are only the echoes of distant places, fictions and stories, like they are coming from a muted television set: “um ventríloquo a conversar com um pato, noticiários italianos holandeses belgas espanhóis marroquinos, escutando o ciclar do girassol” (308).<sup>450</sup>

In the novel, the Portuguese language frames the universe of the human. Outside of Portuguese is the realm of plants and beasts: “tal como os cubanos ... exprimindo-se

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<sup>448</sup> Transl.: “this lack of connection between the novel itself and its ‘name’ is significant. In fact, one of the reasons of art to exist is the resistance to communication, to mediation that submerges all phenomena through recognition and leveling; it is the uncompromising affirmation of the autonomy of the artistic proposal. In this case, António Lobo Antunes’ novels resist in an ostentatious manner to the trend of communication circuits, to the dissolution of content, through the assertion of another kind of discourse founded on the word that creates a world of “interested disinterest, the aesthetical.”

<sup>449</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the diplomas that he himself had written in an invented Spanish that he called Spanish, an invented French that he called French, an invented Latin that he didn’t call anything and which he said had been personally presented to him by a cardinal from Rome.” (452)

<sup>450</sup> Corresponding text in English: “a ventriloquist conversing with a duck, Italian Dutch Belgium Spanish Moroccan news channels, listening to the sunflowers.” (430)

numa língua que era uma espécie de francês ladrado” (252);<sup>451</sup> “o holandês rosnava-me convites numa língua de consoantes com espinhos” (54).<sup>452</sup>

*Esplendor* narrates an insular world grounded in the metaphor of the domestic object of the snow globe encapsulating a Christmas scene. The Portuguese language defines the boundaries of the globe, which is, in fact, a desired empire. The Portuguese is the proprietor of this total space. The novel *happens* at Christmas, which serves as a canvas to recover the family's recollection and memories of colonial times in *Africa*: “E então decidi que este ano festejávamos o Natal em casa” (369).<sup>453</sup> The Portuguese settler is *o da casa* (of the house), is *a casa* (the house), s/he is *em casa* (at home). I will elaborate below on the trope of the home that, factually, excludes more than only the foreigner and foreign language. Home is a very policed and delimited territory of the Portuguese language, the language of the imperial metropolis. It is the *casa portuguesa*<sup>454</sup> or the container of the imperial myth.

The Portuguese language is, for Antunes, a place of familiarity. He shows a dispassionate attachment to this language for it is *simply* and completely the place of worldliness. Inquired about his desire to live abroad, he affirms: “Mas acho que o lugar onde vivo não é o mais importante, embora às vezes tenha saudades do mar. O problema é a língua do sítio onde estou, porque a língua é que é a minha ferramenta” (Antunes 1997b, 5).<sup>455</sup> Yet, for the author there is more to the language, which is home:

[F]oi sempre muito difícil estar longe de Portugal, deixar de ouvir a minha língua. A língua sobretudo... Eu gosto desta terra. Nós somos feios, pequenos, estúpidos, mas eu gosto disto. ... Mas em momentos de desespero, apetecia-me era ser angolano. Estive lá durante a guerra e era o país mais bonito que eu conheci. Angola. (Antunes 1997c, 39)<sup>456</sup>

Angola becomes increasingly better defined as a place of memory that is the author's personal *Africa*:

Era uma terra de uma ternura, de uma beleza! ... Não tenho saudades de nenhum lugar, mas de África tenho muitas saudades. Há uns tempos convidaram-me para ir à África, mas as

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<sup>451</sup> Corresponding text in English: “just like the Cubans ... expressing themselves in a language that was some species of French, a French that sounded like a dog's bark.” (351)

<sup>452</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the Dutchman growled pick-up lines at me in a language made up of consonants and thorns.” (71)

<sup>453</sup> Corresponding text in English: “And so I decided that we'd celebrate Christmas at home this year.” (517)

<sup>454</sup> For an elaboration on the trope of the *casa portuguesa* in *Esplendor* see: Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, “As Ruínas da Casa Portuguesa em Os Cus de Judas e em O Esplendor de Portugal, de António Lobo Antunes,” in *Portugal Não é Um País Pequeno: Contar o Império na Pós-Colonialidade*, ed. Manuela Ribeiro Sanches (Lisbon: Edições Cotovia, 2006), 43-62.

<sup>455</sup> Transl.: “But I think the place where I live is not the most important [thing], although sometimes I miss the sea. The problem is the language of the place where I am, because it is the language that is my tool.”

<sup>456</sup> Transl.: “It was always very difficult to be away from Portugal, to no longer hear my language. The language above all ... I like this land. We are ugly, small, stupid, but I like it. ... But in moments of despair I would like to be Angolan. I was there during the war and it was the most beautiful country I got to know. Angola.”

idades de que eu gostava já não existem, foram destruídas pela guerra civil... Olhe, Malanje. Não me importava de viver em Malanje, na Malanje que eu conheci... (ibid.)<sup>457</sup>

Angola is therefore a surrogate for *Africa* that is a place in the past of the empire. It was once the unspoiled frontier of empire, which associates with the temporal locus of childhood (and an alleged purity).

Angola nunca saiu de dentro de mim. Ocupa um lugar muito profundo, mais até do que eu imagino ou penso. Vejo Angola como um paraíso perdido. Lembro-me da terra, dos cheiros, das cores, dos horizontes, de toda aquela sensualidade. Como, aliás, também acontece em relação à Beira Alta, onde agora vou cada vez mais. É uma espécie de regresso à infância onde fui tão feliz. (Antunes 2003, 194, 196)<sup>458</sup>

Metaphorically, Angola is the virginal frontier of Antunes' imperial/territorial imagination. In 2006, Pública asks the author: "Entre os projectos de livros que tem, não faz sentido aparecer o mundo fora do Portugal das últimas décadas, da colonização, da História?"<sup>459</sup> Antunes responds that this is an *invented Portugal*: "Por exemplo, nunca mais voltei a Angola, sei lá se Angola é assim. Não existe, é um território ficcional" (Antunes 2006b, 47).<sup>460</sup>

Antunes' Portuguese language is the place of *his* world, that is *the great Portugal* as experienced by a significant contingent of the then Portuguese youth directly involved in fighting against the independence of the former colonies in Africa, and by the greater metropolitan circles affected by this experience and the narrative of it. Antunes harbours the narrative of his *universal tale* at this particular location. According to Paulo de Medeiros:

A obra de Lobo Antunes, na sua variedade, constitui um projecto de constante e rigorosa desconstrução – num sentido próprio e não banal – da sociedade portuguesa que assume características mais amplas de reflexão sobre a condição humana, precisamente por incidir tão detalhadamente em elementos particulares de uma cultura, a portuguesa, e até individuais. Por outras palavras, se a obra de Lobo Antunes é um vasto labirinto da sua memória pessoal enquanto sujeito inserido numa história particular, e das suas observações do tempo que é seu e que partilha com outros cidadãos, é igualmente um complexo reduto especular da memória cultural. As vidas expostas das personagens são tanto casos individuais como expressões da colectividade. (Medeiros 2007a, 140)<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> Transl.: "It was a land of such a tenderness, of such a beauty! ... I have missed nowhere, but I miss Africa very much. Some time ago I was invited to go to Africa, but the cities that I liked no longer exist, they were destroyed by the civil war ... Look, Malanje. I would not mind living in Malanje, in the Malanje I knew ..."

<sup>458</sup> Transl.: "Angola never left me. It occupies a very deep place inside me, even more than I imagine or think. I see Angola as a lost paradise. I remember the earth, the smells, the colours, the horizons, all that sensuality. As indeed it is also true of Beira Alta, where I go to increasingly often. It is a kind of return to childhood where I was so happy."

<sup>459</sup> Transl.: "Among the book projects that you have, doesn't it make sense to show the world beyond Portugal of the last decades, of colonisation, of History?"

<sup>460</sup> Transl.: "For example, I never returned to Angola; how would I know if Angola is like this. It doesn't exist, it is a fictional territory."

<sup>461</sup> Transl.: "The work of Lobo Antunes, in its variety, is a project of constant and rigorous deconstruction - in a particular and not banal sense - of Portuguese society, which assumes broader characteristics of reflection on the human condition, precisely for it focuses in such detail on particular elements of a culture, the Portuguese, and even individual ones. In other words, if the oeuvre of Lobo Antunes is a vast

It is paramount to grasp the relation between particular/individual and universal/collective delineated here, which is often overlooked elsewhere (by author and critics/scholars). In *Esplendor*, there is an amalgamation of the Portuguese with the human condition, whereby Portugal, its history, its language and places become synonymous with a general/universal humanity. It follows that there is no significant difference outside of this language, and nor are there places that do not mirror *its world*. Inquired about the places “evoked but unrecognisable” in another novel of his, *Ontem não te vi em Babilónia* (2006): “Estremoz, Évora, Lisboa, Pragal, Vendas Novas, ... Luxemburgo,” Antunes responds:

Cada vez mais – espero - os livros vêm de partes tuas que não atinges, que não alcanças. Muitas vezes nem sabes porque as nomeias assim: podiam chamar-se Évora, Lisboa ou outra coisa qualquer. Mas necessitas de nomes que te sirvam de referência, se não perdes-te no teu trabalho. Tirando isso, não precisas de nomes de pessoas e lugares, até porque estás a contar tua história, estás a tentar contar não a tua vida, mas a nossa vida, na parte de trevas, na humanidade truncada. (Antunes 2006a, 16)<sup>462</sup>

Interviewed in Israel, where Antunes went to receive the Jerusalem Prize, he affirmed his impressions of the place: “É curioso porque tudo isto é uma espécie de Portugal concentrado” (Antunes 2005, 121).<sup>463</sup> Perhaps this positionality and viewpoint explains his affirmation to JL (Jornal de Letras): “É-me insuportável ouvir dizer ‘somos um país pequeno e periférico’. Para mim Portugal é central e muito grande” (Antunes 2006a, 18).<sup>464</sup>

It is significant that Antunes’ oeuvre is offered to the reader as universal (in contrast to other *particular narratives*, as African novels are often categorised). The postcolonial query indicates precisely the problematic identification of the western subject (a narrator par excellence) and location as universal, in contrast to the colonised non-West. This said universalism is not only the author’s “prescription to read his novels,” but is also a categorisation established by critics and the media alike. Correspondingly, in *Esplendor* language does its working inside the empire that is this total, for it is universal, however an inescapable and claustrophobic place that is the crumbling empire.

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labyrinth of his personal memory as subject within a particular history, and of his observations about a time that is his and that he shares with other citizens, it is also a complex reflective stronghold of cultural memory. The exposed lives of the characters are both individual cases and expressions of the collectivity.”

<sup>462</sup> Transl.: “Increasingly - I hope - the books come from your parts you don’t understand, that you don’t reach. Very often you do not know why you call them so: they could be called Evora, Lisbon or anything else. But you need names to serve as reference to you, otherwise you lose yourself in your work. Apart from that, you don’t need names of people and places, specially because you’re telling your story, you’re trying not to tell your life, but our life, in the part of darkness, in the truncated humanity.”

<sup>463</sup> Transl.: “It is curious because all this is a kind of concentrated Portugal.”

<sup>464</sup> Transl.: “It’s unbearable for me to hear people say ‘we are a small and peripheral country.’ For me Portugal is central and very large.”

## The naked language

Language is a revelation in the novel, for it hosts the emergence of the hidden face of the empire. It debunks the narrative of Portuguese *Lusotropical* exceptionalism that rhymes colonialism with affection and sensual love. Maria Alzira Seixo detected a stylistic dysphemism in Antunes' first six novels, which I encounter in *Esplendor* too. Hereby, she posits, the narrative sticks at "o lado desagradável e chocante, o pormenor feio e enxovalhado, os aspectos deteriorados e mesquinhos, [descritos] com uma crueza manifesta que tinge o fio condutor da sua visão do mundo e da vida" (Seixo 2002, 167).<sup>465</sup>

For Seixo the human abjection, which she associated with the anamorphosis found in several of the author's novels, directs the reader to the mutilation of the outside world, of the political and moral order (ibid., 509). Antunes stains the language of the empire with the blood of colonialism: "mandei nessa noite deitar fogo à creche para sublinhar o discurso a encarnado ... o mundo que não quer ser melhorado quer continuar a ser o que é absurdo e cruel e egoísta e violento e injusto e sem sentido algum" (293).<sup>466</sup>

Isilda's progeny defy the window dressing of the empire, exhibiting otherness within. These children materialise the defamation of a mythologised colonial scheme. While Clarisse embodies the unruly naked female (as the antithesis of feminine adornment and domesticity) that challenges passive objectification, Carlos personifies the provocation to whiteness: "[o] escândalo de um filho mestiço e de uma filha despida" (207).<sup>467</sup> Rui stands for the *madman/child* that threatens the social order. His epileptic episodes install an inverted gaze, whereby Rui sees the submerged and secretive facet of the life of the empire: "interessado num mundo feito de sapatos e tornozelos com vozes ... um universo ao rés da terra ... eu de orelha no chão a dar-me conta ... da casa sob a casa, a minha mãe convencida que eu morrera" (159).<sup>468</sup> Rui is effectively Eduardo Agualusa's gecko Eulálio, who is a menace to the installed regime in *Esplendor*. He embodies the mundane and violent (*wild*) life installed by the settler, and sees the empire from the floor - what actually happens on the ground - and hanging from walls and ceilings - upside down: "Clarisse ... alheia à lagartixa do Rui aos pés dela a morder-se e a rosñar" (66).<sup>469</sup>

In this microcosm, breaking social conventions and the imperial fantasy constitutes the ultimate abhorrence: "uma nudez de homem que me horrorizava, um mestiço, um

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<sup>465</sup> Transl.: "the unpleasant and shocking side, the ugly and soiled detail, the damaged and petty aspects, [described] with an explicit rawness that imbues the thread of his world view and of his life."

<sup>466</sup> Corresponding text in English: "on that very night I sent men to burn down the nursery school to underline the speech I'd given in bright red ink ... this world that doesn't want to be better it wants to stay the way it is absurd and cruel and selfish and violent and unjust and utterly meaningless." (408)

<sup>467</sup> Corresponding text in English: "the scandal of having a mulatto son and a daughter who dressed like a cancan girl." (285)

<sup>468</sup> Corresponding text in English: "fascinated by a world made up of talking shoes and ankles ... a whole universe at ground level ... me with my ear against the ground listening ... to the house below the house, my mother convinced that I'd died." (218)

<sup>469</sup> Corresponding text in English: "Clarisse ... indifferent to Rui writhing like a lizard on the floor in front of her groaning and biting his own lips and tongue." (87)

doente, uma infeliz” (380).<sup>470</sup> The novel consistently contrasts this order and the fear of its disruption with the normalisation of violence, both cognitive and material. The juxtaposition of scenes of violence with scenes of bourgeois life forces the empire to confront its *dark side*, which is veritably its very foundation and therefore its true explanation. The matriarch Isilda holds to this impossible narrative conflation up until her assassination:

dizer ao Fernando que sirva a canja e o peru enquanto não me mandam subir para a camionete com os restantes condenados ... se o Fernando se despachar com as travessas tenho tempo visto que as metralhadoras não começaram ainda e depois das metralhadoras tiros dispersos e depois dos tiros dispersos a cal viva de depois da cal viva uma camada de lama, de jantar com os meus filhos, distribuir os presentes, pedir ao Carlos que desenrolhe o espumante. (373)<sup>471</sup>

The point of encounter and amalgamation of these contrasting narratives hitherto living-apart-together creates a new order that is impossible for the settler to understand: “se ao menos percebesse o motivo de nos matarem, nos crucificarem em estacas como bichos” (365).<sup>472</sup>

The vivid language of the novel brings the viciousness of the empire to the forth. In *Esplendor* body parts and bodily fluids populate the text alongside kitchen utensils and gastronomic juices. People are in the imminence of being devoured by birds of prey, while the narrators attempt to sustain the bourgeois colonial scheme. The chapter where the dissociation between the dining ceremony and violence is the most graphic, as indicated above, is the one narrating the hunting down and killing of an Angolan child against the background of foetuses offered to felines, followed by the encounter of colonial settlers cut into pieces:

o garoto bailundo de oito ou nove anos com um saco de feijão roubado sob o braço, encostado ao celeiro sob a espingarda do cabo ... os fetos das grávidas atirados aos gatos como peixe sem valor no Lobito” (200); “o homem de chapéu de palha pregado aos degraus com um varão de reposteiro que lhe atravessava o umbigo sorrindo-nos junto ao bule a secar as bochechas com o lenço” (202); “o garoto de oito ou nove anos que continuava a mirar-me à medida que escorregava devagarinho celeiro abaixo ... como escorre uma lágrima até se desmontar no chão. (204)<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> Corresponding text in English: “a look of manliness in his naked body that terrified me, a mulatto, an invalid, a whore.” (534)

<sup>471</sup> Corresponding text in English: “me telling Fernando to serve the chicken soup and turkey and at the same time I’m not told to get in the pickup truck with the other convicts ... if Fernando hurries up I’ll have time, since the machine guns haven’t started firing yet and after the machine guns a few scattered shots here and there and after the scattered shots the quicklime and after the quicklime a layer of dirt, time to have dinner with my children, hand out the presents, ask Carlos to uncork the champagne.” (523-524)

<sup>472</sup> Corresponding text in English: “if you could only understand their motives for killing us, for running us through on pikes like animals.” (512)

<sup>473</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the eight- or nine-year-old Bailundo boy with a stolen sack of beans under his arm, his back against the wall of the barn with the barrel of the corporal’s rifle pointed at him ... the fetuses of the pregnant women ripped out and cast to the cats like trash fish, in Lobito” (275, 276) “the man in the straw hat pinned to the stairs with a curtain rod pierced through his navel smiling at us next to the teapot wiping the sweat from his cheeks with a handkerchief” (278) “the eight- or nine-year-old-kid who kept looking at me while he slowly slid down the wall of the barn ... the way a tear slides down a cheek until it falls to the ground.” (281)

The outstanding element at work here is the disparity put into evidence by the juxtaposition of graphic violence towards an Angolan child (and to unborn babies and a settler man) and the soothing voice of lullabies that belong to (white) childhood. This morally impossible contrast serves as a graphic denunciation of imperial truism and its material regime.

Ana Paula Arnaut denotes in Antunes' characters: "o uso de uma linguagem crua, objectiva e ostensivamente racista"<sup>474</sup> whereby the author exposes inter- and intra-racial conflicts (Arnaut 2011, 355). Departing from declarations from the author about the material basis of his novels, she indicates that they demythificate the existence of racism in Portugal (ibid., 356). Paulo de Medeiros posits that Lobo Antunes, together with Lídia Jorge, represents and problematizes the insidious and resilient denied/silenced problems of race in Portuguese colonial history and contemporary society (Medeiros 2008).

[It] should come as no surprise since both authors were also the ones who most sharply and consistently problematized the trauma of the colonial war, its forgetting and the functions that the colonial war plays in the cultural memory of Portugal as a nation. In their most recent novels readers are confronted with an extremely violent universe, an utterly shocking reality of complete dehumanization depicted without a trace of sentimentality and also without false idealizations. (Medeiros 2008)

Elsewhere, Medeiros described Antunes' oeuvre as a: "ferida aberta, pulsante e dolorosa, como uma chaga impossível de curar" (Medeiros 2007a, 142).<sup>475</sup> This writing precipitates a visceral reading, whereby the senses, and abjection in particular, force the acquiescence of the horror of the colonial empire. Medeiros describes the centrality of disgust/nausea in Antunes' oeuvre:

O nojo refere-se obviamente à situação de guerra, à violência sofrida e cometida, mas para além disso ao horror presenciado, à degradação de qualquer traço de humanidade, para além das condições sub-humanas, inumanas, a que o exército era sujeito ... É no entanto, um nojo tanto físico como ontológico. (Medeiros 2007a, 149)<sup>476</sup>

The novel showcases the human pieces that make colonial imperialism:

as águias a puxarem-lhes as vísceras" (98); "uma pasta confusa no lugar da boca ... o Fernando finalmente em paz se chegava à terra como se a beijasse, os settlers o observavam a meio caminho do medo e da fome, os abutres só maçã-de-adão e unhas (105); "uma mulher da minha cor espartilhada entre os tijolos ... as bobinas e os fios do motor uma confusão de intestinos" (128); "os mutilados do governo surgiram da vivenda do chefe de posto num vagar de lagartas mostrando as cicatrizes, as crostas, as raízes dos membros, a deslocarem-se aos arrancos à medida que o petróleo se apagava nos torresmos dos cães. (173)<sup>477</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> Transl.: "the use of a crude, objective and blatantly racist language."

<sup>475</sup> Transl.: "open wound, throbbing and sore, like a disease impossible to cure."

<sup>476</sup> Transl.: "Disgust obviously refers to the war situation, to the violence suffered and committed, but beyond that to the witnessed horror, to the degradation of any trace of humanity beyond the subhuman conditions, inhuman, to which the army was subjected ... It is, however, both a physical and an ontological disgust."

<sup>477</sup> Corresponding text in English: "the eagles tugging out their entrails" (133); "his mouth turned into a bloody pulp ... Fernando landed on the ground as if kissing it, finally at rest, the settlers eyed him, half out of fear, half out of hunger, the vultures, all Adam's apple and claws" (142, 144); "a woman the same

*Esplendor* excavates the intimate relation between material and epistemological colonial violence, whereby the tearing of black flesh is explained away. Witnessing Josélia dying and being devoured, Isilda engages in translation:

Os cachorros do mato abriam caminho de mistura com os abutres no interior da pele e das costelas arrancando nacos de pulmão de músculos de fígado, surgindo e sumindo-se, pingando gordura, sangue, nervos, num alcatruz de latidos, a Josélia diante de mim a agitar o seu ramo” (226); “a felicidade da Josélia foi eu não poder voltar atrás a repreendê-la, a metê-la na ordem, a castigá-la, a felicidade da Josélia foi existir um rio entre nós, o que era um rio nas chuvas e agora um pântano de lodo ralo onde os crocodilos não encontravam abrigo” (227); “a felicidade da Josélia foi cair mal um cachorro lhe prendeu o tornozelo ..., foi desaparecer sob uma confusão de latidos e uivos, uma confusão de unhas, patas, caudas fosforescentes ..., foi os cachorros do mato abrirem-lhe caminho no interior da pele, ..., olhando-me uma última vez como se quisesse dizer qualquer coisa que eu não entendia, ... tentando desculpar-se do que eu não lhe desculpava porque tal qual o meu avô não admito liberdades a uma indígena, não consinto liberdades nem má-criações a uma fulana qualquer. (228)<sup>478</sup>

The text unabashedly foregrounds colonial violence in a fashion devoid of its flourishing. The narrative is excessive. This is the excess that Ana Paula Arnaut denotes as characteristic to Antunes’ prose, yet beyond its formal aspect, it indicates the very interior of the narrative, its content that is a commentary on imperial colonialism. In *Esplendor*, Angola constitutes the locus of this excess:

quando chegamos a Luanda a fim de embarcar para Lisboa lá estavam eles de craniozinho escondido nos chumaços dos ombros, ..., sangue, nacos de pessoas, crianças que flutuavam um momento na baía antes de os congros as sumirem nos poços misteriosos debaixo das ondas em que se acumulam, ganhando pó, detritos de naus, não senti pena de me ir embora de Angola onde mal se deixava a cidade tudo excessivo e demasiado distante. (260-261)<sup>479</sup>

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color as me who’d been dismembered lying in pieces in the rubble ... the cylinders and wires from its motor ripped out like a tangled mess of intestines” (176); “the mutilated government soldiers crawled out of the regional administrator’s house, slow as caterpillars, pointing to their scars, their scabs, their stumps, dragging themselves out of the house in the jerking motions while the fire died down amid the crispy remains of the dogs.” (237)

<sup>478</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the dogs together with the vultures would open up an entryway through the skin and the rib cage ripping out chunks of lung of muscle of liver, emerging from the flesh and scurrying off dripping fat, blood, nerves, amid clamorous barking, Josélia standing in front of me shaking her branch” (315); “Josélia was happy that I couldn’t go back to scold her, put her in her place, pushing her, Josélia was happy that there was a river between us, or something that was a river in the rainy season and was at this point just a swamp a slushy mire in which even the crocodiles couldn’t find shelter” (316); “Josélia was happy to fall down the instant one of the dogs latched on her ankle, ..., happy to finally disappear under the chaos of barks and howls, the chaos of claws, paws, phosphorescent tails, ... the wild dogs tore a path through her skin ..., looking at me ... one last time as if she wanted to say something that I couldn’t forgive for because just like my grandfather I never allow the natives to laze around and misbehave, I’d never tolerate laziness or misbehaviour in some woman who means nothing to me.” (316-317)

<sup>479</sup> Corresponding text in English: “when we arrived in Luanda, where we were going to depart for Lisbon, they were already there with their little tiny skulls sunk down between their bulky shoulders, ..., blood, chunks of people, children who floated for a moment in the bay before conger eels pulled them into the mysterious chasms below the waves where debris from ships collected and gathered dust, I didn’t feel bad about leaving Angola where as soon as you leave the city everything is exaggerated and places are much too distant from one another.” (362-363)

Here I have recourse to Roberto Vecchi's (2007; 2010a; 2010b) development of the figure of the exception as the core of Portuguese colonialism analysed earlier in this dissertation. This theorisation is crucial for understanding the mechanism whereby the colony is conceptualised and ruled as a bounded space. The borders that define the realm of (colonial) exception are kept together by the arbitrariness of violence targeting black bodies. Vecchi termed *Lusotropicalismo* as the dispositive (ideological tool) that represents the Portuguese colonial enterprise as benevolent and violence as exceptional. Violence is hereby framed as an excess of an otherwise civilised order, while it is in fact constitutive of the empire and fundamental for the maintenance of the colonial arrangement. Biopolitics are at the core of this mechanism. Antunes speaks of this construction by presenting violence according to the tenets dictated by the *Lusotropical* narrative, which is as the unruly excess of the Portuguese empire. The author is hereby revealing that violence is actually the spilling out of what has been shaped as otherwise harmonious. In *Esplendor* this excess is foundational for the empire. The novel transpires the (rhetorical) ideological constructions that gave shape to violence in the everyday in the colony and exploded during the independence war. The excess emerges as constitutive of the imperial regime that can no longer be sustained.

At the same time, the figure of *the Portuguese exception*, as developed by Vecchi, supports concealing the disparity presented in the novel between the *Lusotropical* rhetoric on the one hand and racialised and gendered violence on the other – which make the overarching structure of the empire. The very fact that throughout colonial rule there was no requirement for consistency/consonance between these two constitutes the Portuguese colonial exception. This means that the subalternity and inhumanity of the black subject inhabit both sides of this axis: the benevolent civilising mission of the Portuguese *in the tropics* and the necessity to impose the imperial order: “Se fosse a si mandava-o de volta à África onde tudo é mais ou menos epilético a fazer asneiras no sertão para distrair os pretos e a furar-lhes os olhos e as tripas que ninguém se incomoda.” (190)<sup>480</sup>

In effect, *Africa* becomes the space where the colonial ruler is entitled to stretch the realm of the possible. It is, as such, the frontier of imperial conquest. In *Os Cus de Judas* (1979), Antunes associates life in the psychiatric institution with one in a concentrationary universe (Seixo 2002, 505). In *Memória de Elefante* (1979) (Elephant's memory), there is a successful homology between the colonial struggles and psychiatric treatment (ibid., 510). I would argue that in *Esplendor* the colony under war is the Lager, the exemplary zone constituted as the “state of exception,” in line with Vecchi's (2010b) elaboration on Giorgio Agamben.

In *Esplendor* there is a vivid association of colonial violence with the Holocaust, whereby the target of violence has been constituted as non-human, as bare life: “um boneco cercado de bonecos estrangulados, bonecos graças a Deus mortos em pilha como os israelitas nos filmes ou os contratados quando o comandante da polícia de Malanje, comigo a ajudá-lo com a espingarda de chumbinhos teve de limpar a senzala”

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<sup>480</sup> Corresponding text in English: “If I were you I'd send him back to Africa where everything is more or less epileptic he can get away with his mischief in the backlands entertaining the blacks, he can even shoot them through the eye or the guts and nobody will get mad at him.” (261)

(163).<sup>481</sup> Here there is a slippage between the object and the non-human, in the words of Clarisse: “A malícia dos objetos inanimados, a sua vidazinha cruel, garfos que nos picam de propósito” (275).<sup>482</sup> Her brother Rui, the *madboy*, denounces the detachment of the colonial settler to the prey of its violence that is equally a doll, a Jew, an Angolan, and an animal: “o Carlos apoderava-se do boticão e fugia com ele para experimentar nos setters” (138).<sup>483</sup>

Language not only represents but also constitutes this excess, which forces against containment. *Esplendor* can be read as the materiality of colonialism spilling out of the borders of the benevolent narrative. It has been kept silent in hiding until its eruption. For Isilda, it is: “uma espécie de grito que vai sair não pela boca mas pelo corpo inteiro e encher os campos como o uivo dos cães, e então deixo de respirar, agarro com força a cabeceira e os mil caules do silêncio flutuam devagarinho no interior dos espelhos” (21).<sup>484</sup>

### The fleshy language

Commenting on one of Antunes’ Chronicles, Paulo de Medeiros posits that: “Não é certamente por acaso que Lobo Antunes insiste na fisicalidade da escrita, apresentada já como um vômito, e depois, insistentemente, como um processo material, ligado ao corpo e à terra, de uma violência inescapável” (Medeiros 2007a, 149).<sup>485</sup>

The language, which is both bodily part and utterance, is mere materiality in *Esplendor*: “o Fernando de carapinha alisada extraiu um incisivo substituindo-o por um dente de prata de forma que ao falar as palavras brilhavam” (25).<sup>486</sup> Language becomes therefore a bodily piece; it emblematises a senseless fragment, as it does not utter speech as we know it: “eu que um dia desses sou grande, me chego a ele, o amarro a um tronco e lhe atravesso a língua com um prego” (184); “Maria da Boa Morte subia da senzala e entrava na cozinha de brasa de cigarro ao contrário queimando a língua” (61).<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>481</sup> Corresponding text in English: “a doll surrounded by a bunch of strangled dolls, dolls that lay dead, thank God, in a pile like the Israelites you sometimes see in the movies or the field hands whenever the police chief in Malanje, with me at his side helping out with my pellet gun, had to clean out the workers’ quarters.” (223-224)

<sup>482</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the spitefulness of inanimate objects, their cruel little lives, forks that poke you on purpose.” (384)

<sup>483</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Carlos grabbed the pliers the medic used for pulling out teeth and ran off with it to try it out on the setters.” (189-190)

<sup>484</sup> Corresponding text in English: “some sort of scream that, instead of coming out of your mouth, comes out of your entire body and fills up the fields like the howling of dogs, and then I stop breathing, grab the headboard hard and a thousand stems of silence slowly float inside the mirrors.” (25)

<sup>485</sup> Transl.: “It is certainly not by chance that Lobo Antunes insists on the physicality of writing, already presented as a vomit, and then insistently as a material process, attached to the body and the earth, of an inescapable violence.”

<sup>486</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Fernando with his tight curly hair straightened out with hair spray had one of his incisors pulled out and replaced with a silver one so that when he spoke the words shone.” (31)

<sup>487</sup> Corresponding text in English: “one day I’ll be a grown-up and I’ll go up to him and tie him to a tree trunk and stab a nail through his tongue” (253); “Maria da Boa morte walked up from the workers’ huts and came into the kitchen smoking a cigarette with the lit end inside her mouth burning her tongue.” (81)

Truthfully, it is the absent utterances in the novel that enable the body to communicate. In *Esplendor*, the empire is unveiled as an inescapable violent enterprise, which acts upon bodies devoid of humanity. In the last days of the empire, there are no *persons* in Angola and no human language, but just flesh. For the settler, the exposure of this truth is obscene. If only s/he was spared of seeing, smelling, tasting, hearing it; if only the subject of immaculate imperial whiteness could avoid this fate:

mais nua do que se estivesse viva, sem mãos, sem língua, sem peito, sem cabelo, ..., a cabeça do filho mais velho fitando-nos de um ramo, o corpo que a serra mecânica decepara em fatias ... (onde tomávamos chá com eles, a comermos bolinhos secos e a refrescarmos com leques de ráfia) ..., as cortinas das janelas abertas varrendo o silêncio, e o cheiro das vísceras (193); nunca encontrei ninguém tão nu na minha vida, ..., não era bem estar nu que mal tem a nudez era estar nu de uma maneira obscena, eu também de lenço na cara, não horrorizada, não com nojo, surpreendida com o gargalo de cerveja a espreitar-lhe das pernas, a ausência de decência, de vergonha, o impudor dela. (198)<sup>488</sup>

Language puts in evidence the biopolitics that is the motor of the empire: the black body that is meat (*a carne mais barata do mercado*),<sup>489</sup> and the white body (of the colonial settler) that is disposable to the metropolis and turns into prey for *the native*.

### The non-language of the *preto-bicho*

Dealing with another of Antunes' novels *O meu nome é Legião* (2007), Ana Paula Arnaut aptly has recourse to Franz Fanon's remarks about the dehumanising rhetoric of the colonial settler, which transforms the colonised into an animal: "E, na realidade, a linguagem do colono, quando fala do colonizado, é uma linguagem zoológica. ... O colono, quando quer descrever e encontrar a palavra justa, refere-se constantemente ao bestial" (quoted in Arnaut 2011, 358).<sup>490</sup>

Zeroing in on the dialogues between the characters of that novel, Arnaut points out the recurrent "identificação negro-bicho,"<sup>491</sup> assuming at times explicit shapes, and at other times doubtful and less explicit ones, namely when references are made to *mestiços* (ibid., 359). As I will argue below, there is a marked difference between the *mestiço* that belongs to the settler family, whose acceptance is conditional but fundamental to the workings of the empire, and the *mestiço* that navigates the colonial realm outside of

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<sup>488</sup> Corresponding text in English: "even more naked than she'd have been if she were alive, her hands gone, her tongue gone, her breasts gone, her hair gone, ..., her older son's head staring at us from a tree branch, his body had been cut into slices by a chainsaw ... (where we used to take tea with them in the afternoon, eating dry little cakes and cooling ourselves with fans made of palm leaves) ..., the curtains of the open windows sweeping the silence and the smell of guts out of the house" (265-266); "I've never seen anyone so naked in my life, ..., it wasn't really just that she was naked what's wrong with being naked, it was that she was naked in such an obscene manner, me with a handkerchief over my mouth and nose as well, not horrified, not nauseated, surprised rather by the neck of the beer bottle sticking out from between her legs, the complete lack of decency, of shame, her immodesty." (273)

<sup>489</sup> Transl.: "the cheapest meat in the market," inspired in the Brazilian saying "The cheapest meat in the market is the black meat." This saying was turned into music: Seu Jorge, Marcelo Yuca and Wilson Capelletto, *Farofa Carioca, Farofa Carioca*. Moro no Brasil, 1998 Polygram.

<sup>490</sup> Transl.: "And consequently, when the colonist speaks of the colonised he uses zoological terms. ... In his endeavors at description and finding the right word, the colonist refers constantly to the bestiary.."

<sup>491</sup> Transl.: "identification black-beast."

the white (domestic) sphere. The latter belongs to the colonial zoo. There is also a fundamental difference between the domestic and the public sphere as the *white mestiço* is an animal *inside the house* of whiteness.

I borrow the terminology from Arnault but opt for *preto* to refer to the black subject of the Portuguese empire as the *preto* is a feeble animal, unlike the force that emanates from the *Negro*. In *Esplendor*, *preto* is the recurring name of the black subject of empire. The *preto* has a place in the meaning-making of the imperial order, whereas the *Negro*, the powerful independence fighter who irradiates the force of the black phallus, is an outsider to Portuguese imperial imagination, or perhaps it inhabits it phantasmagorically.<sup>492</sup> Its emergence is beyond apprehension, which explains the perplexity of *Esplendor*'s settlers in face of black resistance. In *Portuguese Africa*, the black subject is a subservient non-human, a *criado*, a *preto*: "o bailundo de joelhos no capim se é que se pode chamar joelhos a rótulas em ferida, a tentar erguer-se numa angústia de inseto apoiada à bengala" (60).<sup>493</sup> It is an animal for exploitation: "as mulheres agitavam-se na senzala como galinhas no choco" (37).<sup>494</sup> It does not qualify as human: "como se podem tratar os africanos como pessoas se não são pessoas nunca vi um africano ralar-se por morrer um filho bateu numa bailunda da minha idade, numa segunda, numa terceira, e elas, criaturas disformes patos gansos não pessoas (379).<sup>495</sup> It is a frail offspring: "filhos também humildes, também feios, também tristes, um par de ratos vestidos de gente, quietinhos e magros" (195).<sup>496</sup>

Ana Paula Arnaut also calls attention to the silence and sounds of Africans presented by Antunes' colonial settlers in the novel *O meu nome é Legião*, as evidence to their lack of humanity. Borrowing from Fanon above, she reveals the construction of the black subject as inferior ("*negro-animal*") also through translating their silence into a lack, a lack of capacity to speak; speaking being one of the defining traits of the human (Arnaut 2011, 360, 361). In a correlated fashion, Ana Mafalda Leite points to the collection of tropes found in Antunes' *Boa tarde às coisas aqui em baixo* (2003) (Good afternoon to the things here below) that typify colonial discourse and linger into postcolonial times as debris. Language (and its absence) figures in this imagination:

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<sup>492</sup> The "black phallus" incapsulates both the images and imaginations of male power and of racialised subservience (*the Black – slave – as object*). This reading borrows from the current inquiry on "race and psychoanalysis" that builds from Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* ([1952] 1967) delving into the problems of racial and sexual fetish (departing from Jacques Lacan on the latter). In my analysis I purposefully separate the representations associated with black subservience (*preto*) from that of black power (*Negro*). For an overview of the inquiry on psychoanalysis and race, see: Margo Natalie Crawford, *Dilution Anxiety and the Black Phallus* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008). For a brief reading on such intersections between racism and masculinities from slavery under the Portuguese empire until the daily life of Afro-diasporic men in contemporary Brazil, see: Faustino Devison Nkosi, "O Pênis Sem o Falo: Algumas Reflexões sobre Homens Negros, Masculinidades e Racismo," in *Feminismos e Masculinidades: Novos Caminhos Para Enfrentar a Violência Contra a Mulher*, ed. Eva Alterman Blay (São Paulo: Cultura Acadêmica, 2014), 75-104.

<sup>493</sup> Corresponding text in English: "the Bailundo on his knees in the grass if you can call those bloody kneecaps knees, trying to stand up, a tormented little insect trying to pull himself up with his cane" (78)

<sup>494</sup> Corresponding text in English: "the women in the workers' huts as restless as brooding hens." (46)

<sup>495</sup> Corresponding text in English: "why do they treat Africans like humans when they aren't human at all I've never seen an African grieve at the death of a child he hit a Bailunda who's around my age, and another one, and a third, and they, those deformed creatures, those ducks, geese not humans." (532)

<sup>496</sup> Corresponding text in English: "her children were also humble, also ugly, also sad, a couple of rats dressed up like people, quiet and skinny." (268)

Another of the parameters by which colonized peoples are culturally disqualified by Western thought is the nature of language and the absence of a discourse that it is their own; according to this point of view, linguistic devaluation corresponds to degradation and social backwardness. Incoherence, inarticulateness, the scream, onomatopoeia, muteness and silence stand as metaphors for the absence of speech. (Leite 2011, 223, 224)

In *Esplendor*, language confirms *the Black* and coloured (mullato) of the shantytowns (*bairros de lata*) as scuffling members of the animal realm: “numa guincharia de crianças e cães” (161).<sup>497</sup>

Antunes recurrently appeals to the silence of *the black object*, often the black woman, in the novel. The drunken patriarch in *Esplendor* unveils the violence that hides behind an alleged *Lusotropical* sexual encounter. Amadeu undresses the myth of sexual consent across the racial line, a myth maintained through the rhetorical occlusion of colonial violence:

uma moça, uma miúda comprada à família pelo preço que eu quis dado que se não pode recusar uma mulher a um branco, há sempre trens para leste e pessoas que as locomotivas deceparam nos carris ... ou mesmo ali sem necessidade de trens, um ramo de baobá onde pendurar uma corda, uma bala no pescoço com os amigos a continuarem a fumar, a não dizerem nada. (119)<sup>498</sup>

Maria Alzira Seixo posits that the female characters of Antunes' *Os Cus de Judas* who have sexual encounters with the narrator are devoid of voice. This alienating practice finally led the narrator to a self-realised interior death. Zeroing in on the novel's Angolan women, Seixo affirms:

Neste romance é a negação da palavra ao outro (ao colonizado: Sofia, a guerrilheira, África), por parte do lugar europeu onde pertence o narrador, que, em reversão aniquiladora, deixa o sujeito narrador confinado, na volta, a um corpo sem expressão, uma voz sem fala, um encontro sem incidência. (Seixo 2002, 64)<sup>499</sup>

Hereby the *colonial encounter* can be configured as one that denies language to the African (female) interlocutor. In turn there is no interlocutor and there is no Africa beyond the settler self, neither for the author nor for the literature scholar. Seixo approaches the character Sofia in order to speak of the death of the European subject. In a similar fashion, when Ana Paula Arnaut treats “a presença de África”<sup>500</sup> (Arnaut 2009, 29) in Antunes' novels, she is referring to *that Africa* that exists as long as the Portuguese settler inhabits it. This is a continent without Africans, turned into a country that is nothing but a deformed image/imagination: “Todos os romances se passam em

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<sup>497</sup> Corresponding text in English: “with shrieks from children and dogs.” (221)

<sup>498</sup> Corresponding text in English: “an adolescent, a little girl I bought from her family for a price I named because a black woman can't refuse a white man, there are always trains heading east and people who get run over and cut to pieces on the tracks ... or you could do it right there and wouldn't need the trains, just a branch of the baobab tree to hang a rope from, or a bullet in the neck while your friends keep smoking, not saying a word.” (163)

<sup>499</sup> Transl.: “In this novel, it is the denial of the word to the other (to the colonised: Sofia, the female guerrilla fighter, Africa) on the part of the European place where the narrator belongs, which in an annihilating reversion, leaves the subject narrator confined, on his return, to a body without expression, a voice without speech, an encounter that does not occur.”

<sup>500</sup> Transl.: “the presence of Africa.”

Portugal, ou no seu negativo: a África da guerra colonial, quase logo tornada num país outro (ou neste país pensado a partir de um outro), sobretudo em *Fado Alexandrino* ou em *O Esplendor de Portugal*” (Seixo 2002, 477).<sup>501</sup>

In fact, Antunes recalls his passage through Angola as formative for the intense experience of companionship with his fellow soldiers. In this sense, Africa is a mirror, at times paradise, at other times *inferno*; a place where one is confronted with one’s own imperial reflex. Nevertheless, Africa remains a canvas for the process of recivilising the master. This gaze is violent, obscene even:

Vivia completamente centrado sobre mim mesmo. Talvez esteja grato a Angola porque foi lá que aprendi a existência dos outros. Até então, o meu mundo era ptolemaico. Na guerra, senti pela primeira vez uma camaradagem real, que ainda hoje se mantém. ... Neste momento percebi que eu não era o centro do mundo. (Antunes 2003, 197)<sup>502</sup>

Indeed, for Antunes, Africans are mute and unseen as individuals. They do hold millenary cultures of medical advancement and wisdom (Antunes 2003, 197) but remain invisible extras in *our* history. Inquired on the “question of the colonial war,” Antunes posits: “Não pode chamar-se àquilo uma guerra. Morria-se sem se ver ninguém. As minas, não se via quem as punha e, nas emboscadas, era tudo muito rápido. Uma guerra pressupõe um adversário e, ali, ele era completamente invisível” (ibid., 196).<sup>503</sup>

This passage discloses the boundaries of knowing an/other that is conditioned by a situation of occupation, subjugation and violence. The other cannot be other than the enemy, factual and fictional. In any case, *it* remains unseen and silenced, as the *criados* who hardly utter a word throughout the almost four hundred pages of *Esplendor*. The *African*, who does not speak, who cannot speak, serves as a conduit for the dialogue between settlers: “o Carlos não para a minha mãe mas para o Fernando como se fosse o Fernando que falava” (289).<sup>504</sup> They deliver messages born in the settler’s mind directed to the settler self: “a Josélia e a Maria da Boa Morte dizendo sem me dizer: - Angola acabou para a senhora” (103).<sup>505</sup> They submit quietly to the white colonist: “a minha casa é uma cabana no bairro da Cotonag, em Malange, que ordenei aos jingas para construírem junto às cabanas deles, a minha casa é um corpo incompleto de criança que não me espera, me suporta, nenhum sorriso, nenhum protesto, nenhum

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<sup>501</sup> Transl.: “All the novels take place in Portugal, or in its negative: Africa of the colonial war, almost immediately made into another country (or in this country thought from the perspective of an other), especially in *Fado Alexandrino* or *O Esplendor de Portugal*.”

<sup>502</sup> Transl.: “I lived completely focused on myself. Maybe I am grateful to Angola because it was there that I learned about the existence of others. Until then, my world was Ptolemaic. In the war, for the first time I felt a real camaraderie, which still remains today. ... At that point I realized that I was not the centre of the world.”

<sup>503</sup> Transl.: “*That* cannot be called a war. People died without seeing anyone. The landmines, no one could see who planted them and, in ambushes, it was all very fast. A war presupposes an opponent and there he was completely invisible.” (my emphasis)

<sup>504</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Carlos, not to my mother, but to Fernando, as if it was Fernando who’d asked him.” (403)

<sup>505</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Josélia and Maria da Boa Morte telling me without saying a word.” (140)

desagrado, nenhum agrado, nem uma só palavra” (120).<sup>506</sup> Quietness is their very (absent) nature, which will become Isilda’s too, as she descends from the condition of ruler into fugitive colonial settler and surrogate *native*: “acorada na esteira como os jingas, na imobilidade dos jingas, quietos durante horas ou dias ou semanas sem repararem em nada nem se importarem com nada” (176).<sup>507</sup> *Esplendor* performs imperial decadence, when the white settler *also* becomes an animal, merely bare life:

duas fêmeas e um macho de tornozelos na água recortados centímetro a centímetro pela tesoura da luz, oferecendo-se numa inocência trêmula aos crocodilos do rio como a minha família e os restantes fazendeiros do Cassanje se ofereciam, sem um queixume aos angolanos. (276)<sup>508</sup>

The condition of blackness becomes a state of non-humanity transferred to the white settler. This transferability defies the colonial arrangement. It is an *event* that the settler cannot fathom. The settler requires a return to her/his orderly colonial arrangement so that s/he can fathom the world around her/him. This aspiration entails the reinstatement of an immaculate territory of whiteness. It demands another, *previous* language, as Portuguese has been contaminated by those who had no entitlement over it. That earlier language is a pristine Portuguese, white: “os mutilados pediam qualquer coisa que eu não lograva ou não queria ou não podia entender, que entendia nos brancos ... mas não nos pretos diferentes de nós” (176); “conversar com uma africana que naturalmente não percebe” (232).<sup>509</sup> In the ascending line towards the Portuguese language, blacks are at the bottom, followed by all those imperial subjects aspiring metropolitan whiteness, passing through the *retornados*, those settlers who returned to the (former) metropolis, who embody contamination:

não é que os africanos não sejam iguais a nós claro que são iguais a nós mas coitados nem português falam vi documentários ótimos os mais objetivos que há sobre a África com eles meio nus a comerem aranhas vocês graças a Deus são quase brancos. (265)<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> Corresponding text in English: “*my real house is a hovel in the Cotonag neighborhood in Malanje that I ordered the Jingas to build next to their hovels, my house is the still-developing body of a little girl who doesn’t look forward to my visits, she puts up with them, no smiles or complaints, no displeasure, no pleasure, never a single word.*” (163-164)

<sup>507</sup> Corresponding text in English: “I, squatting on a straw mat like a dead Jinga king, motionless like a dead Jinga king, who lie still for hours or days or weeks on end and never notice anything or complain about anything.” (241)

<sup>508</sup> Corresponding text in English: “two females, and a male up to its ankles in the water, their silhouettes cut inch by inch by the scissorlike searchlight, offering themselves up to the crocodiles in the river in their tremulous innocence, the way my family and all the other farmers in Cassanje offered themselves up without complaint to the Angolans.” (384)

<sup>509</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the mutilated soldiers asking for something or other that I was unable to comprehend or didn’t want to comprehend or couldn’t comprehend, something that I could comprehend in white people ... but that I could never comprehend in black people, they were so different from us” (242); “*chatting with an African woman who naturally doesn’t get it.*” (323)

<sup>510</sup> Corresponding text in English: “*it’s not that the Africans aren’t our equals of course they’re our equals but those poor things they don’t even speak Portuguese I’ve seen wonderful documentaries the most objective ones there are about Africa that show them half naked and eating spiders you all are basically white thank God.*” (369)

Portuguese denounces the non-whiteness of its speakers:

telefonei ... [fingindo que era] da parte da embaixada de Angola trocando os tempos dos verbos como os pretos que se julgam brancos” (45); a Nossa Senhora negra de botões dourados, capaz de escrever o próprio nome se lhe dessem um ano para a tarefa desconforme de fazer as letras (53); os doentes num português atrapalhado, com medo da régua de pregos do administrador da Cela. (73)<sup>511</sup>

*The Black*, finally, speak non-languages: “articulando morteiros, conversando num dialeto que eu não conhecia semelhante ao murmúrio das dalias nas noites de insônia” (83).<sup>512</sup> The Portuguese language belongs to the imperial arrangement whereby privilege does not suit *the Black*: “tirando-nos os aspiradores avariados e os fogões sem peças, os quadros e livros de que não entendem nada” (81).<sup>513</sup> The language is indubitably *ours*, an occupied territory. It has been, however, robbed from *us*, usurped and appropriated:

o cabinda escrevendo no português ensinado na missão ... o padre a perguntar-lhes nomes de cidades que não viram nunca ... a minha casa trocada por uma página de bloco quadriculado com manchas de gordura e carvão, soldados no quarto da minha mãe, nos quartos dos meus filhos. (82)<sup>514</sup>

The collective actor that is the *us* in the novel longs for her/his property and home, which is the language of whiteness and imperial order:

mercenários brancos como eu que me dariam comida de branco ..., indenizariam ..., levariam para uma casa autêntica ... com paredes autênticas, ... pessoas que eu entendesse e me entendessem, de quem compreendesse os sentimentos e as idéias em lugar de uma lógica sem lógica nenhuma. (175)<sup>515</sup>

The desire for such linguistic enclosure belongs to the total utopia of safety in imperial confinement represented by the snow globe. Inside the snow globe the settler finds a world that is unchanging: always white, snowy and happy. Maria Alzira Seixo captures this atmosphere in Antunes’ *Esplendor* indicating that it performs a self-absorption (*ensimesmamento*) (Seixo 2002, 523). This reading associates with Madureira’s, according to which the colonial settlers remain “the willing prisoners of a kind of

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<sup>511</sup> Corresponding text in English: “and [I] called [pretending that it was] on behalf of the Angolan embassy ..., switching the verb tenses just like the blacks who think they’re white.” (57); “Our Black Lady of the Golden Buttons, Damião, who could only write his name if you gave him a year to do it (69); “the sickly workers speaking their jumbled Portuguese, afraid of the foreman from Cela and his yardstick with nails driven through it.” (97)

<sup>512</sup> Corresponding text in English: “putting together mortars, speaking to each other in a dialect that I couldn’t understand similar to the murmur of the dahlias during those insomniac nights.” (112)

<sup>513</sup> Corresponding text in English: “taking our broken vacuum cleaners and our gas stoves with missing parts, the paintings and books they knew nothing about.” (110)

<sup>514</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the Cabindan man writing in Portuguese that was taught at the mission ... the priest quizzing them about cities that they would never see ... my house traded for a sheet of graph paper with grease and soot stains on it, soldiers in my mother’s room, in my children’s rooms.” (111-112)

<sup>515</sup> Corresponding text in English: “mercenaries who were white like me who would give me white-people food to eat ..., compensate me for my losses, ..., they take me to a real house ... with real walls, ... people I’d understand and who would understand me, whose ideas and feelings I could comprehend instead of this logic that’s completely illogical.” (240)

imperial sublime” that is the raw material of the Salazarist colonial discourses (Madureira 2011, 233).

This imaginary space reserves the language for its own members. Another language is destined to its objects, *the Black*, namely the language of colonial violence: “O capataz educava-os com a bota” (360).<sup>516</sup> *Esplendor* ends when the imperial language is turned against the colonial settler. Before the firing squad, Isilda gets the bullet in the place of the word: “o modo como os músculos endurecem, o modo como as bocas se cerraram e eu a trotar na areia em direção aos meus pais” (381).<sup>517</sup>

### Whiteness without language

Silence, either final or recurrent, is the settler’s desire to circumvent the material world, and depart. It is not the absence of voice but a purposeful renouncement of the word. In *Esplendor*, silence is a populated realm—the secret place of maternal affliction for her sick child: “escutava-lhe os soluços confundidos com mil ruídos sem origem sem causa que habitavam o silêncio” (36).<sup>518</sup> It is the realm of a language turned towards the inside, where spouses meet, concealing matrimonial anger: “dos olhos que se evitam e do silêncio anguloso, pensando” (89).<sup>519</sup> It is the self-imposed restraint of the alcoholic patriarch who withholds speech:

enquanto o meu pai, arrastando os pés em silêncio, se dirigia ao armário a tilitar o gargalo contra o rebordo do copo ... e regressava à mesa ... apertando o guardanapo na boca (41); o meu pai ... quase a falar com a gente, a arrepender-se, a desistir trocando a conversa por uma garrafa de uísque. (185)<sup>520</sup>

This silence indicates the shame about the colonial order. The father opts not to pass it on, not to materialise it through language. Instead he chokes on the unspoken word. He vomits language towards the inside. And yet the empire arises as a voice uttered by the dead. Devoid of heirs, it ensures its own endurance: “o meu avô no cemitério a chamar pela minha boca” (224); “o dentista [morto] sem reparar que gritava porque a voz se tornara um som autônomo ao mesmo tempo ruidoso e calado, independente dele” (324).<sup>521</sup>

Within the white world of a naturalised colonial order, the empire is constituted and given continuity without language. Whiteness is a shared territory and, therefore,

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<sup>516</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the foreman taught them manners with the edge of his boot.” (504)

<sup>517</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the way their muscles hardened, the way they all shut their mouths, and me running in the sand toward my parents.” (535)

<sup>518</sup> Corresponding text in English: “you could hear her sobbing mixed with the thousands of other noises without origin or cause that inhabit the silence.” (45)

<sup>519</sup> Corresponding text in English: “our eyes avoiding each other, and the cruel silence, thinking.” (120)

<sup>520</sup> Corresponding text in English: “while my father, shuffling around in silence, headed toward the cupboard to clink the bottleneck against the rim of his glass ... and returned to the table ... holding the napkin to his mouth” (52); “my father ... about to talk to us, but then changing his mind, deciding against it, trading the conversation with us for a bottle of whiskey.” (253)

<sup>521</sup> Corresponding text in English: “my grandfather in the cemetery speaking from my lips” (311); “the dentist not noticing that he was screaming because his voice had become an autonomous sound, at once noisy and silent, independent of him.” (453)

dispenses of language, and becomes an introspection. Quietly in harmony, the family counts the grandmother's medicine drops: "nós todos, parados, somando-as [gotas de remédio da avó] para dentro... num coro calado (141).<sup>522</sup>

Silence is a complex topic with several different connotations in Antunes' novels.<sup>523</sup> I read silence in *Esplendor* as a desired place of comfort, the maintenance of which relies on the disregard of the material world outside: "a desejar que fosse noite para que nenhuma voz, nenhuma presença me incomodasse" (149).<sup>524</sup> In this sense silence is the settler's aspiration to oblivion, where s/he performs the three wise monkeys:

se corresse à enfermaria, subisse ao meu quarto a tapar as orelhas ... e a voz a parar-me logo ... se ao menos pudesse não saber nada, não reparar em nada, ser surda (171); o meu pai bebia uísque no andar de cima fingindo não escutar (207); a erva das campas contava uma história muito antiga de gente e bichos e assassinios e guerra que eu não entendia por medo de entender ... repetindo mentiras que o meu pai aconselhava tapando-me as orelhas. - Não escutes. (80)<sup>525</sup>

The silence of the colonial settler in *Esplendor* inscribes itself in Antunes' critique to:

[t]he remarkable public silence that greets the empire's collapse in Os cus de Judas, the "unparalleled" absence of even a vestigial traumatic sign on the "national psyche," the collective refusal to rethink "[n]a sua totalidade [a] nossa imagem perante nós mesmos e no espelho do mundo" (Lourenço, *Labirinto* 45; italics in the original).<sup>526</sup> (Madureira 2011, 236)

In the novel, this collective historical subject is saying *Ich habe es nicht gewusst*. Her/his integrity as a subject depends on this alleged ignorance. At the moment when the settler is overcome by the world outside her/his insular imperial mythology, when no evasion is possible, s/he wishes for oblivion, with her/his death as (historical) subject: "os brincos de pérola, o batom, o pó-de-arroz, o perfume, estendida na cama à espera dos cubanos, desejando que os cubanos venham e me dêem um tiro" (60);<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> Corresponding text in English: "all of us, frozen, counted them [the drops of grandmother's medicine] in our heads ... in a silent chorus." (193)

<sup>523</sup> See, for instance, Ana Paula Arnaut considerations on the critical role of silence in Antunes' oeuvre. Ana Paula Arnaut, "A Ficção de António Lobo Antunes: O Romance no Fio da Navalha," *Pequena Morte*, January 6, 2014. <http://www.pequenamorte.net/a-ficcao-de-antonio-lobo-antunes-o-romance-no-fio-da-navalha-ana-paula-arnaut/#.V5DkSVegE9Y>. Here Arnaut categorises the more recent novels of Antunes (from 2008 on) with a "circle of silence" where silence denotes a situation when communication is superfluous and characters speak mainly to themselves ("to their interior"). I have indicated the presence of such a "situation" in *Esplendor* too.

<sup>524</sup> Corresponding text in English: "wishing it was already nighttime so that I wouldn't be bothered by a single voice, a single presence." (204)

<sup>525</sup> Corresponding text in English: "if I could just run to the infirmary, if I could just run up to my bedroom and cover my ears ... and her voice stopped me in my tracks ... if only I knew nothing, saw nothing, if only I were deaf" (234); "my father drank his whiskey upstairs pretending not to hear them" (285); "the grass on the graves was telling its ancient story about humans and beasts and murders and war that I didn't understand because I was afraid to understand ... repeating lies about which my father warned me, covering my ears 'Don't listen'." (108-109)

<sup>526</sup> Transl.: "in its totality, our image before ourselves and in the mirror of the world."

<sup>527</sup> Corresponding text in English: "pearl earrings, lipstick, powder, perfume, stretched out on the bed awaiting the Cubans, hoping the Cubans will come and put a bullet in me." (79)

and, with her, the death of *her* language: “nomes dos defuntos escritos em português/latim, mal se decifravam” (27).<sup>528</sup>

### After language - *A(pós)-língua (The post-language)*

*Esplendor* is hosted in a time and site *after the end of language*. This location makes evident the impossibility of representing violence as there is no true witness, not only in the sense that Primo Levi gave to it (the true witness is dead or wordless),<sup>529</sup> but in the sense that, in the novel, there is no other *body* who is legitimately entitled to tell the tale than the colonial settler her/himself. Language is exposed as foundational to cognitive and material violence perpetrated by colonial imperialism. Hence, the end of the empire entails a time and space after language. Beyond the boundaries of the human, as constituted by imperial colonialism, there is *nobody*, nothing, the void: the end. For the settler does not know and wishes not to know anywhere else, s/he is blessed to reach oblivion, *graças a deus*.<sup>530</sup>

Both the family's matriarch and patriarch embody imperial pathology, which turns the settler, sooner the father than the mother, into a dead white body invested in a nihilist endeavour. They crave for nothingness after having been ejected out of the snow globe. Through language they have witnessed *the horror, the horror* - referring to Joseph Conrad's (1967 [1899]) *The Heart of Darkness*- with which they are fundamentally entangled.

There is no language apt to make sense out of it, neither for father or grandfather on their deathbeds, entangled in the family's memory:

a língua procurando separar as palavras, colocá-las em fila, pronunciá-las por ordem sílaba a sílaba, juntando frases como peças de *puzzle* ... o que não tivera tempo de dizer ... *nós à espera da revelação decisiva ... atentos ao último conselho ... o silêncio, o corpo parado por dentro se calhar esse nada.* (362-363)<sup>531</sup>

The progeny remains in this place without language: “soltou um soprozinho ... uma pausa, um hiato, o peito do meu pai imóvel” (67).<sup>532</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the names of the deceased were written half in Portuguese half in Latin, so worn down that they could hardly be deciphered.” (34)

<sup>529</sup> “We who survived the Camps are not true witnesses. .... We are those who, through prevarication, skill or luck, never touched bottom. Those who have, and who have seen the face of the Gorgon, did not return, or returned wordless.” Primo Levi quoted in Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, A History of the World 1914–1991* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).1.

<sup>530</sup> Transl.: “thanks god.”

<sup>531</sup> Corresponding text in English: “his tongue tried to separate the words, line them up in a row, pronounce them in order, one syllable after another, putting together sentences like the pieces of a puzzle.”

<sup>532</sup> Corresponding text in English: “he let out a breath ... a pause, a hesitation, my father's chest motionless.” (89)

## Location: centre-home

This chapter carried out the scrutiny of language metaphors having recourse to the themes from the previous chapters – namely centre and periphery – and pushed this metaphorical terrain to its limits, advancing an inquiry into the negation of language to the non-human object of colonialism. These new themes associate with the tropes imposed by the text itself (by its graphic violence and excessive language). They both relate to the banality of imperial rhetoric and the crudeness of its cognitive and material expression, which is violence. I am hence breaching the geography of the periphery into the *zone of the non-being*. The body is an important source of metaphors here, and nothingness is another. The text is eschatological throughout, in its raw attachment to the body and to hollowness. Antunes turns language into mere naked (black) meat, silence, and void.

In *Esplendor*, borders are explicit and operating continuously in the story. There is no acknowledged/acknowledgeable enlacement (no borderzone) between settler and colonial object, but a spilling over the boundary of civilisation. *Esplendor* stages the incursion of the non-human into a terrain entitled to the white settler. The novel defies the narrative of a benevolent contact, bringing to view the actual motors of Portuguese colonialism, namely apartheid, hegemony, appropriation, and annihilation. Language signs to separation: apartheid. It is a detachment towards those it objectifies, which is enabled by hegemony: those who have language (who own it) and those who don't.

The novel is made almost exclusively by the settlers' voice(s), except for the brief passages when the Angolan fighter speaks. Those voices of the imperial subject, the narrators, convey both the horrors of imperial life and *its delights*. The juxtaposition of such disparate elements requires translation. Hereby *barbarism* turns into the lesser aspect of imperial *splendour*, being relegated to the background of *the explanation of the empire*.

The text uncovers the pathological gaze of the colonial settler feeding what s/he deems and coins cultural translation. *Esplendor* is in effect an anatomy lesson in the entrails of the empire. Antunes dissects the mechanisms that rule the colony, showing that the actual "explanation" of imperial colonialism is in a secluded space outside language. It is a well-kept secret, a place of monstrosity. This space is embodied by the hospital that briefly hosts Clarisse when it is suspected that she has cancer. It is a realm of detachment: "uma bata branca que me escreve, me estende o papelinho" (337).<sup>533</sup> It is house to those who decide upon life and death under the euphemistic language for terminal illnesses. Clarisse's gaze into the hospital's secluded room that hides under silence and asepsis works as a window into the colonial zone. She discovers the space where: "uma porta que dizia Reservado onde se calhar fabricavam monstros em segredo com pedaços de pessoas diferentes, caras com uma órbita mais acima porque as cortavam em duas e juntavam sem cuidado" (286).<sup>534</sup> The colonial zone is this space kept out of sight in order not to blemish the image of a neatly regulated realm. Out of

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<sup>533</sup> Corresponding text in English: "the sleeve of a white medical coat writing something down, handing me a piece of paper." (472)

<sup>534</sup> Corresponding text in English: "a door marked Reserved where it's possible that they create monsters in secret using body parts from different people, faces with one eye socket higher than the other because they cut them out separately and added them to the face [without] double checking." (399)

view, the settler becomes the almighty sovereign who rules upon life and death of non-human subjects. Analogously, Angola is the *Reservado*, the biopolitical space of exception concealed by language. Angola is the material expression of this space where the settler is not bounded by the rules that guide life among other humans: “o Rui queria trazer a espingarda de chumbinhos que ficara na África” (257).<sup>535</sup>

This analogy is not gratuitous. Antunes has spoken about the horror concealed in the hospital and the normalisation of a detached attitude to humanity, whereby the bodily fragment (object) takes the place of personhood:

Entrei para a universidade, tinha acabado de fazer 17 anos, e em Outubro estava no teatro anatómico; nunca tinha visto cadáveres. Havia uma espécie de pias, mesas, para o sangue – que não havia – escorrer. O empregado disse: “Meus senhores, está a sopa na mesa.” Passados dois meses já mexia naquilo sem luvas – cadáveres com um ano de frigorífico, cheios de formol. (Antunes 2008, 18)<sup>536</sup>

In *Esplendor* the author had applied this poignant association of the anatomy lesson with the bourgeois supper. In the same interview, Antunes (2008) qualifies the experience at the anatomy theatre as “[u]m espectáculo horroroso.”<sup>537</sup> This construction is significant for it foregrounds the display of violence as a pedagogic practice in a remote space. Hereby violence and the disposability of human parts serve the goal of white human advancement. The hospital embodies the very space of exception. This is the ghostly metaphor that haunts *Esplendor*, where the colony *is* the anatomy theatre.

This space that emerges after the language of convention has been overcome, and the commonplaces of imperial benevolence have lost resonance, is worldly. It is not an ethereal mythological language but a material evidence of the actual empire that is, effectively, biopolitics. In *Esplendor* Antunes serves the reader this *sopa de sangue*.<sup>538</sup> The author patently confronts the reader with a history that has been hidden and demands the rescue of an occluded memory. For Ana Paula Arnaut: “Entre esses motivos pode contar-se uma certa moral, uma certa pedagogia e, acima de tudo, uma consciência de que temos que viver com a carga que o passado nos impõe e com as opções que outros fazem por nós” (Arnaut 2009, 32).<sup>539</sup>

This reading resonates with Michael Rothberg’s work in progress on “the implicated subject,” which advances his *Multidirectional Memory* (Rothberg 2009):

Here the focus moves to an “archive of implication”--a deliberately open-ended term that gathers together various modes of historical relation that do not necessarily (or simply) fall

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<sup>535</sup> Corresponding text in English: “Rui wanted to bring the pellet gun that was left behind in Africa.” (358)

<sup>536</sup> Transl.: “I went to college, I had just turned 17, and in October I was in the anatomical theater; I had never seen corpses. There was a kind of sinks, tables, for blood - that was not - to drain. The employee said: ‘Gentlemen, the soup is served.’ Two months have passed and I touched that barehanded - corpses a year in refrigerator, filled with formaldehyde.”

<sup>537</sup> Transl.: “a horrific spectacle.”

<sup>538</sup> Transl.: “soup of blood.”

<sup>539</sup> Transl.: “Among those reasons one can identify a certain moral, a certain pedagogy and, above all, a consciousness that we have to live with the burden that the past imposes on us and with the options that others take for us.”

under the more direct forms of participation associated with traumatic events, such as victimization and perpetration. Such “implicated” modes of relation encompass bystanders, beneficiaries, latecomers of the postmemory generation, and others connected powerfully to pasts they did not directly experience and to contemporary contexts that might seem distant. A consideration of the issues associated with these subject positions moves us away from overt questions of guilt and innocence and into the more uncertain moral and ethical terrain of “implication”—a terrain in which many of us live most of the time. (Rothberg)

I call attention here to the movement between the exposure of imperial continuities and the quest for absolution of its agents in a recurrent effort to recentre the narrative on the European/Portuguese. Rothberg’s coinage and analysis of the implicated subject allows this slippage, which is also present in some literary analysis of the workings of memory on Portuguese colonialism. This reading departs from the analogy between the Holocaust and colonialism, which is as productive as problematic, as I have argued in the previous section. The perversity of this perspective is that it overlooks the continuities of colonialism and the persistence of anti-black racism. This gaze is therefore centred on the white European subject. I argue, however, that Antunes’ text (more profoundly) disturbs the reader for it reveals the imperial tropes that the reader her/himself reproduces.<sup>540</sup> In this sense the *implicated subject* is not the victim of imperial history but (also) its beneficiary. Rothberg does include the dimension of benefiting from the past in his theorising of this subject position but overlooks one’s active investment in this position.<sup>541</sup> The implicated subject works on the maintenance of her/his historical privilege in the present. This is actually a questioning that occurs *within* the moral and ethical terrain. As Antunes himself posits in “Prescription on How to Read Me,” the reader is complicit and will be redeemed only by consciousness of said complicity. S/he must feel embedded: “Se eu, enquanto leitor, não sinto o prazer de ver um homem ali, uma presença viva, com carne e sangue e esperma e merda, se não sinto o corpo dele lá e a vida dele lá, não consigo aderir afetivamente” (quoted in Arnaut 2009, 37).<sup>542</sup>

Yet again, this said consciousness prescinds from the actual encounter with the Angolan subject. The Portuguese settler, the *retornado*, the reader, is more than capable of achieving consciousness on her/his own. Or isn’t s/he? In her more recent essay referred above, “*O barulho surdo da(s) raça(s) em O meu nome é Legião*,” Ana Paula Arnaut (2011) points to the fact that the consideration of races as unequal, with the unfolding tensions and conflicts dramatized in the novel, lives on in the aftermath of empire. She closes the essay with the question of whether the demise of Portuguese colonialism represented the end of such “colonial mentality” (ibid., 363). Colonial ideology is pervasive in Portuguese culture and is fully operative in Portuguese society.

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<sup>540</sup> I refer here to the “generic reader” as the host to the recurrent tropes produced by the Portuguese hegemonic national culture. I am aware though, that no reader is a *tabula rasa* so that each one picks and chooses from the repertoire of national culture.

<sup>541</sup> Another important aspect of the debate on the heritage of the imperial burden in Portugal is that the subject of the empire is implicated by his very presence in the war against the independence of the former colonies in Africa. Antunes is himself clear about his involvement, not to leave the impression of implication as bystander: “A guerra é uma coisa atroz, eu participei activamente em coisas atroz.” António Lobo Antunes, “António Lobo Antunes, Depois da Publicação de 'Exortação dos Crocodilos': 'Agora Só Aprendo Comigo'” Interview by Alexandra Lucas Coelho, *Pública*, 30 January, 2000, 30.

<sup>542</sup> Transl.: “If I, as a reader, don't feel pleasure to see a man there, a living presence, with flesh and blood and sperm and shit, if I don't feel his body there and his life there, I cannot adhere affectively.”

However, in order to respond to this question, one must be precise, as racism does not operate according to a logic of reciprocity or equivalence. The fundamental problem exposed by *Esplendor* and performed by it is that the subject who does the social diagnosis is invariably the white European. This imbroglio is again the predicament of much literary analysis. As a result, the white gaze remains the authoritative source for canon formation.

In *Esplendor*, hegemony is performed as only the Portuguese settlers' gaze and their language exist. The *centre* of the narrative is the colonial settler, *the Black* is outside, and the *mestiço*, the *madboy/man* and the *unruly woman* are at the periphery, which is actually constitutive of the Portuguese colonial regime. In the Portuguese colonial world the periphery is at the centre. The conditional acceptance of those peripheral imperial subjects into the positionality of the normative imperial subject (white, male and able-bodied) informs their monumental investment in safeguarding the imperial order so that the nightmare of losing their place at the table does not come true. For the *mestiço* who just *discovered* his blackness, his position in the colonial ladder seems mistaken, but it is not: “- É verdade que sou preto? ... o capataz ia chegar à cozinha e mandar-me trabalhar na safra, tiravam-me o quarto, os brinquedos, o meu lugar à mesa ... como vivera uns anos por equívoco na casa da fazenda” (92).<sup>543</sup>

*Esplendor* takes place at the margins of the empire that is actually its core, at the spilling of colonial violence that is, in fact, its foundation. The impression of being at the margin, which resonates with the postcolonial trope of the Portuguese semi-periphery, is only effective when the black object has already been relegated to a realm of non-existence.

Antunes faces the reader with the violence that maintains this scheme. Eventually its centre turns out to be hollow. The instituted arrangement, once solidly in place, became fragile and doomed. The trope of the *casa* (house and home) embodies this ruination. The home is that orderly place, *our* Angola, the imaginary Africa under imperial rule, which has been nostalgically kept alive until the imagination is caught up by the crumbling empire: “- Não posso continuar aqui porque esta casa está morta” (87).<sup>544</sup> There is no life possible for the settler outside of this place of privilege and out of a predatory relationship. This vanishing place stands for the end of a world order, the end of a world, and the end of a historical subject: “a casa a desaparecer nas trevas, a casa e a não casa em espasmos alterados ... não havia lugar onde morarmos nem havia nós” (95).<sup>545</sup>

The novel ends with Isilda in front of the firing squad wearing their “óculos escuros espelhados” (381).<sup>546</sup> Now it is *the Black* that returns the unbearable reflex of the imperial myth, as she escapes to the ultimate place of belonging after the end of the empire; a place of pristine whiteness, the heaven as final home.

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<sup>543</sup> Corresponding text in English: “ ‘Is it true that I’m black?’ ... the foreman was going to come into the kitchen and send me out to work the harvest, they were going to take away my room, my toys, my spot at the dinner table ... since I’d mistakenly lived in the house on the plantation for a few years.” (125)

<sup>544</sup> Corresponding text in English: “ ‘I can’t stay here because this house is dead.’ ” (118)

<sup>545</sup> Corresponding text in English: “the house vanishing in the darkness, house and no house in alternating spasms ... there was no place for us to live and we weren’t there either.” (129)

<sup>546</sup> Corresponding text in English: “mirror-lensed sunglasses.” (534)

According to Ana Margarida Fonseca, Isilda's decision not to leave Angola was an act of resistance: "Ficar é, na nossa opinião, um acto de resistência, através do qual o corpo do ex-colonizador se inscreve no território físico e simbólico da nação independente" (Fonseca 2003, 291).<sup>547</sup> I contend that rather than a resistance, the white settler stays put as an insistence. As s/he does not know other possible lives than that of colonial agent, s/he holds to the fantasy of its continuity. S/he holds to the past, to its enclosure and its language. At the end of meaning, of her/his universe of intelligibility, s/he closes her/his eyes ahead of a final enclosure.

## Cultural translation - voice

In *Esplendor*, colonial Angola has been rhetorically constructed as a home through cultural translation. Translation is the paradigmatic place of the borderland, of an envisioned *zone of encounter* and exchange. Portuguese colonialism built the fantasy of its home as a hospitable space of encounter. Ideas of reciprocity and symmetry are often associated with this home. The trope of cultural translation in *Esplendor* reveals the perversity of Portuguese imperial imagination for it is the empire that serves as its actor/translator. The *explanation of the empire* provided in *Esplendor* reproduces an imagination of subalternity that is at the core of the Portuguese postimperial identity. For this imagination to be fixated it requires the disappearance of the actual other in the colonial zone that is the Angolan. In *Esplendor*, the other is consistently the other side of the self (of imperial grandeur). The silenced Angolan as colonial object in the novel lends itself as a critical tool for questioning translation at the home of the empire. The fundamental questions that emerge here are: who does the translation?; who speaks on behalf of whom?; who is the translator-subject and the translated-object?; who is the audience to which the translation is addressed?; what are the tropes that harbour the alleged alien language into *our own*?; what is deemed subsidiary, and what is elected and selected to make the canon, the explanation of the empire?

The novel is a punch in the stomach of the reader, who is invited to testify the conviction of (gendered) racial superiority that transpires in the storytelling of the colonial settler. Conversely, there is no possibility of identification with the colonial subject, who is the target of such scorn for they do not exist in the narrative. Yet there is recognition of an array of emotions ascribed to the imperial experience and the experience of its demise. The familiarity of the reader with the names, denominations and normativisms of the empire denounces, reveals and installs discomfort. Commenting on *As Naus* (1988), Ana Paula Arnaut argues that the novel "é, de facto, uma história de avessos, escrita `as avessas"<sup>548</sup> whereby, aside from the formal elements of the narrative that I denoted before, disorder is constituted through the "perturbação provocada na nossa enciclopédia, a individual e a coletiva" (Arnaud 2009, 35).<sup>549</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> Transl.: "Staying is, in our opinion, an act of resistance, through which the body of the former coloniser inscribes itself into the physical and symbolic territory of the independent nation."

<sup>548</sup> Transl.: "It is, in fact, a history of inside out's, written inside out."

<sup>549</sup> Transl.: "disturbance provoked in our encyclopedia, individual and collective."

This unsettling sentiment is stretched throughout *Esplendor*, which is named after a refrain in the Portuguese national anthem. *A Portuguesa* was composed at the time of and as a reaction to the British Ultimatum (1890) that curtailed the Portuguese project of expansion of its colonial domains in Africa. The anthem rescues national/imperial pride against the evidence of the failure of an enlarged imperial domain: against humiliation, the fantasy of the *esplendor*. This imperial fantasy is encapsulated in the *mapa cor-de-rosa* (pink map) of envisioned control through Mozambique and Angola. Pink appears in the novel as the dream world of the empire at the times of its demise. Isilda recollects it ahead of her execution: “a minha mãe de sombrinha aberta cor-de-rosa ... a minha mãe nunca tirava as luvas nem se descalçava” (381).<sup>550</sup> The allusion to the *mapa cor de rosa*, the geography of the aspired empire, is the perfect antidote to the crumbling empire because as long as its demise is not named, it will not happen.

Ana Paula Arnaut indicates that the author’s *inside out writing* entails a particular disturbance of the Portuguese understanding of the empire, for it enacts: “a desmistificação da grandiosidade da História e da *raça* de um conjunto de heróis portugueses” (Arnaut 2009, 34).<sup>551</sup> In *Esplendor* the hero is an ordinary (wo)man, the actual subject of Salazar’s populist grandiloquence.

Antunes explicitly presented his novel as a narrative forcing against the silence of the “colonial war” in Portugal (up until the early 2000s). Not only is he forcing against a wall of silence, but he is also countering the story of a benevolent *Lusotropical* empire:

É muito habitual dizer-se que o nosso colonialismo era brando, era brando o tanas, eu vi coisas atrozes. Se fosse angolano nunca teria perdoado a Portugal, vi coisas horríveis e o espantoso é que não tenha ficado ódio da parte deles. A discriminação era total, total. Há pouco tempo houve desmentidos, por parte de altas instâncias militares portuguesas, sobre a utilização de napalm durante a guerra colonial. São mentirosos porque eu vi o napalm, o napalm estava onde eu estava, eu vi-o. Vi bombardear com o napalm e vítimas de seu uso, testemunho isto em qualquer tribunal. Ninguém foi condenado por isso, absolutamente ninguém. Todos os meus companheiros de batalhão o sabem. Justificamo-nos com o que fizeram o MPLA e a UNITA, mas nós fizemos coisas horríveis. Falo da UNITA, mas na UNITA limitavam-se a trabalhar com a PIDE, eram pagos e treinados pela PIDE. (Antunes 2001, 18)<sup>552</sup>

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<sup>550</sup> Corresponding text in English: “my mother in the shade of her pink parasol ... my mother never took off her gloves or her shoes.” (534-535)

<sup>551</sup> Transl.: “the demystifying of the grandeur of History and of the *race* of a number of Portuguese heroes.”

<sup>552</sup> Transl.: “It’s often said that our colonialism was mild, mild was my ass, I saw atrocious things. If I was Angolan I would never have forgiven Portugal. I saw horrible things and the amazing thing is that they do not hate us. Discrimination was complete, total. Not long ago there were denials by high Portuguese military authorities on the use of napalm during the colonial war. They are liars because I saw napalm, napalm was where I was, I saw it. I saw bombings with napalm and victims of its use, I will testify to this in any court. No one has been convicted of this, absolutely no one. All my battalion comrades know. We justify ourselves with what MPLA and UNITA did, but we did horrible things. I speak of UNITA, but UNITA limited to working with the PIDE, they were paid and trained by the PIDE.” Note: MPLA stands for The People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola, which was the independence movement that ascended to power after the end of imperial rule. UNITA stands for the Union for the Total Independence of Angola, which fought alongside the MPLA in the war of independence from Portugal and then against the MPLA in the civil war. PIDE stands for the International and State Defense Police, which was the political police of the Portuguese fascist and colonial dictatorship.

The novel ends in Angola, where Isilda is murdered facing a common grave. It is 24th December 1995. Along the journey to the site of the murder, she goes back and forth in her memory archive, conversing to her children and to her future murderers. The empire ends a tragic death leaving no promise of a brighter future. Apart from the ghostly presence of dead relatives, Carlos and his siblings are left to give testimony to the empire's damage (as damaged people), out of which/whom nothing/*nobody* surges. The novel closes up any possibility of a third generation. It leaves no children, no one to speak the language of the empire.

Ana Margarida Fonseca (2003, 286) made the poignant and important association between this *esterilidade* (sterility) with racial theories in vogue in the nineteenth century that borrowed from botanic models. These alluded to the impossibility of *cross-racial* reproduction to sustain the notion of racial degeneration through miscegenation – an idea that haunts the characters in *Esplendor*. There is no absolution in the Last Supper (*Santa Ceia*), but relief in death, salvation: the end of the empire.

Discussing the earlier *Memória de Elefante*, Ana Paula Arnaut poses that Antunes takes upon himself the task of: “sublinhar a necessidade e a vontade de contrariar o ‘fenómeno da amnésia coletiva’ que, após a Revolução dos Cravos, ensombrou a sociedade portuguesa” (Arnaut 2009, 27-28).<sup>553</sup> Borrowing from Maria Alzira Seixo, Arnaut indicates that the silent woman in the Lisbon bar, the “interlocutor” to the narrator of *Os Cus de Judas*, is another way whereby the author is: “eventualmente especulando o silêncio e alheamento do próprio país sobre a Guerra e sobre o *outro* que [a] História também calou.”<sup>554</sup> In the sequence, Arnaut rescues an interview in which Antunes calls for the imperative to remember the: “milhão e quinhentos mil homens que passaram por África.”<sup>555</sup> Referring to Seixo, Arnaut affirms about a particular character in the same *Os Cus de Judas*, the Angolan washerwomen Sofia, who is an MPLA operative: “Sofia não cede à fala, porque África não pode falar, a não ser pela luta.”<sup>556</sup> In a later article, Arnaut indicates that the exposure of violence in Antunes’ novels is a requirement for countering this collective forgetfulness – “violência justificada” (Arnaut 2011, 355).<sup>557</sup> It is critical, nevertheless, to grasp who is the forgotten historical subject in the discourse of author and scholars.

Madureira (1995) challenged the anticolonialism of Antunes’ text, particularly referring to the same novel and its female characters as a supposed “return of a (historiographic) repressed” – “the story or indeed the mere allusion to Portugal’s colonial wars in Africa.” The literature scholar argues instead that the novel performs a “game of seduction” whereby: “the [male] narrator-protagonist spins his gruesome yarn of war and destruction in a dimly lit Lisbon bar to a female interlocutor who is something like the obscured and silenced object of his desire” (Madureira 1995, 21). By these means the novel occludes, once again, the female that serves merely as conduit for the male (settler’s) desires.

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<sup>553</sup> Transl.: “emphasize the need and the desire to counter the ‘phenomenon of collective amnesia’ that after the Carnation Revolution, overshadowed Portuguese society.”

<sup>554</sup> Transl.: “possibly scrutinising the silence and aloofness of their own country about the War and the *other* that History also silenced.”

<sup>555</sup> Transl.: “one million five hundred thousand men who have gone through Africa.”

<sup>556</sup> Transl.: “Sofia does not resign to speech because Africa cannot speak, except through the struggle.”

<sup>557</sup> Transl.: “justified violence.”

Madureira associates the female trope with the “blank space or historiographic silence.” She stands for the “unoccupied territory” that “acquires meaning insofar as she is written, troped, penetrated” (ibid., 22). He finds a natural intertextual link to the metaphoric terrain covered by *The Heart of Darkness* and Freud’s constructions on sexual intercourse, penetration, geographical exploration and conquest. Madureira associates the female characters of *Os Cus de Judas* through the shared trope of availability to male penetration as geographical exploration. The outstanding feature of Sofia in this row is that she will be object of torture, gang-rape and murder by the PIDE. This character informs the scholar’s charge to Antunes. For Madureira, the presence and reversal of this “colonialist commonplace” (the gendering of unexplored or colonised territory) is not peculiar to Antunes; rather, he posits, Antunes’ reliance on this trope puts his challenge to historiography in doubt (ibid., 23).<sup>558</sup>

I concur with Madureira’s indication that “Lobo Antunes’ reversal of the gendered tropical topoi of lusotropicalism” (ibid., 23) cohabits with the availability of the female body, of the African women standing for *Africa, for* the colonial settler. In this case, as performed in *Esplendor* and by it, as will be addressed further down, it serves the postimperial subject to gain consciousness and to restore her/his morality. *Esplendor*’s patriarch drinks away the longing for the Angolan mother to his *mestiço* son. He acknowledges the forceful character of the *Lusotropical* encounter between the male settler and black women. Hereby the *Lusotropical* myth of harmonious conviviality and sensual contact (that fed the *estadonovista* rhetoric) is debunked through the very same mechanism that inhabits *Lusotropicalismo*, namely the disposability of the black (female) body to colonial violence. Associating *Os Cus de Judas* with *The Heart of Darkness*,<sup>559</sup> Madureira directs to the previous a critique that Chinua Achebe made of the latter:

As the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe has written of Conrad’s representation of the “dark continent,” however, the Africa of Lobo Antunes “is to Europe as a picture of Dorian Gray – a carrier unto whom the master unloads his physical and moral deformities.”

For Lobo Antunes, the deformities of the Angolans are specular in another sense. As the privileged site of Portugal’s centenarian colonizing mission, Angola becomes the disquieting reflection of “um velho pais desajeitado e agonizante ... uma Europa repleta de furúnculos de palácios e de pedras de bexiga de catedrais doentes” ([*Os Cus de Judas*] 58).<sup>560</sup> It becomes the derisory negation of “the idea of a Portuguese Africa,” of the lusotropicalist myth of Portuguese colonialism, of *O Mundo que o Português Criou* [The World that the Portuguese Created]. (Madureira 1995, 24)

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<sup>558</sup> This aspect of the reading disappears (or is revised, as indicated by the scholar himself) in Madureira’s later article in *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies* 19/20, wherein he finds the novel in the counter-current of the Portuguese novels that set out to problematize the empire but end up repeating its tropes. For Madureira, Antunes explicitly refuses to continue the empire. I believe that the point made by Madureira in his earlier analysis is important and must be highlighted alongside aspects of Antunes’ novels that challenge the imperial gaze, as the scholar did in his later article.

<sup>559</sup> There are other intertextual readings of Antunes’ novels with *The Heart of Darkness*, such as the article cited above: Ana Mafalda Leite, “From Lobo Antunes to Joseph Conrad: The Writing of Post-Colonial Maps and Phantoms,” *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies* 19/20 (2011), 213-225.

<sup>560</sup> Transl.: “an awkward and agonizing old country ... a Europe full of boils of palaces and bladder stones of sick cathedrals.”

Altogether, *Esplendor* works in both ways: it denounces the imperial gaze by performing it. It is a Lusitanian white narrative in its voices and perspective. Angola and Angolans do not utter their own voices, except for the brief passages when the independence fighters speak or growl. They do not have or own languages. They are objects of the Portuguese imperial gaze and of its imperial colonialism. Hereby the novel can be understood as postimperial, for it constitutes the self-critique of/inside the former empire. It exposes imperial continuities in lines of race, gender and class that still tear the Portuguese social tissue. It challenges the myth of a *common past*, laying bare the selective process through which collective/public memory is construed by a white polyphony.

It is therefore a self-contained narrative of a self-contained critique. Here Africa disappears in a way to denounce its forced erasure and the violence to which it was subjected. Is the critique more palatable (apparently in contrast to its graphic style) because it is voiced from inside the empire? Is it possible at all to grasp if uttered by the imperial subject in her/his *own language*? Or is this its very force?

As far back as 1998 at the Paris Book Fair, Antunes voiced his discomfort with the unanimous praise he was granted by the public, critics and scholars alike: “Inquieta-me ser tão digerível e que me considerem uma espécie de Julio Iglesias da literatura” (quoted in Carvalho 1998).<sup>561</sup> There is a mirage of comfort in Antunes’ novels. The trap is in the familiarity of the narrative, in the intimate relationship the reader develops with it. It speaks to the images and tropes already established as factual in Portuguese culture (the imperial benevolent regime) despite evidence of the contrary. And the reader is caught up in this incestuous entanglement. Her/his bad conscience transpires. After reading, the reader is lost in her/his complicity. Now – which is an anachronistic place and time – s/he knows. Therefore, despite the silencing and policing of the narrative, s/he knew it all along.

A definite aspect of the *palatability* of *Esplendor* is the portrayal of a lack of humanity on *both sides* of the line, namely the colonial settler and the independence/civil war fighter. In this sense the author addresses the power holder, whoever s/he might be.

Mas a guerra é sempre um momento absurdo porque ninguém ganha. Isto foi o que, de mais claro, trouxe da guerra. Na guerra não há vencedores. Todos – militares, famílias, populações – são vencidos. E os militares são os que menos culpa têm porque se limitam a fazer aquilo que o poder político pretende. (Antunes 2003, 200)<sup>562</sup>

Several scholars embraced this gaze in Antunes’ oeuvre. Maria Alzira Seixo argues the postcolonial aspect of Antunes’ writing as such:

Por isso a problemática dominante destes romances não é a da crítica do Salazarismo e do imperialismo ou a da guerra colonial (embora obviamente as inclua em situação de proeminência), mas sim um complexo de atitudes que envolve a desgraça do colonizado

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<sup>561</sup> Transl.: “It bothers me to be so digestible and that they consider me a kind of Julio Iglesias of literature.”

<sup>562</sup> Transl.: “But the war is always an absurd moment because nobody wins. This was the most clear thing that I brought back from the war. In the war there are no winners. All - military, families, peoples - are defeated. And the military are the least guilty because they only do what the political power wants.”

tanto como a do colonizador, as atitudes de agressão e prepotência visíveis em ambos os lados e, sobretudo, o misto de malogro e de oportunismo que a guerra produz em todos os sentidos, reduzindo a porção de humanidade no indivíduo, a capacidade criadora nos grupos familiares e afins, e a harmonia nas comunidades. Trata-se efetivamente, de uma problemática pós-colonial, na medida em que as atmosferas criadas se reportam a um lugar invadido (com a deslocalização diversificada de nativos e de invasores) e são caracterizadas por atitudes híbridas, no sentido bakhtiniano termo ..., retomado pela teoria pós-colonial .... (Seixo 2002, 501-502)<sup>563</sup>

Following this line of thought, the text becomes an inquiry into the human condition for the fact that Angola is only represented as a mirror (it is *Africa*). The narrative becomes *universal*. Antunes' oeuvre is associated with themes rather than places, namely: the complexity of life, the haunting of death, the absence of love, the impossibility of communication, the trauma of war and dictatorship as in Germany or Latin America, *enfim* humanity at large. This reading beyond Angola that harbours in *Africa* (as canvas and imagination) ignores the fact that the suppression of Africa/Africans as an actual place and as subjects of a voice makes the narrative perform imperial power.

This reading neglects a fundamental element of the postcolonial critique, which is to problematize the power differential. In this regard it is illustrative to refer to Primo Levi, who was discussed in the previous section, pointing out the fact that Levi himself wrote extensively on the trauma of the perpetrator (power holder) but made a point of indicating that s/he is not the victim. Not only does reading Antunes as a narrator of an allegedly hybrid subject position overlook this critical aspect, but it underplays it, having recourse to the trope of the semi-periphery and the subalternity of Portuguese imperial enterprise, “a questão da especificidade [portuguesa],” one such “espaços intersticiais ou partes do mundo menos marcadas pela ideologia globalizante,” and not “claramente dominados pela determinação da supremacia económica ou político-linguística” (Seixo 2002, 502).<sup>564</sup>

The euphoria of the borderland that challenges colonial binaries<sup>565</sup> gives way to rendering both colonial and anticolonial discourses equally passé.<sup>566</sup> This logic informs the absence of anticolonial literature in the Portuguese postcolonial field, as mentioned in the previously in this dissertation. Fonseca here too shows awareness of the colonial

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<sup>563</sup> Transl.: “So the dominant issue of these novels is not the criticism to Salazarism and imperialism or the colonial war (though obviously it includes them in a prominent place), but rather a complex of attitudes that involves the disgrace of the colonised as much as of the coloniser, the aggressive attitudes and visible prepotency on both sides and, above all, the combination of failure and opportunism that the war produces in every way, reducing the portion of humanity in the individual, the creative capacity in the family and peer groups, and harmony in communities. This is effectively a post-colonial issue in that the atmospheres created relate to an occupied place (with the diversified dislocation of natives and invaders) and are characterized by hybrid attitudes in the Bakhtinian sense of the term ..., taken by post-colonial theory ....”

<sup>564</sup> Transl.: “The question of the [Portuguese] specificity,” one such “interstitial spaces or parts of the world less marked by the globalizing ideology,” and not “clearly dominated by the determination of the economic or political-linguistic supremacy.”

<sup>565</sup> These were criticised by Fonseca, as highlighted in the previous chapter: Fonseca, *Between Centers and Margins - Writing the Border in the Literary Space of the Portuguese Language*, 41-61.

<sup>566</sup> That is what the same scholar seems to do in her earlier essay: Ana Margarida Fonseca, “Identidades Impuras - Uma Leitura Pós-Colonial de O Esplendor de Portugal,” in *A Escrita e o Mundo em António Lobo Antunes. Actas do Colóquio Internacional António Lobo Antunes da Universidade de Évora*, eds. Eunice Cabral, Carlos J. F. Jorge and Christine Zurbach (Lisbon: Publicações Dom Quixote, 2003), 286.

asymmetrical relation, but this seems to be sidelined again: “as trocas culturais nos espaços imperiais foram intensas e contínuas, mesmo se não deva ser negligenciada a desigualdade das relações de poder e a acção repressora das estruturas coloniais” (Fonseca 2003, 287).<sup>567</sup> Yet, the literature scholar develops an awareness of the limitations of reading *Esplendor* as postcolonial in the trend of Boaventura de Sousa Santos’s theorising on Portugal’s hybrid condition.

Assim, tem-nos preocupado, essencialmente, a observação dos variados registos de subalternidade do colonizador, o que não equivale a dizer que em algum momento a relação colonial seja subvertida já que, apesar de as retóricas oficiais estarem ausentes do discurso ficcional, os pressupostos ideológicos das personagens brancas sobre ele se fundam. (Fonseca 2003, 289)<sup>568</sup>

Hereby, as Fonseca indicates, *mestiçagem* or hybridity are not liberating strategies, but entrapments into the worldliness of life in the colony. Ana Paula Arnaut (2011) denotes in *O meu nome é legião* that Antunes insinuates the insidiousness of racism through the voice of the colonial settler treating the *mestiço*. She points out that this *special type of racism* (borrowing from Boaventura de Sousa Santos) is perpetrated on the *mestiço* through the insistence and practice of white supremacy: “A miscigenação não é a consequência da ausência de racismo, como pretende a razão luso-colonialista ou lusotropicalista, mas é certamente a causa de um racismo de tipo diferente” (Santos quoted in Arnaut 2011, 361).<sup>569</sup> Arnaut calls attention to the voices of characters, which overthrow the myth of the Portuguese empire, whereby “a simpática e benevolente ideia do luso-tropicalismo parece ser irremediavelmente minada” (ibid., 362).<sup>570</sup> I subscribe to the effect of mining the Portuguese imperial mythology, but challenge the notion that gradation in the colour line turns this into a different type of racism, since *this racism* is sustained in blackness as abjectness, which is applied accordingly through a colour continuum.<sup>571</sup>

Here again Ana Margarida Fonseca insists that the Portuguese specificity is built in order to contrast with the Anglophone model and calls attention to the “reciprocidade de olhares” (borrowed from Maria Alzira Seixo).<sup>572</sup>

Ao associarmos a ideia de subalternidade à figura do colonizador português não é nossa intenção afirmar que o consideramos subalterno no mesmo sentido que o colonizado o foi. No entanto, acreditamos que a complexidade das relações de submissão no espaço colonial português produziu efeitos que exigem uma análise atenta, configurando formas pós-

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<sup>567</sup> Transl.: “cultural exchanges in the imperial spaces were intense and continuous, even if the inequality of power relations and the repressive action of the colonial structures should not be neglected.”

<sup>568</sup> Transl.: “Thus, we have been essentially concerned with the observation of the various indicators of subalternity of the coloniser, which is not equivalent to saying that at some point the colonial relationship is subverted since that, despite the official rhetoric being absent from the fictional discourse, the ideological assumptions of white characters are built on them.”

<sup>569</sup> Transl.: “Miscegenation is not the consequence of the absence of racism, as intended by the Luso-colonialist or *Lusotropicalist* reason, but it is certainly the cause of a different kind of racism.”

<sup>570</sup> Transl.: “the friendly and benevolent idea of *Lusotropicalismo* seems hopelessly undermined.”

<sup>571</sup> I borrow this perspective from Afro-Pessimism (see references provided above), departing to blackness and a condition of ontological death. See: Frank B. Wilderson, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>572</sup> Transl.: “reciprocity of gazes.”

coloniais que se desviam da configuração anglo-saxônica melhor conhecida. (Fonseca 2003, 294-295)<sup>573</sup>

Antunes' text has also received psychoanalytical readings whereby the erasure of the Angolan seems to be subsidiary to the merit of exposing the civilisational decay of the empire and its subjects. Seixo (2002, 499-500) defines the *colonial encounter* as the confrontation between the self and the other – who I would term the *savage (o preto)* into whom the previous turned. The disturbed colonial settler serves as the schizophrenic patient (in Seixo's wording, the holder of the “problematização da identidade, do sentido de pertença, e da relação com o outro”)<sup>574</sup> confronted with her/his unwillingness to perpetrate violence (for Seixo: “a luta contra quem se não quer destruir”)<sup>575</sup> as for her/his “afetiva adoção” (affective adoption) of *Africa* and *Africans*, or when she identifies in *Esplendor's* Isilda an “empatia com a mulher nativa” (empathy with the native woman). Ana Margarida Fonseca also finds a commonality between black and white women (Isilda and Maria da Boa Morte) borrowing—again at face value—from the text, whereby “na velhice, quando as marcas exteriores da diferença desaparecem” (Fonseca 2003, 291),<sup>576</sup> and in the infancy of both women: “Maria da Boa Morte não era ainda de fato, nessa altura, o Outro, e porque a identidade é sempre relacional, a ‘senhora’ e a ‘bailunda’ constituem-se no momento que os mecanismos de regulação da sociedade colonial entram em acção” (ibid.).<sup>577</sup> However, this commonality is unilateral. Would Maria da Boa Morte voice it as such?

Hereby, a postcolonial consciousness of one's own alienation is gained through knowledge of the other (Seixo 2002, 510). In my reading, the other as subject exterior to the colonial settler does not exist. The *African* is effectively a non-other. Asserting a colonial encounter here, and one where the settler is benevolent, is in itself an act of cognitive violence. The African subject does not exist as a bodily presence but a trace, as Ana Margarida Fonseca spotted in Carlos: “A marca da alteridade – a cor negra – inscreve-se de forma indelével na identidade da personagem” (Fonseca 2003, 284).<sup>578</sup> Furthermore, Fonseca places both Carlos and his white wife Lena (misread by Maria Alzira Seixo as mulatta) in the space of a borderland, “no que ambos tem de excêntrico relativamente aos centros imperiais” (ibid., 285).<sup>579</sup> Here those at the core of the imperial relationship are gazed at as subaltern. In fact, these imperial characters embody alterity within (the border).

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<sup>573</sup> Transl.: “By associating the idea of subordination to the figure of the Portuguese coloniser it is not our intention to say that we consider him subaltern in the same sense that the colonised was. However, we believe that the complexity of the relations of submission in the Portuguese colonial space produced effects that require careful analysis, shaping post-colonial forms that deviate from the better known Anglo-Saxon configuration.”

<sup>574</sup> Transl.: “problematization of identity, of the sense of belonging, and of the relationship with the other.”

<sup>575</sup> Transl.: “the fight against those who one does not want to destroy.”

<sup>576</sup> Transl.: “in old age, when the outer marks of difference disappear.”

<sup>577</sup> Transl.: “Maria da Boa Morte was not yet, in fact, at that time, the Other, and because identity is always relational, the ‘lady’ and the ‘Bailunda’ constitute each other at the moment when the regulatory mechanisms of colonial society come into action.”

<sup>578</sup> Transl.: “The mark of alterity - the black colour - inscribe itself indelibly on the identity of the character.”

<sup>579</sup> Transl.: “in what both have of eccentric relative to the imperial centres.”

The imperative element of the postcolonial critique, which is the voice of the colonial object, is silenced or undermined in this reading. A further and even more problematic step from here is Maria Alzira Seixo's misreading of the problems of cultural translation (from Gayatri Spivak) whereby Spivak critiques the objectifying and appropriation of the Third World for consumption in the West, in a way to again cannibalise the colonial subaltern: "O Sul encarado neste sentido funciona, em O esplendor de Portugal, quer no que respeita a Angola quer no que respeita à ex-metrópole, como o problema da colonização dentro da colonização" (Seixo 2002, 519).<sup>580</sup>

Seixo points to the recurrent passages in *Esplendor* where the grandfather *explains* to Clarisse why the Portuguese went to Angola: they were the underdog in Portugal and came to dominate *pretos*, lepers, slaves and dogs. I have relied on the same trope above to highlight the myopic and hegemonic character of such *imperial explanation*. Seixo recognises in this account of the empire, the deconstruction of previously rigid hierarchies and the overthrowing of their fixed definition.

This reading is customary in (Portuguese) secondary literature that aims to make use of the analytical tools provided by Postcolonial theory. Ana Margarida Fonseca (2003) departs from Boaventura de Sousa Santos's definition of the *specificity* of Portuguese colonialism and the *originality* of the postcolonialism (Portugal as semi-peripheric and incomplete Prospero, subaltern coloniser, colonised coloniser – which is a trope present in Maria Alzira Seixo's analysis too) in comparison to the Anglophone hegemonic model. She then embraces the same postcolonial tropes (identified – narrowly – with the Anglophone theoretical realm) from Bhabha and Young (hybridity), Hall (transculturation) and Dirlik (blurring of frontiers between coloniser and colonised, the shared damage).<sup>581</sup> For Ana Margarida Fonseca, the Portuguese case contributes to the Postcolonial field by also calling attention to the perspective of the former metropolis (despite its lack of availability for self-reflection, she adds) (Fonseca 2003, 282). Notably, a postimperial critique that is not self-reflexive is built upon a frail foundation.

Particularly referring to the oft-cited passage of *imperial explanation* in *Esplendor*, Ana Margarida Fonseca argues:

Em *O Esplendor de Portugal*, o protagonismo é todo conferido ao colonizador, mas este não se apresenta como representante e agente de um poder hegemônico, encontrando-se a meio-caminho entre a arrogância de mandar e a suspeita da submissão, entre o colono onnipotente e o imigrante vulnerável. Subvertem-se assim, os binômios coloniais e subvertem-se igualmente, num mesmo gesto, o propósito pós-colonial de dar voz àqueles que, no interior dos impérios coloniais, são sistematicamente subalternizados, segundo a célebre fórmula de Spivak (*Can the subaltern speak?*) – os colonizados. Na narrativa de Lobo Antunes, são de

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<sup>580</sup> Transl.: "The South, under this perspective, works in The Splendor of Portugal, both with regard to Angola and with regard to the former metropolis, as the problem of colonisation within colonisation."

<sup>581</sup> There is a genealogy to Postcolonial critique that is consistently overlooked in the West. A series of tropes of the Postcolonial derive, for instance, from Francophone/Caribbean anticolonial critique (Edouard Glissant, Aimé Césaire and - the now very much in vogue- Frantz Fanon's writings) and Hispanophone/Latin-Americanist critique to coloniality (such as Anibal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, Walter Dignolo, and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's writings). In the previous section of this dissertation, I briefly discussed some of these other genealogies to Postcolonial critique under the heading of "Situating Portuguese colonialism."

facto os colonizadores que falam, mas enquanto *subalternos* do império colonial – aqueles que, apesar de agentes do colonialismo português, manifestam a posição de dupla inferioridade a que se referia Sousa Santos: subalternos pela definição intrínseca dos processos de dominação e subalternos porque excluídos dos padrões civilizacionais europeus. (Fonseca 2003, 284)<sup>582</sup>

Here again it is the colonial agent that defines her/his subalternity in relation to other colonial agents. I do concur with Ana Margarida Fonseca when she identifies in *Esplendor* an affront to the postcolonial, but I dispute that there is a correspondence with the displacement of “colonial binaries” as an alleged challenge to imperial power. In fact, the Portuguese postempire affirms its hegemony through the rhetorical displacement of such division.

For Maria Alzira Seixo, the postcolonial aspects of Antunes’ texts are apparently found in the questioning of (imperial) identity in a situation of (colonial) displacement. This is far from what is necessary for an actual postcolonial critique, i.e. not merely post-modernist in blurring absolute frontiers and traditional binaries (power/subalternity, history and identity) and not simply post- as a temporary marker for what comes after the colonial. In a similar fashion, for Ana Margarida Fonseca, Boaventura de Sousa Santos’s understanding of *ambivalence* as the core of Portuguese imperial dynamics lends the selection of Antunes’ *Esplendor* as exemplary of the ambiguity between the roles of coloniser and colonised (ibid., 283). Fonseca bypasses the central element in *Esplendor*, which is to reveal the limitation of the single voice (of power). In my opinion, authoritative scholars in the postempire often take cultural translation at face value.

Madureira offers a different reading though. Comparing Antunes’ novel to other Portuguese novels about the “colonial war,” the scholar asserts that Antunes’ work explicitly refuses to perform the mediating gesture of the “counternarration” to imperial decadence, such as the “exemplary” narrative of *25 de Abril* that would constitute a “supplement” to white man’s burden (Madureira 2011, 235). Discussing *Os Cus de Judas*, Madureira indicates that Antunes “refuses to transcribe” the words of the militant Angolan woman, gang raped and tortured by the PIDE. It is fulcral that Madureira identifies the negation of mediation and the abrogation of the counternarration in the refusal to translate, transcribe and appropriate.<sup>583</sup>

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<sup>582</sup> Transl.: “In The Splendour of Portugal, the main role is fully given to the coloniser, but he is not presented as representative and agent of a hegemonic power. He lies instead midway between the arrogance of ruling and the suspicion of submission, between the omnipotent settler and the vulnerable immigrant. Hereby colonial dichotomies are subverted, and in the same gesture is equally subverted the postcolonial intent to give voice to those who are systematically subalternized inside colonial empires, according to the famous formula of Spivak (Can the subaltern speak ?) - the colonised. In the narrative of Lobo Antunes the settlers are those who in fact speak, but as *subalterns* of the colonial empire - those who, despite being agents of Portuguese colonialism, express the position of double inferiority to which Sousa Santos referred: subaltern by the intrinsic definition of the processes of domination and subaltern because excluded of European civilisational standards.”

<sup>583</sup> In commenting on the meanings of the silences of Angolan (women) in Antunes’ *Esplendor*, I have appropriated Seixo’s remarks on the significance of Sofia’s denied speech. However, Seixo falls short of reading in Antunes’ portrayal of the Angolan woman “a refusal to translate,” as Madureira accurately does.

The narrator's refusal to tell Sofia's story, his insistence on guarding her secret, stands in direct contrast to the PIDE agent's brutal tactics of interrogation. It stops short of reproducing what Spivak calls "the ethnocentric and reverse-ethnocentric double-bind" (that is, converting the native into the object of an "enthusiastic information retrieval") (Critique 118). In this way, Sofia marks the site of an irretrievable alterity, of the novel's inaccessible exterior. She represents a diegetic limit beyond which Antunes narration cannot proceed without reproducing the very violence and terror which it sets out to displace. (Madureira 2011, 236)<sup>584</sup>

In *Esplendor*, the characters-narrators are constantly transcribing the voice of Angolans and imposing their narratives into them. In my reading the author is hereby calling attention to the cognitive violence of the colonial entanglement. The patriarch, though, does not put words into the mouth of his Angolan *lover*. Furthermore, in line with Madureira's reading above, Antunes does not inscribe a (female) African-narrator into this novel. This refusal is critical for it discontinues a *habit* of colonialist narration.

### **Concluding remarks: language conquest & occupation – the frontier of representation**

Borrowing from Jacques Derrida, Ana Mafalda Leite establishes an analogy between the very process of writing and conquest for an intertextual analysis of Antunes' *Boa tarde às coisas aqui em baixo* (2003) and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. She identifies in the figure of the map found in these texts, and its progressive drawing, colonial enterprise – geographical occupation of the blank space and the writing of truth. According to the literature scholar, both texts "pursue, in their own way, a practice, not necessarily of occupation per se, but a *practice* that questions the occupation/writing process, and the oppressive power of representation of the colonial enterprise" (Leite 2011, 218). This is an important remark regarding the afterlife of the empire that is equally under scrutiny in *Esplendor*. Leite elaborates on this query:

As David Spurr argues in *The Rhetoric of the Empire* ... the discourse of colonialism typical of the classic colonial situation remains subtly residual in those practices brought on by the forces of Western cultural hegemony over the post-colonial world. (Leite 2011, 219)

I would argue that in *Esplendor*, colonial discourse is naked. It emerges as more than residual or aberrant but rather foundational and commonplace, in spite of its excess.

Still borrowing from Spurr, Ana Mafalda Leite points to the pervasive European imagination of abjection associated with Africa and African indigenous people whereby physical suffering is identified with intellectual and moral degradation (ibid., 220). This

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<sup>584</sup> As previously discussed, Madureira has a somehow different position or accent in his earlier article, where he indicates that the reliance on the figure of the woman that acquires meaning through sexual abuse and particularly penetration revives or simply continues the *Lusotropical* commonplace (however in a inverted fashion). Before, Africa was the sensuous object waiting for penetration – "impregnation" - and now it is the empty space (or Freudian "gap") available for selvagery and sexual violence – "sodomy" "escatological excess" Luís Madureira, "The Discreet Seductiveness of the Crumbling Empire - Sex, Violence and Colonialism in the Fiction of António Lobo Antunes," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 32, no. 1 (1995), 25.

normalisation enables the westerner to shape metropolitan identity by establishing difference with the colony and the colonised, and legitimises the perpetration of colonial violence. The scholar encounters in Antunes' text this process of shaping boundaries between (pre- and postcolonial) wilderness and civilisation. "The principles of exclusion, of the frontier and difference, that are summoned up by colonial discourse are related to this fear that the colonizers will lose themselves in 'darkness' and go native" (ibid., 221).

Leite's reading adds a critical element to Seixo and Medeiros' analysis of the place of abjection and the figure of nausea in Antunes' text. Not only is the abject element a sign of moral decay and imperial demise, but abjection sticks to the black body and to the imagination of *Africa* as a civilisational threshold.

I have argued above that Angola is the virginal frontier of Antunes' imperial/territorial imagination. It becomes the *inferno* where the Portuguese went native. My reading of *Esplendor* as exemplary for grasping the mechanism whereby metaphorical colonial boundaries are established through the trope of language associates with Leite's reflection. Constructing the other as abject supports the policing of the biopolitical boundaries of the empire.

The idea of contamination is related to the idea of going native and, paradoxically, the inverse which is desired, the westernization of the native, is revealed by colonial discourse to be something ridiculous and strange, artificial, a parody, or even grotesque. ... This anxiety of maintaining the boundaries is associated with the idea of preserving an identity and, on the other hand, with the fear of transgression associated with the idea of alienation, disease, contamination, "darkening," pathology and madness. The fear of contamination that begins at the biopolitical frontier anxiously expands and progresses, both metaphorically and metonymically, with the fears of going native. (Leite 2011, 222)

In *Esplendor*, the space of language is policed and kept in its *Lusitanian purity*. It admits no appropriation, no transformation, and no other voices. This is the ascetic terrain of empire. It is a regulated realm of representation, whereby the dark/brown subject is the Portuguese other (female, *mad*, *mestiço*) in charge of the empire. S/he must not allow *the Black* inside.

Finally, this analysis will not resolve the apparent contradiction that *Esplendor* presents. The novel is a *spectacular* cultural artefact of the Portuguese postempire, as it denounces colonial violence through its very performance. I rely on Luís Madureira once again for highlighting this conundrum and the important, although disparate, elements it brings to the analysis. Reflecting on a passage from *Os Cus de Judas* where the narrator describes the Angolan washerwomen speaking a strange language (reminding him of black jazz players), Madureira argued that this is a violent silence indicating a self-reflexive imperial subject narrator:

The Angolans in the fragment are muted, blinded. They are deprived of what is apparently an exclusively occidental privilege: to reciprocate an objectifying gaze. ... They are, in short, always-already known to the European traveler. What "astonishes" the narrator of *Os Cus de Judas* "about Africa [is] that it had never really been strange" (Journey without Maps 248), as Graham Greene has written. ... To thus claim the authority to articulate the African, to give her/him identity and definition is, in the final analysis, to replicate the hegemonic

projection of colonialism. The modes of representing Africa and Africans, then, have not changed significantly - even in a conjuncture where some Africans have undertaken to represent themselves. Africa is still a trope, not a disembodied heart of “impenetrable” darkness, but a series of solar anuses which signify precisely because they are the sites of European penetrations, of the making (or unmaking) of the Portuguese epic. This obsessive self-reflexivity, which Lobo Antunes shares with recent historiographers of the “discoveries,” reflects in turn the discreet yet persistent seductiveness which the ideological residues of Portugal's fragmentary empire exercise upon (post)colonial metropolitan narratives. (Madureira 1995, 27-28)

Elsewhere the scholar identifies a potential for transcending the limitations of Africanist novel, i.e. borrowing from Said the incapacity to force an end to imperialism and imagine that “the ‘natives’ could lead lives free from European domination” (Madureira 2011, 230). Here Madureira finds a “disquietingly self-reflexive” quality, whereby the “West’s particularist and fabular ‘universal history’ [is] charted.” Africa is revealed as the site where the colonial settler can realise her/his desire to destroy and her/his wish to die whereby her/his humanity is affirmed (ibid., 230). For that purpose, Madureira rescues the anticolonial appropriations of Hegel’s master/slave dialectic to point out the dehumanisation of the master through her/his own dehumanising racist practice. Hereby the scholar traces the colonial genealogy of the concentrationary practice:

As a template to Nazism genocidal procedures, colonialism, Césaire asserts in *Discours sur le colonialisme*, becomes *la négation pure et simple de la civilisation*. As a consequence, the “white world” reveals itself “horribly weary from its immense efforts/ its stiff joints [cracking] under the hard stars” (69). (Madureira 2011, 231)

It is befitting that Madureira (2011) points to Césaire’s work on the analogy of concentration camp and colony. Following Madureira, Africa represents Hegel’s *netherworld*: it is home in the sense of the Freudian beginning and therefore the “uterine tropics.” Africa is the arrival of a journey of “retrocession to a primitive state” where one’s “savage instincts” are unrestricted. The analogy with Conrad and Holocaust novels is explicit. It is opportune that Madureira has recourse to Günter Grass’s *Blechtrommel* (Tin Drum) to illustrate this metaphoric space, where Oskar chooses a place under his grandmother’s skirt: “Oblivion, a home, the ultimate Nirvana? ... I was looking for Africa under the skirts” (Tin Drum 125) (ibid., 227-228).

This haven of unbounded liberty for white supremacy to choose its prey is the imperial past that several of Antunes’ characters long for. This space is the colony as *Lager*: “Oskar’s Afrika becomes not only an analogy of death, but the figure for a wholesale civilizational collapse” (ibid., 229).

In António Lobo Antunes’ novel *O Esplendor de Portugal*, language is the home of cognitive dissonance, of the civilising narrative of the empire against its abject materiality. Language ends here, in *Africa*, as it does not hold in the face of the imperial edifice falling into pieces. Touching its dismembered body, tasting the blood of its entrails, there is no holding together possible. Another language must be forged but, for that, this one must be shot dead. Only then can another tale be told by a language *after* this one. For this: oblivion.

## Conclusions to the Section

This section worked with language conceptions articulated in postcolonial literature within the realm of Portuguese colonialism in Africa. Specifically, the section presented an analysis of the linguistic use and the concepts of language offered by three novels written by three canonical authors and a sample of their commentary. Each chapter started with the scrutiny of linguistically innovative aspects of their writing and of transformations in the aesthetics of the narrative. There followed an examination of the concepts of language. Finally, these metaphors and tropes were associated with the imperial grammar of Portuguese postcolonialism, and with the canonical position of the authors in the cultural industry of the postempire.

Though Mia Couto, José Eduardo Agualusa and António Lobo Antunes apply the common tropes and metaphors inherited from Portuguese colonialism in quite different ways, each of them establishes a critical dialogue with the resilience of colonialism in Mozambique, Angola and Portugal.

While Couto gives prominence to a literary language that emerges out of the poetic experimentation and colloquial appropriation of Portuguese in Mozambique, Agualusa allows the *noise and dust* of African languages to surface in his literary expression of a Portuguese that assimilated the African other. Antunes harbours his literary text in Lusitanian Portuguese, fashioned by a *gut-language* founded in the constitutive violence of empire.

The narrative of the three novels examined (which are, to different measures, exemplary of the authors' oeuvres) defies the form of the "classical" European novel. Couto narrates through traversing stories that range from animistic religiosity and official documents to testimony, each of which is conceived as a constitutive part of experience. Agualusa walks the reader through parts of a story told against varied backgrounds fashioned by language as false and/or true, in a constant movement of *dislocation*. Antunes immerses the reader in a dizzying narrative marked by interruption, repetition and flashbacks. This convoluted temporality sheds light onto the living heritage of colonialism after imperial demise. These forms of disobedience to the norm put into evidence the non-linear manner through which memory—both personal memory and national memory—is constructed.

Simultaneously the process of selection that shapes national memory imbricated with empire is revealed. Couto and Agualusa mock the *discoincidence* between the changing terminology of political regimes (in the utterances of the socialist *politburo* and the capitalist elites, both associated with their global partners) and actual life experience in Mozambique and Angola. Antunes confronts the colonialist's language with the myth of a benevolent empire. For Couto and Agualusa, language is unveiled as power through the characters' rhetorical slippages. Both their novels face authoritative texts with those devoid of status, deemed unfit for narration. For Antunes the narration of empire is all about excess, denounced as the actual nature of colonial power. His novel offers an unauthorised autobiography of the Portuguese Third Empire.

The three novels comment on the notion of a singular fixed identity, voice and language. They are polyphonic in distinct fashions: fantastic, cosmopolitan and narcissist. Couto's characters are different expressions of the same composite self that remains true to its characteristic differences and voices. In Agualusa's novel, the plural self becomes the cosmopolitan of a melted identity. In Antunes' novel there is one subject in various shades of whiteness, talking to her/himself. This (impression of) polyphony stands for conceptions of the nation. For Couto, both the self and the nation are made of multiple differences that live together. For Agualusa, the self and the nation are made of different parts that joined into a new form: the Lusophone Creole transnation. For Antunes there is one nation that is imperial Portugal, erected in contrast to *Africa*. Analogously, there is one self, made of apparently dissimilar parts which are however the same. This self that is the white colonialist incorporates her/his colonialists by proxy (the unruly woman, the mullato, the *madman*) mirrored in the image of *her/his* black other.

All three of the novels offer an imagination of place or location of language. Hereby they reflect on the particular universe of experience as the birthplace of language and culture. Both Couto and Agualusa experiment with language location through *linguaging*, but use the same anti-essentialist repertoire in significantly different ways. Couto insists on the fundamental role that one's roots (the land of birth and the culture of the place) play in one's world of reference (culture and language). Agualusa foregrounds the importance of an adventurous, uprooted, and *therefore* cosmopolitan experience. For Antunes, there is one locality, which is the empire, which is projected first of all into Angola, and then into anywhere: from Luxemburg to Israel.

Such imaginations of a place for/of language associate with tropes of the border in critical commentaries on coloniality. In Couto's text, language is an open horizon for experimentation, which departs from its birthplace, a Mozambican village, carries this village, and hopefully returns to it. Language is a space of communication and interaction, itself shaped through *mestiçagem*, which is an alternative to the political myth of purity, authenticity and singularity. Therefore language defies borders (separation). Agualusa departs from an anti-essentialist stance as well, thinking language as an a-centric borderland through creolization. In Antunes' text, language is a bounded territory and *mestiçagem* is a fallacy of belonging to imperial whiteness, as well as an unauthorized incursion into the hygienic territory of language.

It follows that for Antunes the home of language is empire, an all-encompassing claustrophobic delimited space (the snow globe) maintained through incessant vigilance and border patrolling. This inhospitable home is constituted through the expulsion of its others. It is a *casa portuguesa* that is property of the white settler. For Agualusa, home is an elusive *place of passage* that is a transnational *Lusophone language* bonding a variety of *Lusophone Creole* subjects. For Mia Couto, language is but one aspect of home, rooted in the land and the bonds with people, which are accrued in the course of one's life.

The writings of these three authors convey an imagination of the Portuguese language vis-à-vis imperial centrality. This imagination is enlaced with history, culture and evolving societies responding and engaging with new geo-politics. Couto argues for and makes use of his autonomy as a writer to appropriate the Portuguese language,

contaminating it with other logic than imperial monolingualism. This is an autonomy from a linguistic and cosmological centre that grounds language in *other* locations (localities). The Portuguese language gains meaning only in context. It is therefore particular but also incomplete as other Mozambican languages; the sounds of a place and silence often say more than words could. In this humble condition, language allows encounters and disencounters: it is a *place of contact* where difference meets. In Agualusa's literature and commentary, the Portuguese language is the outcome of a mixture that refers back to the Portuguese *capacity to adapt*. It is a decentred space born out of assimilation and incorporation of the languages of imperial subjects (*Africa*). Hereby language is conceived as borderland, in this case a place of encountering sameness – the amalgamated mixed culture and subject. It acts however as a space framed within the boundaries of Portugueseness. However dissimilarly, in Couto's and Agualusa's texts and opinions, the Portuguese language is an interstitial space, a moving homeland. This differs for Antunes, in whose text the Portuguese language is the centre and home of aspired whiteness and of a desired long-lasting empire. Language is imperial colonialism in Africa, representing and enacting the colonial order; it is *our* territory or homeland.

Translation is therefore rendered superfluous in Antunes' monolingual world. However, as language is a territorial entity constituted through expulsion, access to the other can only materialise through translating Portuguese into *non-languages* and vice-versa. Translation sheds light onto the violent act of denying language to others already conceived as non-human. Hereby Antunes problematizes the canonical locus of enunciation of the translating practice, the singular voice of language. Linguistic translation is also not necessary, although for other reasons, in Agualusa's creole universe, as everyone speaks the same melted-pot language. For Couto, though, translation is cultural. Language is only one aspect of a culture and the same language can be inscribed in different cultures, so Coutian translation is a requirement for human contact.

All three novels bear witness to the unreliable character of language as it hides as much or more than it allows to be seen. Language is small talk, political rhetoric, and game. It is a lie and above all an escape from our haunting ghosts that are both personal (and intimate) and collective. Language surfaces in all three novels as a coping strategy, as a part of a survival kit in a violent world, and a way to navigate the changing scripts of power. Language soothes the pains of Couto's characters through storytelling (fantasy and poetry) and evoking spirituality in the narrative. In Agualusa's novel, the artifactuality of the sensuous word allows moments and even a lifetime of pleasurable detachment. In Antunes' novel language sustains the colonist through nostalgic remembering (the images and tropes of the *good times* of colonialism) before her/his impending death. Language is here a sign of pathology, in a way correlated to Agualusa's character's hedonistic indulgence in the surrogate life granted by language and literature. Agualusa urges his protagonist to live beyond language in a *real Lusotropical world*, whereas Antunes demands that his character dies, for life to emerge *after* language.

On the basis of language's unreliability, a community harboured in language might not necessarily be a strong collective. In Couto's text there is a hope for an elusive community made of unlike subjects. Language is the (moving) ground for this

collective, but it is not at its core. In Agualusa's novel, despite the games that language plays on us, it is the fundament of a community of wandering cosmopolitans. In Antunes' novel, there is no community, but only a collective forcefully gathered and torn by violence.

Violence is present in distinct measures on the pages of these three novels, which in itself signifies a disruption of the rhetorical habit in the postempire of narrating Portuguese colonialism without mentioning its gendered and racialised violent foundations and afterlife. In Couto's novel, graphic violence is episodic, but the point of departure from where the story unfolds. The severed phalluses of UN blue-helmets are a necessary *event* for putting western power (and masculinity) into question and under threat. Hereby the postcolony is talking back. Yet, other manifestations of (non-physical) violence emerge in the text: the destruction of local sociabilities and cosmologies; uprootedness; and social and cultural hierarchies. Graphic violence is at the core of Agualusa's story; that is, the violence perpetrated by colonial agents and the agents of coloniality. Although episodic, the violent event of murdering a woman and branding her baby with a cigarette provides the glue to the story whereby all characters are entangled. This violent episode offers a starting point (a foundation) but also as point of departure from this original bond of violence, towards a bond of love. In Antunes' novel, violence spills off the page. It is excessive throughout, which highlights the fact that violence is foundational to imperial colonialism. Hereby the text confronts the grammar of a benevolent Portuguese empire.

The novels prompt a critical reflection on the violence perpetrated by language. They all denounce the regime of naming, granting titles, (de)humanising, and allocating subjects of empire and nation to different positions in the scale of power and humanity. They give a worldly comment on the power to represent and signify. This includes disclosing the hollowness of titles and the constructed character of hegemonic narratives (national identity, national and imperial *History*). At the same time the novels testify that the right to represent, narrate and signify has the force to determine life chances. Language has a place at the core of a regime of necropower.

On the other hand, language is also redemptive for it unveils that which has been silenced and buried. In Antunes' novel, which takes place in the context of a world and worldview in decay, language reveals the violence of empire. This revelation is suggested as a necessity for attaining humanity in the postempire. Language awakens the colonial ghosts in Agualusa's novel and exposes the actual identity of his false characters. For Couto, however, language only reveals what is within reach. In all three novels, the materiality of language enables the recovery of occluded stories, subjects, and experiences. It is the senses evoked by language that force our eyes, nose, ears and skin to perceive what has been hiding in plain sight. For Couto, language poetically reinscribes the spiritual and fantastic dimension into the narrative; for Agualusa it is the touch, colour and smell of the tropics; while for Antunes it is the nausea caused by bodily fluids of corpses in *the colony Africa*. Language offers a possibility of overcoming and/or of settling in empire, through games of seduction and deceit, and through the induction of pain and pleasure.

This exercise of unburying (ghosts) is also a commentary on the construction of alterity in the universe of the three novels. In Couto's novel, the other is the uprooted subject,

either national or foreign, no matter what his/her language is. The translator's detachment from his home place allows his birthplace, his culture, and his relatives to be marginalised. These subaltern others resurge along the novel. In Agualusa, alterity can allegedly be built from any position of deviation. The novel's protagonist challenges the colour/race line, and the human-animal divide that is also defined by *having* language, for he is an albino-gecko. In this purportedly post-racial and post-human universe, the positions of subject and other seem to be exchangeable and reciprocal. In Antunes' novel, the occluded others of empire are presented as constitutive of it. The unruly woman, the mulatto and the *madman* all threaten the metanarrative of Portuguese empire. They are out-of-control, and embody the risk offered by disease, which is contagion of a narrated orderly whiteness by incursion of the black other. They materialise the ontology of empire by abjection to blackness and the control of distance to *it*: the native, the animal, *Africa*.

The novels advance particular imaginations of Africa. Couto's novel embodies that *African quality* defined by Patrick Chabal (1996). It is the quality of conveying the African collective unconscious that blends the everyday experience with its particular African mythology and fantasy (85). It is a rootedness in a place (locality) and the marks of its evolving culture and society in the conflicted encounters with *the West* (power-holders in Mozambique and outside). For Agualusa, *Africa* is a nostalgic place of childhood lost in the memory of the cosmopolitan creole. *Africa* is a residue absorbed into the wider "Lusophone time-space." In Antunes' novel, *Africa* is the place of imperial nostalgia built on a process of mirroring and negation. *Africa* is a biopolitical space under a state of exception. It is the place of *Horror*, the virginal frontier of empire.

Associated with the imagination of Africa is the place of race enlaced with gender in the novels. Antunes' novel *offers* the black female to the reader. Race is here undoubtedly a position of abjectness and a measure of distance or proximity to civilisation. Agualusa's novel foregrounds the appealing sensuality of the mulatta while affirming the movability and exchangeability of the terrain of racialisation, in true *Lusotropical* fashion. Couto evades race but hints at gender in a disentangled manner. The reader can only infer that the translator's mother is black, but she might not be. She is African. She embodies the ontological place of crossing and combining land (groundedness/worldliness) with water (evolving and moving) and sky (open space of possibility, freedom). At the same time, Couto (quoted in Fonseca 2007, 54-55) finds himself in the same *place of confluence* as his Mozambican *black compatriots*; that is the place of an African writer uttered in the traditional Marxist blindness to the weight of race and gender.

These three canonical authors are part of and participant in the raced and gendered economy of the postcolonial. They have cultural capital in Portugal and Brazil, and so have access to publishing houses and the book market circuit, and are granted media attention. Hence, the critique inscribed in their texts and commentary works along a surreptitious affirmation of coloniality. There is an array of scholarly analysis and journalistic opinion in the novels and the authors' positions but more often than not Mia Couto's literature is framed as local (*African*), Agualusa's as transnational (Lusophone) and Antunes' as universal (western). Each of them contributes to and challenges this reception to different extents through navigating the established tropes and metaphors

of the imperial grammar. Couto evades and confronts colonial and post-independence binaries through hybridity. This is, as extensively argued, a double-edged practice in the terrain of Portuguese colonialism and its afterlife. Agualusa inhabits and affirms the core trope of Portuguese coloniality, which is *Lusotropical* miscegenation. Antunes exposes the imperial myth, the dis coincidence between the *Lusotropical* grammar and colonial violence. At the same time he erases Angolan autonomous presence, as *Africa* only exists for the education of the (post)imperial subject. The anti-essentialism of Couto and Agualusa could be read as a confirmation of postcolonial hybridity centred on the Portuguese imperial subject and imperial heritage. Antunes, without doubt and purposefully, insists on harbouring the narrative in the centre, in order to implode that location. However there is no *other* place or subject.

Altogether, though in dissimilar fashions, in the three novels by Couto, Agualusa and Antunes, which are chosen as exemplary (or canonic) for the field of postcolonial literature on Portuguese colonialism, language emerges as a haunted terrain for crafting an *(un)safe home*.

## General Conclusions

I am not the “Other,” but the self, not the object but the subject, I am the describer of my own history, and not the described. ... This passage from objecthood to subjecthood is what marks writing as a political act. (Kilomba 2010, 12)

No conclusion to this dissertation could possibly provide a comprehensive view on the array of theories and literary expressions in the field of Postcolonial Theory and Literature on Portuguese colonialism in Africa that have been analysed here. I will therefore recover the questions that guided this investigation, illuminate important topics dealt with, briefly forward *inconclusive* remarks about the field under study, and suggest new or underexplored lines of inquiry.

This research entailed a critical analysis of narratives of the Portuguese language in sites of *encounter* with *Africa* in postcolonial theory and literature in contemporary Portugal. This meant scrutinising the main tropes and metaphors adopted to reflect on the Portuguese language vis-à-vis the empire, namely notions of centrality, the border and violence. Hereby the query on language surpassed the narrow field of linguistics, attending to the metaphorical richness of the postcolonial. Language figured here, as it figures in the Portuguese imaginary, to talk about *other* things. The questions guiding this study were: How is the colonial (dis)encounter with *Africa* theorised in its associations with the Portuguese language? How do language metaphors perform and problematize this (dis)encounter? How do these reflections and metaphors open up and/or fixate an imperial imagination? This critical analysis shed light on the colonial phantom of race that is the (female) black other—*Africa*—and identified emergences in theory and literature that give her protagonism.

Through the dissertation I have shed light on the resilient coloniality that inhabits the field, as well as on the interruption of this regime, and on the emerging theorising and imaginations. This has been therefore an inquiry attentive to the economy of the postcolonial field, namely about its own location in the *postempire* and consequently the limits it imposes on criticality, and the possibility of attending to other geographies of criticism.

In diverse fashions, and to different extents, postcolonial theorists and novelists disrupt the benevolent text of the Portuguese empire. The chapters in this dissertation gave a glimpse into the manner through which this is done and the extent of disobedience and disruption of the colonial grammar. This grammar still populates national memory in its strong enlacement with the narration of Portuguese colonialism in Africa as a harmonious *encounter*.

As the core of that colonial grammar is the occlusion of race through a variety of rhetorical and analytical means, the dissertation tracked the emergence of race and of the voice of racialised (and gendered) postcolonial subjects in the postcolonial canon. This meant exposing and questioning colonial violence and its survival after the demise of colonialism. I have consistently indicated instances when the postcolonial field confronts the “Luso-tropicalist identitarian encyclopaedia or cultural common-sense”

(Ferreira 2007, 37) and revealed the articulation of this grammar with an inquiry into hegemony and neo-colonial relations. Hereby postcolonial theory and literature attack the naturalisation of colonial violence.

The Portuguese empire has been narrated and celebrated as the daring adventure of the imperial white male who conquered the lands *and hearts* of indigenous populations (the discourse of the *Discoveries*). On the other hand, the same empire has been characterised as *soft* as it was conducted by a subaltern *colonised-coloniser*. Both these narratives are inscribed in the conceptions of the Portuguese language in the postcolonial field. Both of them dialogue with a resilient *Lusotropical* eschatology, whereby *Africa* is a metaphor for the abject black woman as an object of desire for the Portuguese *loving colonialist*. This colonial ghost inhabits the postcolonial field in tense cohabitation with the disclosure of gendered racist violence as foundational to the empire.

The postcolonial emergent associations between the representations of *the Jew* and *the Black* offer important directions for confronting the phantom of race in Portuguese colonialism and the afterlife of slavery. In making these associations, account needs to be taken of the matter of corporeality and the different positions allocated to racialised subjects, in relation to Portuguese nationality and to an alleged Lusophone transnationality attainable only by the *non-black cosmopolitan*. The analogy between *Lager* and colony is also a fruitful emergence in the postcolonial field as it rescues race in the query of modernity, and at the same time foregrounds the raced and gendered asymmetry in the shaping of public memory. However, the place of testimony must be questioned, as there is no reciprocity between coloniser and colonised. Given the insistence of the narration of Portuguese colonialism as subaltern and the colonist as hybrid, the field often forgets that neither colonialism nor coloniality distribute power equally between imperial and colonial subjects.

The metaphor of the home has a ubiquitous presence in postcolonial literature and theory. The field problematizes territorial notions of culture and language, inherited from empire. In this query, the home loses property and a fixed location. The fluidity of a dwelling home is argued by postcolonial theory and conveyed by literary imagination. However, this shifting ground of the home as *place of encounter* can enforce the miscegenated character of the *hybrid empire*, such as in Agualusa's novel *O Vendedor de Passados*. The related postcolonial topic of hospitality in the place and home of *encounter* is posited as a confrontation to the hegemony of the owner or host of language. Yet, this proposition supports the notion of ownership of language and awakens the imperial script of benevolence in the context of non-rights for the guest.

The postcolonial query of the Portuguese language must be vigilant about its own centrality; otherwise it gives continuity to violent colonial *habits*, such as the silence of other languages and the invisibility of other cultural repertoires. These enforced absences shape a myth of a fraternal linguistic community held together through the kindheartedness of the hospitable postempire. Here the postcolonial guests might never be able to become the host. Conceptions of the home invite questioning of the position of the guest, the foreigner, the other, who in the field of Portuguese colonialism is *the Black*.

Postcolonial theory and literature reproduce but also confront the benevolent script or the *anti-conquest* of Portuguese colonialism by attacking the ideal body of the nation and the postempire with its racialised and gendered bodies. Every postcolonial query departs from a deconstruction of alterity produced by the empire. In the case of Portuguese colonialism this is an immense task, given that the empire narrates itself as *other*. This navel gazing (centrality) becomes evident in the false polyphony in Antunes' novel, *O Esplendor de Portugal*, which displays in full ornament the cacophony produced by different voicings of the settler colonialist's self. The same novel is crafted upon the violated body of *the African*, unveiling the actual *other* of the Portuguese empire. Couto's novel *O Último Voo do Flamingo* contradicts the imperial (western) perspective of *the African* as a fixed subject of a non-complex identity in contrast to the western universal subject position. Agualusa's novel conveys alterity as a new universal narrative of a Creole cosmopolitan, adopting the *Lusotropical* grammar that resonates in the purportedly postcolonial notion of a *time-space of the Portuguese language*.

Important queries in the postcolonial field address the problem of voice and of agency. For example: who theorises and writes the postcolonial? In whose name? Where are the submerged genealogies of postcolonial theory and the subaltern theorists and authors, who have often been absorbed into this body of knowledge and literary practice without mention? Critical positions on the coloniality of the postcolonial canon have emerged in the field. Inocência Mata's concerns about the subaltern position of African literatures, the western selective grid and the exclusion of non-white non-male theorists and authors are crucial for considering the limits of the field and the inclusive roads that need to be taken in order to capitalise on its possibilities.

The field is inscribed in the *postcolonial cultural industry* that is ruled by capitalist dynamics whereby *difference* (to the normative West) is appropriated as the desired *postcolonial exotic* object for consumption. The *Africa* produced by this industry has little resonance in the realm of the postcolonial literature analysed in this dissertation — in other words, novels often circumvent this exoticised construct—but it determines (most of) the reception of novels and the place that is assigned to African authors. Ironically the Orientalist gaze that is problematized throughout novels such as *Flamingo* by Couto frames their reception. Hereby the decolonial disposition of the novel is to a great extent lost in consumption. This *Africa*—for Appiah “something called *Africa*”—which is at work here echoes a centuries-old imagination of backwardness, while evoking both threat and desire.

Portugal was an early agent in the construction of gendered and raced alterity, which took place in the context of imperial conquest. There is an emerging exploration of this early and resilient construction in the postcolonial field. Nonetheless, it needs further, sustained attention and demands foregrounding. The prominence that race requires in the postcolonial query on Portuguese colonialism must be established in dialogue with critical race queries penned by (diasporic) Africans across the Atlantic and throughout Europe, and with theorists grounded in Africa. By this I mean rescuing the *African quality* (following Chabal) of analysis and cultural artifacts (such as literature but also the wider arts) that convey African experiences of modernity. Maria Paula Meneses' analysis of the (mis)understanding of witchcraft in Mozambique follows the same line, and is in dialogue with Couto's uses of witchcraft in *Flamingo*. These are two important

examples of disruption of the Orientalist perspective towards Africa and problematization of the West.

Furthermore, giving prominence to race in the postcolonial query also entails entering into conversation with thinking embedded in the *Africanicity* argued by Mbembe as the fundament of (Fanon's) revolutionary theory. This knowledge echoed in the struggles for national liberation in the then *Portuguese Africa*, namely under the lead of Amílcar Cabral in Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde. It arises from the experiences of subalternisation and struggle against oppression in the African continent under European imperial rule. This involves a more sustained and explicit engagement with African anticolonial literature and theory.

Rescuing such *African scripts* also supports analyses and practices addressing the current pressing issue of the position of racialised populations in the postempire, not only in Portugal but also in the wider European space. It is paramount to foreground the violence exercised against racialised populations in the name of Europe, which occur alongside the mainstreaming of Black cultures in the gentrifying streets of European capitals such as Lisbon. In the peripheries of the very same cities, racialised subjects are put under surveillance and hunted down. At the sea borders surrounding Europe, as well as at its inland borders, racialised subjects are denied entrance and left to die. These are the current sites of the *NeoConOpticon*, or the omnipresent surveillance of the borders and territory of the European Union through a high-tech security industry mobilised by a neoconservative neoliberal capitalist ideology for "preserving the western way of life" that is constructed as under threat. Postcolonial analysis can only safeguard its relevance if excavating and attacking the recurrent violence enacted by the NeoConOpticon onto racialised subjects whose alterity has been construed through imperial colonialism.

*The Black* is foreign to Portuguese nationality; s/he remains the migrant, narrated as first, second or third generation. This overdetermined position has palpable effects in terms of livelihood, rights, and survival. In order to face the grave consequences of the production of alterity through coloniality, the question of bio- or rather necropolitics must be addressed. Race is at its core. These burning questions cannot be properly apprehended unless the postcolonial field is invigorated with the reflections and interventions of anti-racist movements. These movements have been historically relegated to the margins of public debate and scholarship in Portugal. Postcolonial scholarship must rescue them. For that, the field must confront its own implication with coloniality. It is an urgent task to debunk the myth of a raceless Portuguese society and an alleged transnational community of the Portuguese language.

The canon of postcolonial criticism of Portuguese colonialism studied here is generally oblivious to its own hegemonic position or insufficiently aware that it imposes limitations to its criticality. I acknowledge the requirement and share the desire that the field moves beyond coloniality and advances a reinvigorated imagination of *other* Europe. Still I deem it fundamental to indicate the location of this query, which is why I termed this location as the *postempire*. This disobedient appropriation of Paulo de Medeiros' coinage, or rather an inflection of it, is inspired in anticolonial and Afro-pessimist reflections grounded in the western constitutive anti-blackness and the resilient necropolitical regimes in the afterlife of slavery. Hereby I indicate the

necessity of paying attention to African diasporic analysis and expression as a way into the entrails of the postempire and hopefully out of it again.

The postcolonial field is however questioning the situatedness of its own knowledge, as evident in the works of several scholars in this dissertation, such as Ana Paula Ferreira and Manuela Ribeiro Sanches. This questioning must gain prominence and diffusion. Hereby postcolonial criticism can depart from its own conceptions of colonial exceptionality to establish its difference. This consciousness of a historical specificity should support a wider range of associations and dialogues outside the master narrative of *Lusophone* comparisons (away from relational narcissism).

Given the daunting task of confronting imperial nostalgia in a purportedly shared space of *postcolonial conviviality*, I deem it paramount to term the *time-space of the Portuguese language* as a site of *disencounter* between Portugal and an imagined Africa. The postcolonial novels analysed display instances of encounter and of disencounter between Portugal, Mozambique and Angola and, more generally, between African locations and cosmologies and *the West*. They disclose the messy and complex enterprise of imperial colonialism and its mutually yet differently implicated subjects, and illustrate its pernicious continuities. Their strongest decolonial aspect is unveiling durable and robust power asymmetries amidst this *mess*, employing artistic and analytical wit and imagination.

If there is an important common thread between the different cultures, histories and locations embraced by the Portuguese postcolonial terrain, it is the violent experience of raced and gendered imperial colonialism *a la Portuguesa*. It is encapsulated in the body of the enslaved as exception in the context of “racial mixture.” This colonial difference or specificity is enunciated in postcolonial theory and literature, but not only or necessarily in the postcolonial canon in the Portuguese language. The shared colonial experience supports such other enforcements, such as with homoglot literatures, anticolonial texts and diasporic dialogues throughout the Black Atlantic, African literatures, and anti-racist movements. The postcolonial query must foreground the story that must not be told that is counted with this very mark of constraint, loss and violence, with “the mark of *untranslatability* on it” (Spivak 1993, 195).

The postcolonial field has indicated the importance of the question of the translation of literature, but also of knowledges. This query infuses meaning and value in the signs inscribed in the literary text that cannot be fully captured. It also posits that not all signs can or should be made apprehensible. In the query of Portuguese colonialism carried out here, silence, noise, the sounds of a place and echoes of voices of the dead erupt in the narration of the postcolonies and the postempire as sites of meaning. They are the ghost of colonialism; Spivak’s *withholding* that signal the historical violence of colonialism; they are Vecchi’s *residual language*. Furthermore, these marks in language hint at what the colonial grid does not fathom: other knowledges, other languages, and other cultural repertoires. This also means that analysing the novels through a postcolonial canonic lens must be but one of the possibilities of seizing the meanings they invite and suggest.

Therefore, the postcolonial investigation of language awakens colonial ghosts but also suggests widening the territory of inquiry into fundamental problems of coloniality,

namely: occluded forms of knowing, power asymmetry between languages and knowledges, and cognitive violence. Postcolonial theorists and authors install pain and discomfort in this terrain, while proposing, each to a varying degree, a search for other knowledges and languages that have been discredited and invisibilised by and through the Portuguese language. This movement debunks Eurocentrism, following Boaventura Santos, by revealing hegemony operating through the economy of knowledge production, attribution and circulation. At the same time it seeks to visibilise and enact what is beyond the relation of subordination to the West.

The prominence of translation in the postcolonial field is also productive for bringing to the fore the question of cognitive justice. It demands reciprocity in the relationship that must be grounded in a space of discursive contestation. Hereby other knowledges regain credibility as they emerge through the agency of their own producers. Such connections through mutual translation configure sites of encounter as anti-hegemonic spaces where dissent and alterity are not excessive but the norm. Following António Sousa Ribeiro, rather than being spaces founded on a presumed commonality produced by colonialism, such commonplaces of a culture become the object of contention and argumentation. From here, engagements with the imagination of *Lusofonia* become meaningful if premised in contention, reciprocity and visibility to silenced scripts and agents. The Portuguese language is a bounded terrain and it has not been fully capable of becoming a time-space of mutual strangeness. The recovery of Africa from obscurantism and exoticism prescribes the enlacement with other languages.

The postcolonial field needs to embrace the radicalism of criticism centred on race. One road I propose is to have recourse to Afro-Pessimism in order to grasp the profound (contemporary) implications of the ontological position of *the slave* as non-human. From this understanding, a radical imagination of *another time-space* can be unleashed. Afrofuturism is a collection of analytical and aesthetical practices that conceive a future for black people—those who were *never meant to survive*. It is an African diasporic imagination prompted by resilience in the context of anti-blackness and consequent duress. It draws from the experience of forceful uprooting and alienation through enslavement to reconceive *the Black* as an exotic other, as an alien aspiring a utopic future. This future is embedded in African cosmologies and magical or fantastic mythologies alongside science and technology.

Nástio Mosquito is an Angolan-born, Belgium-based artist who offers provocative and innovative artifacts of Afrofuturist inspiration. In a recent interview with the Portuguese newspaper *Público*, Mosquito (2016) postulates his art as one of a *gatuno* (thief) who appropriates information to mix it up, turning it into something that is his own, new, and different. While the interviewer associates his craftsmanship with *mestiçagem*, Mosquito associates it with *remixagem* (remix). His work conveys his positionality as other to Europe. Commenting on his most recent album, titled *Se Eu Fosse Angolano (If I were Angolan)*, Mosquito says that:

Voltei a ser imigrante, minoria, negro, numa altura em que na Europa se fala de migrações ... Tudo isso me tocou, a imigração, as mortes de negros nos EUA, enfim, todos esses actos

de violência. Uma violência não apenas física, mas exibida na opinião das pessoas, no medo pelo outro. (Mosquito 2016)<sup>585</sup>

While on Mosquito's previous album most songs were in Portuguese, on his most recent one he shifted to English. Inquired about this change, he explains to the interviewer that he merely adopts the language of his daily experience. This language, be it English or Portuguese, traverses the world:

Cada canção é servida por palavras lúcidas, ácidas ou crípticas, sempre numa lógica de afirmação das pessoas para além das estruturas que as podem aprisionar. No outro álbum o português dominava. Agora há nove temas em inglês e apenas uma canção em português. Um facto que nada tem a ver com circulação global – “até porque com o anterior disco em português percorri o mundo”, lembra – mas apenas porque o inglês se tornou na sua língua diária. “Aconteceu. Não escolhi. Essas histórias precisavam de ser contadas assim. É só.” (Mosquito 2016)<sup>586</sup>

The artist, who is theorising through his craft, gives precedence to the storytelling rather than to the language in which the story is told. Mosquito might embody another cosmopolitan imagination, one that is not premised in a *common language*, but grounded in what Spivak termed *commonality of being set apart*, from an overdetermined or given position of *the Black* and *thus* foreign.

The Afrofuturist art of Kiluanji Kia Henda (2011) surges from the experience of racialised police violence in Brazil and the mix of affect and violence felt at the Angolan location where his brother was killed in one of the battles of the civil war. Henda was born in Angola and divides his time between Luanda and Lisbon. He posits that his art reflects two vital issues in the African context, namely:

[T]he ability to write and know one's own history, and the ability to plan one's own future. Afrofuturism is an escape through which I am seeking to separate myself from the present. It does not obey a temporal rule, which allows a supposedly utopian future to be projected that sometimes interferes with the legacy of the past. (Henda 2011)

This purposeful anachronism represents and artistically performs a summoning to coloniality. At the same time it evokes a present and a utopian future that aspires a detachment from this legacy. This temporality and the imaginations to which it gives fruition speak from and to postcolonies and postempires: to Africa and the West, and to Africans and the African diaspora. This formation can be conceived as one such *marginal subaltern cosmopolitanisms* about which Meneses wrote, or the *media landscapes* suggested by Appadurai; it is Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*.

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<sup>585</sup> This translation is mine, as are all the translations that follow. Transl.: “I came back to be an immigrant, a minority, a black man, at a time when Europe is talking about migrations .... All this touched me, immigration, the deaths of blacks in the USA, in short, all these acts of violence. A violence not only physical, but displayed in the opinion of the people, in the fear of the other.”

<sup>586</sup> Transl.: “Each song is served by lucid, acidic or cryptic words, always in a logic of affirmation of the people beyond the structures that can imprison them. On the other album, Portuguese dominated. Now there are nine songs in English and only one song in Portuguese. A fact that has nothing to do with global circulation – ‘even because with the previous record in Portuguese I travelled the world,’ he remembers - but only because English became his daily language. ‘It happened. I did not choose it. These stories needed to be told that way. That's it.’”

Afrofuturism also advances feminist critique of the representation and use of female black bodies indebted to the abjection of and desire for enslaved black women—as in work by Wangechi Mutu and Shoshanna Weinberger amongst others (see Richardson 2012). This critique materialises in analysis and art—affiliated to Afro-pessimist thinking (e.g. that by Christen A. Smith and Saidiya Hartman)—displaying the grotesque body designed in the intersection of race, gender and sexuality. This body of knowledge and art associates with reflexive practices on the raced and gendered body of Portuguese coloniality, namely the black wet nurse, the black prostitute, the black migrant, and the black servant.

The Afro-Portuguese scholar and performer Grada Kilomba has laid bare the (Portuguese) colonial genealogy of *the black woman* as *the* object of desire in both postcolonial and postimperial spaces. At the same time she unleashes an indictment of the violent reproduction of whiteness in Europe, and advances perspectives for a decolonised knowledge embedded in African and African diasporic grammars. Kilomba explores that same temporality mobilised by Afrofuturism, the “timelessness of everyday racism ... where the past comes to coincide with the present and the present is experienced as if one was in that agonising past” (Kilomba 2010, 12). Her project encompasses the aspirations of Afrofuturism, namely art and writing as *the revenge of representation* or return, and as emergence or the introduction of *newness into the world*. Kilomba comments on *Plantation Memories*: “This book represents this double desire: the desire to oppose that place of “Otherness” and the desire to invent ourselves anew” (Kilomba 2010, 11-12).

Though Kilomba’s work hardly figures in Portugal, it has gained prominence in international circles, and has received attention and praise in Brazil. Indeed, it has inspired Black feminist critique across the Atlantic. Drawing on Kilomba, Aline Djokic reflects on her positionality along the Brazilian colour line, unveiling the *Atlantic exception*, which is the discoincidence between the *Lusotropical* grammar and the afterlife of slavery in the postcolony:

Porém nem mesmo os eufemismos usados para designar as cores de nossa pele consegue esconder como nos viam e continuam a ver: como coisas e animais e não como seres humanos. Segundo o dicionário Michaelis o termo pardo (do lat. Pardu) quer dizer: entre o branco e o preto, branco-sujo, V. mulato. O termo mulato por sua vez, segundo Grada Kilomba vem do termo português mula, o resultado do cruzamento entre o cavalo e o burro. Por último o termo mestiço (do esp. Mestizo), aparentemente mais neutro, mas cujo significado é vira-lata, o resultado do cruzamento de cães de raças diferentes. Ainda citando Grada Kilomba “todos esses termos tem uma conotação animal ofensiva e estão relacionados à idéia de infertilidade e proibição.” (Djokic 2014)<sup>587</sup>

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<sup>587</sup> Transl.: “But not even the euphemisms used to designate the colours of our skin can hide how they saw us and continue to see us: as things and animals and not as human beings. According to the Michaelis dictionary, the term brown (from the Latin *Pardu*) means: between white and black, white-dirty, see mulatto. The term *mulato* in turn, according to Grada Kilomba, comes from the Portuguese term *mula* [mule], the result of crossbreeding between the horse and the donkey. Finally the term *mestiço* (from the Spanish *Mestizo*), [which is] apparently more neutral, but which means stray dog, [in other words] the result of the crossbreeding of dogs of different races. Still quoting Grada Kilomba ‘all these terms have an offensive animal connotation and are related to the idea of infertility and prohibition.’”

This Afro-diasporic imagination denounces coloniality in order to announce a new position for raced and gendered subjects. It associates with postcolonial literature that advances the phantasmagoric presence of racism giving fruition to the voice of that and of those who were repressed, of *the unspoken*. In this sense, postcolonial literature is blasphemous, and blasphemy, following Bhabha, is enlaced with blackness. Literature as the practice of the sinner of coloniality rescues the veiled face of colonialism and therefore its implicated subjects. In the comfort of the postempire, “to blaspheme is to dream” (Bhabha 1994, 226); to persist against one’s otherwise silenced and occluded (ghostly) presence. The dream surges out of the daring imagination of a collective future for racialised and gendered subjects, for *the Black*. It advances a future yet to come after survival from the Middle Passage and the resilient anti-blackness of our times.

For Bhabha the postcolonial dream is an insurgent “return” that constitutes the entrance of “newness into the world” (ibid., 227). It enacts the refusal of collapsing the other of colonialism into the narrative of empire. It is not incidental that the three postcolonial novels analysed in this dissertation end in dreams. Each of them suggests a different postcolonial imagination, some truly blasphemous, some not. *Flamingo* closes with the dream of flying towards the recovery of one’s composite home, *Passados* with the dream of wandering towards the *Lusotropical* encounter, and *Esplendor* with the dream of imperial annihilation. Each of them announces a new beginning in, at or out of the Portuguese language that had already been anticipated as a noticeable *lack*, a *tendency* or a *latency*.

A postcolonial imagination in the Portuguese language in truly blasphemous inclination is found in cultural artifacts that face the violence of coloniality in its most graphic and most subtle manifestations. In *Esse Cabelo, A Tragicomédia de um Cabelo Crespo que Cruza a História de Portugal e Angola* (*This Hair. The tragicomedy of an Afro hair that crosses the history of Portugal and Angola*), the Afro-Portuguese Djaimilia Pereira de Almeida tells the story of her excruciating visits to hairdressers that were pregnant with meaning. She suggests the story of her Afro as a materiality and metaphor for a larger geopolitics (Almeida 2015, 13). It is a haunted history.

A casa assombrada que é todo cabelereiro para a rapariga que sou é muitas vezes o que me sobra de África e da história da dignidade dos meus antepassados. ... Tudo aquilo que posso contar é com um catálogo de salões, com a sua história de transformações étnicas no Portugal que me calhou – das retornadas cinquentonas às manicuras moldavas obrigadas, a contragosto, ao método brasileiro, passando pelos episódios do retraining da minha exuberância natural numa menina que, nas palavras de todas essas mulheres, “é muito clássica”. A história da entrega da aprendizagem da feminilidade a um espaço público que partilho, talvez, com outras pessoas não é o conto de fadas da mestiçagem, mas é uma história de reparação. (Almeida 2015, 14-15)<sup>588</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> Transl.: “The haunted house that is all hairdresser for the girl I am is often what I have left over from Africa and from the history of the dignity of my ancestors. ... All I can tell is through a catalogue of salons, with its history of ethnic transformations in the Portugal that I experienced - from the returnees [from the former colonies] in their fifties to the Moldavian manicures, unwillingly moulded to apply the Brazilian method, going through the episodes of constraining my natural exuberance into a girl who, in the words of all these women, ‘is very classic.’ The story of the delivery of the learning of femininity to a public space that I share, perhaps, with other people is not the fairy tale of *mestiçagem*, but a history of reparation.”

This is a story of repairing the right to signify, to tell history, and to recover language. I end this dissertation where Grada Kilomba started her *Plantation Memories*, at *Escrava Anastácia's mask of speechlessness*. Kilomba rescues the nineteenth-century portrayal of the enslaved woman who was given the name Anastácia. Her exact African origin is unknown; some claim that she was born in Angola, taken to Brazil, and enslaved by a Portuguese family to end up in a sugar cane plantation. She was drawn by the Frenchman Jacques Arago, who was a member of a *scientific mission* to Brazil. Anastácia is portrayed wearing “a heavy iron collar and a facemask that prevented her from speaking” (Kilomba 2010, 17).

The reasons given for this punishment vary: some report her political activism aiding in the escape of other slaves; others claim she resisted the amorous advances of her white master; and yet another version places the blame on a mistress jealous of her beauty. She is often purported to have possessed tremendous healing powers and to have performed miracles, and was seen as a saint among enslaved Africans. After a prolonged period of suffering, Anastácia died of tetanus from the collar around her neck. ... In the latter half of the 20th century the figure of Anastácia began to be the symbol of slavery brutality and its continuing legacy of racism. Anastácia became an important political and religious figure all over the African and African Diasporic world, representing heroic resistance. (Kilomba 2010, 17-18)

Anastácia embodies the violence of colonialism and the force of resilience of the body and the legacy of resistance. Kilomba rescues the compelling figure of the enslaved Anastácia with the mask to indict the colonial regime:

Formally, the mask was used by white masters to prevent enslaved Africans from eating sugar cane or cocoa beans while working on the plantations, but its primary function was to implement a sense of speechlessness and fear, inasmuch as the mouth was a place of both muteness and torture. (Kilomba 2010, 16)

This investigation started with language, has given it corporeality, and has concluded with the figure of the mouth of the raced and gendered enslaved subject Anastácia. It is the mask of colonialism that postcolonial scholarship and literature expose, and the mouth of its postcolonial subject that they release. Postcolonial theory and literature on Portuguese colonialism in Africa is on the right track when it does this, and must be detracted when it does not. Postcolonialism compels a departure from language in order to allow the mouth of those rendered speechless to speak the hidden speech: blasphemy.

## Appendix.

### **Postcolonial translation studies: *translation stripped of innocence***

This appendix glimpses over the field of Translation as it aims to elucidate critical concepts from Translation Studies in its crossings with Postcolonial criticism, which have been dealt with in the body of Chapter 2.

Any incursion in the field of Translation and any use of the trope of translation must depart from the historical awareness that western translation practice emerged in the context of transmission of Catholicism along with imperial conquest. At the time of the Portuguese and other European empires, translation meant religious conversion and assimilation simultaneous to otherisation, as well as the demonization of indigenous populations and cultural habits and, in the ultimate instance, their suppression. These violent processes are inscribed in what Boaventura Santos coined *epistemicidio* (Santos 2009b, 468), as discussed in the body of the chapter. This genealogy inscribes coloniality in the field, as will be discussed below. Awareness of it informs contemporary attempts to decolonise the field in its incursions into other disciplines.

The field of Translation Studies has developed swiftly in western academia over the last two decades, since its “cultural turn” as coined by Susan Bassnet and André Lefevere in their influential collection *Translation, History and Culture* (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990). According to Hermans (2009, 95) the collection “made the point that translation, enmeshed as it is in social and ideological structures, cannot be thought of as a transparent, neutral or innocent philological activity.”<sup>589</sup> Translation Studies was not only expanded but also widened to include the scrutiny of its own practice.

[Cultural turn is] a term used in translation studies to refer to a phenomenon which helped the theory of translation expand its boundaries beyond linguistic, particularly from the 1990s onwards. The link between translation studies and cultural studies became stronger and a translation was no longer perceived merely as a transaction between two languages, but rather as a more complex process of negotiation between two cultures. (Vanessa Leonardi in Various 2009, 179)

Jeremy Munday (2009, 11-12) points out some outstanding consequences of this “shift in research paradigms.” First of all there is “the interrogation of long-held tenets of translation,” such as the notion of equivalence between the original (source text) and the translation (target text). Lawrence Venuti’s work on what he coined “foreignization” and “domestication” have been granted much attention in this matter. The second consequence is the focus on “the role of the translator”—which brings to

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<sup>589</sup> Translation as a trope within critical thought on colonialism and dependency has a genealogy that surpasses western academia. In Brazil, for instance, it was elaborated within literary theory and literary history. Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, *Race in Translation: Culture Wars Around the Postcolonial Atlantic* (New York: New York University Press, 2012). 292.

the fore issues of choice, agency, values and accountability (Hermans 2009, 93)—and the “cultural context” of translation, that raises problems of an ideological, political and ethical nature. This aspect is crucial for my reflection as it is actually about the question of voice, as addressed in the postcolonial analyses approached in the section: “The translator ‘revoices’ the source text author, literally in the case of an interpreter, metaphorically in written translation, and leaves a trace of his or her involvement in the textual choices made in the target text” (Munday 2009, 15). And the third consequence is the growth of the discipline to the point that its cohesion as a distinctive field of knowledge is threatened.

Such changes in the discipline were also fed by “new impulses deriving from cultural materialism, postcolonial studies and gender studies” (Hermans 2009, 96). Leonardi emphasises the role of “the explosion of postcolonial studies” in this transformation (Leonardi in Various 2009, 216).

Postcolonial scholars began to realise that culture is mediated through language and that translation was an intercultural tool for communication and manipulation. Both postcolonial theories and translation studies share a concern over the issue of power relations, and their intersection gave rise to the so-called “postcolonial translation studies,” where translation is often employed as a metaphor to show it functions as an instrument of colonial domination. Robinson (1997b) sees translation as applying three different roles: in the past it was actively used as a means of colonization to control people; in the present it is a postcolonial act; and in the future it will hopefully be used as a means of decolonization. (Leonardi in Various 2009, 216)

Paul Bandia indicates that “the intersection between postcolonial studies and Translation Studies has rested primarily on literature” (Bandia 2010, 264). He provides a selective though informative account of the field, which serves my purposes here. Bandia argues that this injunction led both to the overlapping of postcolonial writing with the act of translation, or “writing as translation,” and to the translation of postcolonial literature. “Writing as translation” is harboured in the understanding that postcolonial literature is metaphorically a form of translation, whereby:

[T]he language of colonization is bent, twisted or plied to capture and convey the sociocultural reality or worldview of an alien dominated language culture. The very fact of writing about experiences of formally colonized societies by postcolonial subjects in the language of the colonizer is thus likened to translation as a metaphor for the representation of Otherness. (Bandia 2010, 265)

This metaphorical apprehension of translation is also harboured in the linguistic features of postcolonial literature of the Mozambican Mia Couto and in the main strain of secondary literature on his writing, which I discussed in the section on literature.

The attempt by postcolonial writers to mould and shape the colonial language into a medium for expressing non-western thought and literature resulted in non-western varieties of the colonial language, challenging hegemony and imperialist-universalist pretensions, and disrupting the classic notion of a standard language. (Bandia 2010, 265)

Yet most importantly, in addition to a focus on the linguistics of the text, postcolonial analyses have raised “ontological issues that have become research paradigms in Translation Studies” concerning power and ideology (ibid., 266).

Postcolonial research, as a subfield, has *stripped Translation Studies of its innocence*, as it were, by establishing parallels between postcolonial writing as resistance to hegemony and the translation of subaltern cultures as resistance to imperialism or subversion of dominant linguistic and cultural practices. (Bandia 2010, 266, my emphasis)

The second strand of the juncture postcolonial literatures and translation deals with the translation of postcolonial literatures. This vein of research approaches the geopolitics of the field, which is imbued with the ideologies at play in the global literary market. Bandia points to the works of Gayatri Spivak (*The Politics of Translation*, 1993) and Tejaswini Niranjana (*Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context*, 1992) about the role of translation in perpetuating the construction of colonised subjects as inferior, and their strategies to confront “the ideological underpinnings of an intercultural exchange essentially based on unequal power relations” through the practice of translation (Bandia 2010, 266-267). These are fundamental issues that I touched upon on the analysis of the texts by Mia Couto, José Eduardo Agualusa and António Lobo Antunes.

Addressing the location of *Africa* within this arena, Bandia attends to the particularities of contexts where orality supersedes written literature and where a multitude of national languages cohabit. Further, the continent is overwhelmingly affected by the power asymmetry in the linguistic and literary arena. “Postcolonial writers must translate themselves into global languages in order to afford some literary capital in the global market place” (ibid., 267).

This contention relates to a critical debate about language use in African literatures that started in the 1960s and still lives today. This debate, scrutinised by Alamin Mazrui (2002),<sup>590</sup> centres on the positions identified with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and Chinua Achebe who advocate and apply different strategies for the decolonisation of African literatures, namely writing in African languages in the case of the former, and in European languages in the case of the latter. Isis Butôt (2009) offers an insightful discussion on these positions within the analysis of African literatures in the Portuguese language, based on two contemporary Mozambican novels. As the previous strategy, the usage of African languages envisions working outside of the colonial realm—which is however not the same as working in a realm untouched by coloniality. The aim is to decolonise the appropriation of European languages.

[T]he translation of post-colonial literature has been described variously as “re-translation” (Niranjana 1992), re-creation, rewriting, or reparation (Bandia 2008), as it involves the representation of marginalized cultures in dominant languages, with an underlying intent to set the record straight, as it were. It is translation as reparation insofar as its overriding purpose is one of restitution or restoration, of redress of the inanities of the past, and

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<sup>590</sup> Alamin Mazrui had written critically about the overly direct link between the use of European languages and colonisation and the converse problematic equation between the use of African languages and decolonisation. See his book co-authored with Ali Mazrui: Ali A. Mazrui and Alamin M. Mazrui, *The Power of Babel: Language & Governance in the African Experience* (Oxford, England Chicago: J. Currey; University of Chicago Press, 1998), 228.

resistance to linguistic, social and cultural misrepresentation. Far from being a mere linguistic transfer, postcoloniality imposes a praxis of translation as negotiation between cultures in an unequal power relationship. (Bandia 2010, 267)

The engagement of the Postcolonial with Translation foregrounded problems around language as a zone of (dis)encounter. It enabled a politicised analysis of *text transit* inscribed in a broader terrain of culture pervaded by power asymmetry.

The intersection of postcolonial literature and translation has reset the button of an ethics of translation, raising questions about the relation between writer-translator and language, about who translates postcolonial literature and for whom, about publishers and editorial policies regarding minority literatures written in major languages, about the location of power and the relation between centre and periphery, and ultimately about the teaching of post-colonial literatures in translation. With respect to the translation practice, other ethical issues arise regarding the degree of fluency or transparency of the target text, the vexed question of the assimilation of minority language cultures, the manipulation or subversion of language, an ethics of sameness or difference, reception and readability of translation and the role of translation as an agent of decolonization. (Bandia 2010, 267-268)

These are fundamental questions that the field of Portuguese Postcolonial Studies has started to address in the footsteps of anticolonial thought, as it enters an analysis of the politics of production and reception of postcolonial literature, and the very shaping of the discipline.

This set of questions reflects the maturing of the Postcolonial field, which took up the topics of Translation and inscribed colonial difference into its core. This is the very point of departure of the analysis in the body of the section. Hermans selectively addresses such trends in translation, which offer critical tools for the scrutiny of hegemony and for developing alternative (subversive) practices in the wider realm of culture (Hermans 2009). As these are the veins in translation of relevance for the purposes of this analysis, I will strongly rely on his accounts. A critical trend for this analysis is the “‘return’ to ethics” embodied in the work of Lawrence Venuti. Drawing on work of Antoine Berman that “linked literary translation with ethnocentrism and otherness” and advocated “respect for the original in its radical alterity,” Venuti forwarded a critique of the politics of translation in the English-speaking world. Departing from the “marked imbalance in global translation flows” where “English is primarily a donor, not a receptor language,” Venuti argues that the Anglophone world is closed to “cultural diversity” and to “other modes of thinking and expression.” This problem is worsened by the current fluency in translation (Hermans 2009, 98).

Fluently translated texts make easy reading because they conform to familiar patterns of genre, style and register. The ease however comes at a cost. It erases the otherness of the foreign text, and this domestication the term is aptly chosen, suggesting both smugness and forcible taming – has harmful consequences. Its main ideological consequence is that it prevents an engagement with cultural difference because foreign texts, whatever their origin, are uniformly pressed into homely moulds. (Hermans 2009, 98)

Venuti points out that the strategy of “leaving the reader in peace” (already criticised in 1813 by Friedrich Schleiermacher) masks a process of “annexation” whereby the translated text “transposes the so-called dominant ideology under the ‘illusion of transparency’” (Schleiermacher quoted in Venuti 2003, 257). Venuti’s alternative to

*peaceful reading* is to inscribe difference in translation that configures, following Hermans, “a form of resistant or ‘minoritizing’ translation called ‘foreignizing.’” Hermans coins this practice “defamiliarizing” translation (Hermans 2009, 99). Hereby the marks of estrangement of the original are kept in the translation; the translator leaves her/his imprints in the text, and makes the reader aware of the conditions of translation.

This kind of translating is abusive in two senses: it resists the structures and discourses of the receiving language and culture, especially the pressure toward univocal, the idiomatic, the transparent; yet in so doing it also interrogates the structures and discourses of the foreign text, exposing its often unacknowledged conditions. (Venuti 2003, 252)

It follows that the text, translated through a practice of “abusive fidelity” (Venuti 2003, 252), in the words of Philip Lewis, conveys an uncanny aspect, for it disrupts the reading.

[Venuti] tap[s] what he calls the “remainder,” a term borrowed from Jean-Jacques Lecercle (1990) to mean all those linguistic features that cannot readily find a place in the neatly ordered grammars of standard usage, the homogenized standard language through which dominant social classes exercise control. (Hermans 2009, 99)

Equally countering *peaceful reading*, Emily Apter argued for the reinstatement of difficulty in the reader’s experience as part of the critical enterprise (Apter 2011b). This difficulty incorporates both philosophical difference and the global geopolitics of literatures, languages and aesthetics (Apter 2006). “Untranslatibility” is Apter’s nomenclature for this ethical practice: “it is another name for working through something difficult” (Apter 2011b).

Leonardi and Munday argued that foreignizing translation “release[s] an unpredictable variable” that, according to Venuti, “produces an alien reading experience ... which can disrupt the target culture and language [therefore] subvert[ing] the power relations of the [target language] by the release of foreign textual elements” (Leonardi and Munday in Various 2009, 208). The “remainder” (Venuti 1998, 108)<sup>591</sup> or “excess” (Venuti 2003, 258), inscribed in this strategy, has a strong resonance in what Walter Mignolo (2000b) called “linguaging,” whereby the “noises” and the “dust” of a mother tongue are carried into new usage of dominant languages. *Linguaging* is Mignolo’s denomination for the re-appropriation of language and “returning language to the body” (Mignolo 2000a), which inspired the analysis in the section on literature. In *linguaging*, speech and writing act as strategies of *transculturation*. They stand for different manifestations of tensions between linguistic maps, literary geographies and cultural landscapes, argues Mignolo. *Imperial design* is inscribed in these representations, which may however destabilize the macro-narrative. The *border*, which is a *place* and metaphor that I explored throughout this dissertation, is the privileged location for the emergence of such new language practices and discourses (Mignolo 2000b).

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<sup>591</sup> “The collective force of linguistic forms that outstrips any individual’s control and complicates intended meanings.” Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation. Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 108.

The “resistant” translation that Venuti proposes (Hermans 2009, 99) is then paralleled with cultural practice at the borders or, better, the (translation) zones crossed through power asymmetry and violence, where the subaltern develops meaning-making strategies to survive, both materially and emotionally. It is therefore a practice that counters hegemonic globalisation as it instates new modes of cultural contact that resonates with Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ and António Sousa Ribeiro’s theorising.

An English translation that makes readers aware of its abuses, namely its transformation of the current standard dialect in its interrogative work on a particular foreign text, will expose the limitations and exclusions of the translating language, showing that “English” is an idealist notion that conceals a panoply of Englishes ranged in a hierarchical order of value and power among themselves and over every other language in the world. Thus a translation practice can turn the interpretation of translated texts into an act of geopolitical awareness. (Venuti 2003, 259)

Along the same lines, Apter argues for awareness of new dominant emergences “shifting the balance of power in the production of world culture” (Apter 2006, 3), and to “significant instances of recalcitrance [to Anglophone dominance]” (ibid., 9). She points to authors attacking English, transcribing and using vernacular, as examples of writing that represent such cases of noncompliance:

Their writing demonstrates how the power of dominant languages can be subverted by the inventive creativity of the most disadvantaged peoples. It also provokes serious reflection on what constitutes the limits of a discrete language, not just in terms of original and target, or native and “foreign,” but more precisely in terms of language as a border war conditioned by the clash between plurilinguism and corporate standardization. (Apter 2006, 9)

There are two aspects of this practice that are fundamental to a reflection on Portuguese postcoloniality. The first is the resistance against incorporation into an Anglo-American hegemonic globalisation, which is the *raison d’être* of the Community of the Portuguese Language and has been the overly present rhetoric attached to *Lusofonia* in the public sphere. The second is the two-fold concealment of *Portugueses* and of other languages subalternised in this hegemonic space. There is, actually, as much diversity within this space as outside of it. Translation must lead to this self-reflection informed by the global asymmetries inscribed in the cultural (dis)encounter and a project to transform them. Translation theory and translational practices within the Anglophone realm support developing an awareness of the power machinery through text transit in the context of Anglo-American dominance, but also demand awareness within other Europhone realms as zones of hegemony.

A translation practice might not only advance theories of culture and translation, but also join them to a politically oriented understanding that can potentially extend their impact beyond the academic institutions in which these theories are housed. This is not to say that translation, especially the translation of specialized theoretical texts, can change the world in any direct way. Rather, the point is that translation can be practiced, in various genres and text types, so as to make their users aware of the social hierarchies in which languages and cultures are positioned. And with that awareness the different institutions that use and support translation, notably publishers, universities, and government agencies, can better decide how to respond to the cultural and social effects that follow upon the global dominance of English. (Venuti 2003, 259)

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Kwame Anthony Appiah put forward important manners of such “resistant” translations, with different outcomes. The former associates translation with inadequacy and loss (see, in Chapter 2, Spivak on *translation-as-violation*) and the latter calls for “thick translation” providing detailed contextualization to the text (Hermans 2009, 99-100), that is translation associated with a gain. For Hermans, what brings together feminist and postcolonial approaches to translation is their interventionist stance. It is the “political act that makes language speak for women [and/as the postcolonial subject]” (ibid., 100). Yet further it is an intervention, which legitimacy is recovered: “In a world of power imbalances, the violence that resists patriarchal oppression is not to be equated with the violence exercised by the system. It is this awareness of power differentials that links feminist work most closely with postcolonial approaches” (ibid., 101). But perhaps the fundamental aspect of resistant translation within the framework of Third World Feminism and Postcolonial critique—as the authors here mentioned have a contentious relationship to the western canon—is bringing to its core the question of “who is speaking” and “who sets the terms of the conversation.”

Both approaches also share an interest in questions of social inclusion and exclusion (who can or must translate, on whose terms, and who benefits?), and in the deployment of translation both as part of a knowledge-controlling apparatus and as a vehicle of either complicity or resistance. (Hermans 2009, 101)

Claudia Costa (2012) provides an insightful overview of the crossings of Postcolonial and Feminist criticism in Latin America with a particular focus on their dissonances with the western canon.<sup>592</sup> Costa reveals other subjects (women, indigenous peoples, Afro-Latin-American subjects) and loci (the South) of enunciation of critical thought and practice that are consistently rendered invisible in each of these terrains of scholarship. She forwards Latin American translation thought and practice that is aware of the geopolitics of power/knowledge and fights for overthrowing it, shaping instead a practice of mediation. Translation as the establishment of a relationship with difference within territories of power is then a site in need of decolonisation itself so that it can turn into an exercise of openness to other forms of knowledge and experience. Costa indicates the processes of exclusion within *travelling routes of theories* (launched in the West, often borrowing from the South without acknowledgement, and exported to the South for consumption) and the attribution of scientific authority to the western white (male) theory producer within those academic fields. Altogether, Costa refers one back to other critical gazes upon the formation of the canon in these two disciplines. This is a fundamental aspect for my analysis of the Postcolonial field in Portugal as it swings between the erection of a new canon and its deprovincialisation. Translation is embedded in the field and it provides the chance to normalise western hegemony but also to subvert it. Latin American postcolonial feminism and, for that matter, Feminisms from the south of the South, support the latter endeavour. They also associate with critique voiced in the (south of the) North— see for example Inocência Mata’s writing in the body of the chapter.

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<sup>592</sup> At points she relies on the important collection co-edited by Sonia Alvarez: Sonia E. Alvarez et al., ed., *Translocalities/Translocalidades: Feminist Politics of Translation in the Latin/a Américas* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 496.

A *decolonial translation* must then attempt to debunk the power asymmetries imbued in the traffic of cosmologies and languages. Important questions on postcolonial research on translation relate to differences between dominant and subordinate languages, status and prestige of colonial languages. Hybridity, which is a theme with its own genealogy in postcolonial studies indebted to Latin America, has gained central place in translation since the work of Homi Bhabha.

As highlighted in the dissertation, hybridity is the condition that, for Homi Bhabha (1994), enables cultural translation. This is a term he uses in a broad sense to speak of the continual displacement that comes with migration, transformation, re-inscription and in-betweenness, and which he regards as characteristic to postcolonial societies (Hermans 2009, 102).

Hermans (2009) indicates that the term translation is etymologically linked to metaphor, being derived from “transfer.” Apart from the literal aspects of translation, postcolonial studies have explored the metaphorical vein of translation. It has given rise to a range of studies on the representation of otherness in postcolonial translation studies and a further “engagement with its subject – that is cultural traffic” (ibid., 103). Hermans mentions Brazilian Anthropophagy that is, from my perspective, an outstanding movement within this trend, for it has already inspired much critical thought on colonialism. *Antropofagia* turned signs on the colonialist gaze to cannibalism, presented as an empowered image of a “postcolonial culture” devouring the colonial master, picking and choosing from the hegemonic culture what suits its own purposes. Here terms such as “transcreation” surged, with parallels (adaptation, mutation) in other postcolonial contexts (ibid.).

The issues of otherness, representation and rationale of cross-cultural comparison in a postcolonial world reappear throughout the accounts of practices and theorizings that do not match the category “translation” pure and simple. ... If different cultures are to be understood on their own terms, translating becomes problematic. (Hermans 2009, 104)

Translation involves then negotiating such terms while avoiding assimilation into the vocabulary of the hegemonic culture/language. This “might help to make western academia a province of a larger intellectual world, not its centre” (Hermans 2009, 104). The work of Maria Tymoczko is fundamental for carrying out this task, through “questioning the ‘Western based presuppositions’ that have so far dominated translation” (Munday 2009, 15).

Tymoczko (2004) acknowledges important moves in translation theory away from Positivism—leading to the cultural turn—that enabled incorporation of non-western thinking of translation and its practices. However, she stresses that translation theory is still firmly grounded in the West:<sup>593</sup>

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<sup>593</sup> As a rule I refer in this dissertation to the West as a place of hegemony, synonymous to the North, and in opposition to the non-West or South. Tymoczko points to the problematic nature of such terms, which also recur in this dissertation and in postcolonial theory in large: “There is, of course, a problem with the terms east and west, both of which implicitly imply perspective and position. ... Here I am using the term Western roughly to refer to ideas and perspectives that initially originated in and became dominant in Europe, spreading from there to various other locations in the world, where in some cases, such as the United States, they have also become dominant. At this point in time, however, when Western ideas have permeated the world and there is widespread interpenetration of cultures everywhere, the terms east

Let me begin by observing that all theory is based on presuppositions-- called *axioms* or *postulates* in mathematics. In the case of translation theory, the current presuppositions are markedly Eurocentric. Indeed, they grow out of a rather small subset of European cultural contexts based on Greco-Roman textual traditions, Christian values, nationalistic views about the relationship between language and cultural identity, and an upper-class emphasis on technical expertise and literacy. (Tymoczko 2004)

Tymoczko argues that translation theory must therefore be made aware of the limitations of its own perspective, which should be reviewed and “enlarged” to the non-West and to marginal locations within the West. She lists the current presuppositions about translation that underlie western translation theory. Those of relevance for my purpose here are: 1. “Translators are necessary in interlingual and intercultural situations; they mediate between two linguistic and cultural groups”; 2. “Translation involves (written) texts”; 3. “Translators are generally educated in their art and they have professional standing; often they learn their craft in a formal way connected with schooling or training”; and 4. “Currently translation is entering a completely new phase and assuming radically new forms because of cultural movements and diasporas associated with globalization and because of the hybridity of the ensuing cultural configurations” (Tymoczko 2004). I have highlighted important objections to this situation modelled in the West from an array of scholars in Portuguese-speaking and other postcolonialisms in the body of the dissertation. These axioms reveal practice of the dominant western elites that are literate and receive formal education, and refer to the condition of monolingualism in western (Anglo-American) societies. Tymoczko argues that this situation is exceptional and blind to the experience of the non-West and actually to the greatest share of the world population.

These assumptions may all reflect an Anglo-American model of linguistic (in)competence, equating nation with language, and national identity with linguistic provinciality. ... Translation studies has [sic], after all, been heavily theorized by English speakers, who are notoriously deficient in language acquisition, and who, thus, may be particularly biased in their theorizing of translation. (Tymoczko 2004)

Outside of the West, Tymoczko continues, plurilingualism is the norm. Translation is more often used across languages within the same community, it is mostly applied to oral communication rather than written texts, and the translator apprenticeship takes very different forms than in the West. Further, cultural and linguistic contact is not particular to the current stage of globalisation, neither in the West nor outside of it. Regarding the latter, she states:

This is a hypothesis that has generated some of the most interesting and entertaining speculative writing on translation in the last 15 years, but it is clearly a view that can only be sustained by those who know very little history, even very little modern history. ... In the modern era, the types of hybridities associated with diasporas that cultural studies scholars tout as new can be traced in most immigrant cultures, notably those of North and South America, where the phenomena have a documented history dating to the European discovery [sic] of the Americas in the fifteenth century. Diasporas, population movements, cultural and linguistic contact, cultural mixing and hybridity, and translation have been part of human

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and west become increasingly problematic.” Maria Tymoczko, "Enlarging Western Translation Theory: Integrating Non-Western Thought about Translation," <http://www.soas.ac.uk/literatures/satranslations/tymoczko> (accessed March 8, 2012).

history since the dawn of our species and its diffusion out of Africa. This hypothesis must be rehabilitated before it can be useful and non-Western data will aid in the rehabilitation. (Tymoczko 2004)

The rehabilitation of this last hypothesis rescues both thinking and practice of translation within the context of Portuguese early imperial colonialism but also within contexts previous to and/or outside of European colonisation. All in all, Tymoczko advocates a view of translation that accommodates those different perspectives and practices. She argues then for a “cluster concept” that is broader and thinks translation as time-, place- and circumstance-specific (Tymoczko 2004). This enlarged theory of *situated translation* is fed by a better understanding of mediation in plurilingual and pluricultural life. It integrates knowledge about oral cultures, recognises all types of translation beyond professional; it demands knowledge of the history of cultural movements and cultural interface throughout the world; and expands the object of study to include transference, representation and transculturation, thus hosting phenomena that are neither exclusively nor primarily linguistic.

These modes of cultural interface are of relevance when discussing translation from a postcolonial perspective for they elaborate on fundamental topics of the (re)working of colonialism as, following Tymoczko, they can be physical or symbolic and involve different media (transference), entail the construction of otherness with its ideological operations instituting power and authority (representation), or entail the performance (rather than the transmission) of cultural facets and forms (transculturation). The latter concept has already been largely applied to postcolonial analyses, in particular in the field of Anthropology, indebted to Latin America.<sup>594</sup>

What is clear at present is that translation studies does [sic] not stand in a neutral space. ... Translation theory has followed the flow and diffusion of English as a dominant international language serving to spread knowledge of all types to all corners of the globe. Western conceptualizations of translation are permeating non-Western countries and becoming lenses for perceiving and understanding local conditions. This is a form of intellectual hegemony that needs to be reconsidered and, I would suggest, resisted. The dissemination of Western translation theory will inevitably continue to have a hegemonic character unless it is interrogated on the basis of differences that exist between dominant Western assumptions and other local knowledges and experiences, differences between Western histories of translation and other local histories. (Tymoczko 2004)

This contention resonates with Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ plea for alternative epistemologies. Tymoczko extends criticism to the very formation of an alternative canon and insists on the fundamental question of voice, a recurrent topic in Postcolonial Studies and in criticism of them.

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<sup>594</sup> Munday points that transculturation, in particular, is borrowed from the work of the Cuban anthropologist and historian Fernando Ortiz. Jeremy Munday, "Issues in Translation Studies," in *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies*, ed. Jeremy Munday (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 19. Tymoczko indicates that the term “was first used to speak about the interchange of cultural characteristics between Europeans and the indigenous populations in Latin America, and to describe the creolization and mestizization [sic] of most Latin American cultures.” Tymoczko, *Enlarging Western Translation Theory: Integrating Non-Western Thought about Translation*. For an analysis of the concept within the “Postcolonial debate” in Latin America see the collection: Mabel Moraña, Enrique D. Dussel and Carlos A. Jáuregui, *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 628.

If the task of enlarging translation theory becomes primarily a project of Western scholars, the hegemonic potential of translation studies will increase substantially. By contrast, that peril will be mitigated if the project involves people from many parts of the world, people who best know and understand and can advocate for their own local conceptions and traditions of translation. Such voices can promote the self-representation of non-Western perspectives in translation studies. (Tymoczko 2004)

Munday questions whether Tymoczko's challenges for translation will be taken up by the field (Munday 2009, 19). Tymoczko herself acknowledges the contributions of those who have already played a critical role in questioning those presuppositions in translation and its relation with power, such as Venuti and feminist and postcolonial theorists (Tymoczko 2004). She posits that such debates are not isolated and, following Foucault, argues that "[n]ew discourses have a time and a moment, and that moment is related in turn to the emergence of changing institutions" (Foucault quoted in Tymoczko 2004).

This point is important for it highlights the relationship between the epistemologies that feed the language imagination manifested in discourses (and for that matters texts) and their material life or, in Foucauldian terms, their relations placed in "a field of exteriority" (Foucault 1972, 45). However, it is critical to accompany the process whereby institutions change and new ones emerge and, as I will indicate below, this is a process ignited at the bottom. Yet beyond translation policy, Tymoczko's point allows a furthering of the reflection on translation to the terrain of politics, where it stands as an ethics of conviviality in the polis.

Michael Cronin builds on the provincialization of western translation theory to elaborate on a refurbished cosmopolitanism. According to Hermans:

Michael Cronin (2003, 2006) advocates micro-cosmopolitanism, which seeks to develop an eye for the myriad fractal complexities of the local while remaining aware of larger contexts. [...His] view of translation ... foster[s] diversity. Translation, as he sees it, negotiates meanings and thus creates an intermediary zone of mediation, which is socially necessary in densely populated multicultural centres. Without it, communities remain partitioned and shut up in their own mental worlds, and proximity will breed alienation and violent conflict. Instead of the monolingual thesis which regards ethnic diversity as a threat to cultural and political coherence and insists on speedy wholesale integration and the adoption of a common language, Cronin projects a vision in which translation helps to increase the totality of humanity's knowledge base without undermining cultural specificity. (Hermans 2009, 104-105)

This view is dear to this analysis for, while associating with Boaventura de Sousa Santos' *ecologia dos saberes contra o desperdício da experiência (ecology of knowledges against the waste of experience)* (Santos 2000b; 2006c), it refutes the project of a monolingual community, in this case, *Lusofonia*. Further it hints to another concept of a cosmopolitan translator, a more humble and worldly figure than *the intellectual*. Cronin addresses the recurrent criticism of the notion of cosmopolitanism for its "cultural, economic and political elitism" (Cronin 2006, 15):

The micro-cosmopolitanism dimension helps thinkers from smaller or less powerful polities to circumvent the terminal paralysis of identity logic not through a programmatic

condemnation of elites ruling from above but through a patient undermining of conventional thinking from below. (Cronin 2006, 16)

He traces the genealogy of the notion of cosmopolitanism (as a “socio-cultural condition,” a “philosophy or world-view,” concerning “the emergence of transnational institutions,” as “a practice or competence,” or “universalism linked to the civilizing mission of imperial and neo-imperial elites” or the “trans-national utopia of a hyperbourgeoisie”), which gained renewed interest at the turn of the century, linked to a perceived increase of cultural exchange and flows. These notions are of relevance to this analysis of language as a site of (dis)encounter traversed by the coloniality of power, for they associate, as Cronin exposes, with ideas about cultural contact, and therefore of translation, the moral projects that orient such contact and their link to the ideal of humanity and ultimately to hospitality (Cronin 2006, 6-12).

Cronin draws from David Held’s definition of cultural cosmopolitanism: “In this sense, all translators are cultural cosmopolitans, in that going to the other text, the other language, the other culture, involves that initial journey away from the location of one’s birth, language, upbringing” (ibid., 11). He points to the “element of displacement” in the translator’s practice, and adds to this notion Stuart Hall’s “vernacular cosmopolitanism” that is “aware of the limitations of any one culture” but nevertheless acknowledges the importance of stating its difference. Translation assumes here the paramount task of conveying the “traces of difference” (ibid., 12). What comes out of this composite idea counters those notions of cosmopolitanism as a world-view dependent on the erection of large (political) entities, which he termed “macro-cosmopolitanism,” namely “a tendency to locate the cosmopolitan moment in the construction of empires, in the development of large nation-states (France, Great Britain, Germany) or more recently in the creation of supra-national organizations (European Union/United Nations/World Health Organization)” (ibid.). Cronin’s scrutiny of the genealogy of cosmopolitanism supports identifying the indebtedness of *Lusofonia* to an imperial-driven supra-national project imbued in the humanism of a civilising mission.

The micro-cosmopolitanism movement, by situating diversity, difference, exchange at the micro-levels of society, challenges the monopoly (real or imaginary) of a deracinated elite on cosmopolitan ideals by attempting to show that elsewhere is next door, in one’s immediate environment, no matter how infinitely small or infinitely large the scale of investigation. (Cronin 2006, 16-17)

Hereby, the idea of a community predatory to diversity is rejected and, at the same time, the agency of translation is located at the bottom. Returning to his previous text of interest to this analysis, Cronin offered critical elements to identify the risk involved in a language community. He points out “the nineteenth-century cultural nationalism” and the consequent “equation of linguistic with national identity” (Cronin 2003, 162). Drawing from the experience of Irish-language travellers choosing to speak English as it is a global language, he affirms the recurrence of “cultural misapprehension,” whereby “travelers are readily identified and categorized on the basis of the language they speak” (ibid., 162-163).

And so the Irish traveller in a non-Anglophone area, by choosing to speak English, inadvertently becomes the Englishman/woman: “Leaving aside the nationalist

susceptibilities, the difficulty of misattribution is to create a false set of expectations or to conceal histories not normally on view” (ibid., 163). This is a perverse dynamic at play in asymmetrical relations crossed by language, whereby the history of the subaltern is absorbed into the history of the culture of the empire.

However, in the *Anglophone area* and in other *contact zones* defined around European languages, there is another layer of colonial difference that is overlooked. Race (that is gendered) is a fundamental category for defining the terms of (non)belonging to such communities. So whereas such areas (*Lusofonia* being one of them) are marketed as colour-blind or immune to the power asymmetries shaped by empire, they are barely perceived outside of the race gaze.

Apter explores the analogous dynamics in the terrain of the French language as contact zone between Europe and Africa. In Jacques Derrida’s *Monolingualism of the Other Or The Prosthesis of Origin* (1996) she finds “a rare engagement with *francophonie* as theoretical terrain” (Apter 2006, 246). The position of “the *Franco-Magrébin* subject,” and most particularly “the problems of national/linguistic unbelonging characteristic of post-Independence Algerians” configure this engagement, which is postcolonial. Here the “experience of national disenfranchisement” inscribes an “estrangement in language,” its “untranslatable” aspect (ibid.). Still drawing from Derrida, Apter highlights otherness inside this territory:

[A] Babel “*from and within itself ... the stranger at home, the invited or the one who is called ... This border of translation does not pass among various languages. It separates translation from itself, it separates translatability within one and the same language. A certain pragmatics inscribes this border in the very inside of the so-called French language.* (Derrida quoted in Apter 2006, 246)

This is the very dynamic that Mirelle Rosello highlights in her reflection about *Salut cousin!*, integrated in my analysis (in the body of the dissertation). Hereby the terrain of language is perceived as another area, perhaps the ontological one, which produces and reproduces borders, constituting otherness. Borrowing from Derrida, Apter proposes another politics of belonging not predicated on possession but harboured in mutual estrangement.

The contingency of the subject suggests here that French speakers who are French nationals constitute one possible world of French speakers among many. Once the national predicament is dislodged, no speaker maintains exclusive ownership of language properties; the right to language is distributed more freely as language is classed as the property of X-many-lease holders. (Apter 2006, 246-247)

Ankhi Mukherjee (2012)<sup>595</sup> makes a corresponding argument for the *Anglophone zone*. Her ideas resonate Venuti’s panoply of Englishes above, pointing to the adaptability and performativity of the English language at the service of South Asian literatures. She argues for English as a cosmopolitan vernacular, which “focuses attention on language rather than nation as its creative principle.” It is a language that drifted away from its

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<sup>595</sup> In this public lecture, Mukherjee dealt with themes that belong to her book: *What is a Classic? Postcolonial Rewriting, Repetition, and Invention of the Canon* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014), 296.

original shores to give emergence to a deterritorialized community of literatures. A differing or *deffering* English (after Derrida's *différance*)<sup>596</sup> is a vernacular full of fragments that testify to the degree of engagement with colonialism. This marked difference is linguistic and political as it bears on European universality. She draws from Said, Bhabha, Spivak and Rushdie to propose a "cosmopolitan community" defined by un-satisfaction as the sign of a movement of revision of the universal, as in the cosmopolitanisms examined by Cronin above. At the same time, this is a community that aspires a "non-cohesive global" shape where collaboration exists side by side with parasitical relations and resistance. For it is a "homeland" conceived by those who "gaze English from the outside (of Englishness)," it is a "non-cohesive global community" whose looseness is a product of the desire to non-belonging.

Out of this vernacular community, Mukherjee (2012) proposes an alternative canon, defined by impurity and linguistic diversity. She warns against the policing aspect of the canon, which reinforces power/knowledge hierarchies and establishes authority through exclusion. This contention is however countered by the emergence of what she terms new models of interconnectivity other than writing back to the metropolis, as there is no such single (colonial) centre that there once was. Still, epistemological asymmetry persists internationally, Mukherjee warns, and the politics of audience, reception and recognition are active within the new realms of alternative canons. Awareness of this dynamic enables a cautious appreciation of the importance of alternative canons, for they provincialize territories of western hegemony in the eyes of a wider readership that crosses borders, and they foster dialogue between literatures out of a "circulating library." The relevance of such alternatives is measured in their actual dissociation from hegemony. And this must always be appreciated in context.

It is crucial to scrutinise what is proposed as an alternative canon against its post- and neo-colonial context, and this practice is much needed in considering postcolonial literature and theory in other *language zones*. For the sake of reflecting on the Portuguese case, it is important though to point to the fact that there are fundamental differences between the status of the Portuguese language in Africa and that of English in India. To mention but one of the markers of this difference, there is a huge contingent of speakers of English as mother tongue in India, against a proportionately smaller contingent of Portuguese first-language speakers in the former Portuguese colonies in Africa. This aspect, tied to the sheer size of the South Asian population, meant that most of the twentieth-century literature in English was written by non-English people (Mukherjee 2012) of Asian origin. Furthermore, English, vulgarly known by the youth as American, is the language of globalisation. These aspects bring India closer to (careful) comparison with Brazil than with African countries where Portuguese is spoken, regarding an entry point and a perspective towards a global vernacular and any imagination of a community.

Language zones as they have been conceived hitherto reinforce language perceptions linked to imperial domination that act a disservice to the different histories and cultures that inhabit *linguistic areas*. Apter's working through the trope of translation as a model

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<sup>596</sup> "The economy of this writing is a regulated relationship between that which exceeds and the exceeded totality: the *différance* of the absolute excess." Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London and New York: Routledge, 2005 (1978), 75.

for Humanities' critical enquiry supports engagement with it as a political and epistemological practice in asymmetric terrains of (dis)encounter, "the translation zone" (Apter 2006). This has been my perspective throughout this dissertation.

In fastening the term "zone" as a theoretical mainstay, the intention has been to imagine a broad intellectual topography that is neither the property of a single nation, nor the amorphous condition associated with postnationalism, but rather a zone of critical engagement that connects the "l" and the "n" of TransLation and transNation. The common root "trans" operates as a connecting port of translational nationalism (a term I use to emphasize translation among small nations or minority communities), as well as the point of debarkation to a cultural caesura — a trans——ation—where transmission failure is marked. (Apter 2006, 5)

This coinage gears the reader's gaze towards difference that cannot/must not be erased, subsumed or incorporated. These are the elements of "untranslatability" and "incommensurability" (Apter 2006) which indicate the reclaimed presence of otherness in the *encounter*. Hereby Apter argues for a practice of translation that does not devour another text. She poses the injunction *not to translate* as an ethical force, allowing elements out of date and out of place to emerge in the text, disturbing the present and the known locality (Apter 2011a). Activating untranslatability not only introduces specificity in the text, as she argues (*ibid.*), but also foregrounds the multiplicity of meanings hidden, occluded and subjugated.

Cast as an act of love, and as an act of disruption, translation becomes a means of repositioning the subject in the world and in history; a means of rendering self-knowledge foreign to itself; a way of denaturalizing citizens, taking them out of the comfort zone of national space, daily ritual, and pre-given domestic arrangements. It is a truism that the experience of becoming proficient in another tongue delivers a salubrious blow to narcissism, both national and individual. ... Translation is a significant medium of subject reformation and political change. (Apter 2006, 6)

Apter (2006) draws from translation to propose a new comparative literature adverse to western predicaments. She defines her own practice as one of taking terms from literature and introducing them into critical thought (Apter 2011a).<sup>597</sup> Translation then departs from textual analysis towards institutional politics. It is an interventionist practice that proposes new ethics of encounter.

By insisting, too, on learning languages wholly distant from one's native philology, a new comparative literature based on translational pedagogies renews the psychic life of diplomacy, even as it forces an encounter with intractable alterity, with that which will not be subject to translation. (Apter 2006, 11)

Learning other languages within the zone predicated as monolingual is fundamental for transforming it into a cosmopolitan space. Apter departs from a notion of cosmopolitanism, because of the heritage I discussed above, opting instead for a recovered humanism, inspired among others by Edward Said's anti-imperialism and Gayatri Spivak's credible comparatism: "a critical secularism that refuses to foreclosure the possibility of a common world culture" (Apter 2006, 8). Still, Apter points out the

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<sup>597</sup> In this masterclass Apter discussed central positions taken in her book: *Against World Literature? The Politics of Untranslatability in Comparative Literature* (London and New York: Verso, 2013), 358.

critical contribution of a notion of cosmopolitanism, namely that it engages a debate about citizenship and legal status. Therefore some kind of “cosmopolitanism from below” is fundamental for bringing issues at the heart of current global asymmetries to the fore, which are dear to postcolonial criticism. Incorporating notions of worldliness and planetarity, Apter foregrounds rejection of “orthodoxies of likeness and selfsame” inscribed in “globalization’s monolithic spread” (Apter 2011b). Opposing globalisation as a practice of “translating everything into a global idiom,” she argues for “a reserve of untranslatability” in the global paradigm (ibid.). Still drawing from Derrida, she shapes another gaze to the practice of comparatism, which is paramount for critical thinking on language zones.

Abolishing the divides of inside/outside, guest/host, owner/tenant, “the monolingualism of the other” names a comparatism that neighbors languages, nations, literatures and communities of speakers. This idea of “neighboring” is borrowed from Kenneth Reinhard, specifically his Levinian understanding of a “comparative literature otherwise than comparison ... a mode of reading logically and ethically prior to similitude, a reading in which texts are not so much grouped into “families” defined by similarity and difference, as into “neighborhoods” determined by accidental contiguity, genealogical isolation, and ethical encounter .... For Reinhard, treating texts as neighbours “entails creating anamorphic disturbances in the network of perspectival genealogies and intertextual relations. That is, before texts can be compared, one text must be articulated as the uncanny neighbour of the other; this is an assumption of critical obligation, indebtedness, secondariness that has nothing to do with influence, *Zeitgeist*, or cultural context” (KS 796). (Apter 2006, 247)

This perspective disturbs the genealogy of the encounter, phrased in terms of the benevolence of the host, joined to its guests through family ties. Instead, a neighbour made out of historical contingency and debt, supports a new community aporia, tied by trauma. “‘Neighbouring’ describes the traumatic proximity of violence and love, manifest as exploded holes in language or translation gaps ... spaces of non-relation” (ibid.).

From here a community could be defined in two ways, either one joined by former coloniser and former colonised, predicated on the colonisation yet experienced from dramatically uneven positions, or one made out of the common experience of colonial violence. This latter materializes Paul Gilroy’s Black Atlantic. Apter draws from the same source as Gilroy, namely Edouard Glissant, to explore the trope of translation in such a community formation, coined *Creole*.

Glissant’s paradigm of the *tout-monde*, building on nondialectical ontological immanence of Deleuze and Guatarri, offers a model of aporetic community in which small worlds (models perhaps after a deterritorialized Caribbean) connect laterally through bonds of Creole and a politics of mutualism centered on resistance to debt. (Apter 2006, 245)

She furthers a genealogy of the Creole, which follows António Sousa Ribeiro’s requirement to localise such recurrent vocabulary in cultural criticism, to not lose sight of the colonial heritage.

Insofar as Creole heralds a condition of linguistic postnationalism and denaturalizes monolingualization (showing it to be an artificial arrest of language transit and exchange), it may be said to emblemize a new comparative literature based on translation. Though ... Creole has emerged as an omnibus rubric, loosely applied to hybridity, *métissage*, platforms

of cross-cultural encounter, or to language as a critical category of literary history; it has also emerged as a synonym for traumatic lack. Marked by the Middle Passage, and the coarse commands of human traffickers and plantation owners, Creole carries a history of stigma comparable to that of pidgin translation in nineteenth-century Chinese. (Apter 2006, 245)

Yet, borrowing from Haun Saussy, Apter highlights the possibility to rescue Creole from the pejorative marks attached to pidgin in terms of incompleteness, misarticulation and excessiveness and put Creole into translation practice. “Pidgin stands for -it makes audible and visible- the incommensurability of languages” (quoted in Apter 2006, 245). It is an uncanny trope that translation abducted from linguistics, which supports decolonising the wider humanities and social sciences. The pidgin refers back to the metaphors and dynamics emergent from the juncture between the postcolonial and translation with the aim of enabling critical thought on the postcolonial (dis)encounter, for it is the holes, caesuras, lacks, disruptions and excesses that must inhabit the (dis)place of the postcolonial language. Yet, for *the Creole's* close ties with the grounded vocabulary of Portuguese colonialism and its postcoloniality, which Omar Ribeiro Thomaz (2007, 60) accurately termed as *Lusotropical eschatology*, here one must again be vigilant. After all, the *colonial innocence* of translation has been lost.

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## Summary

The imaginary of the Portuguese empire in Africa has been strongly present in the narratives of Portuguese national identity. With the Carnation Revolution of 1974 and the recognition of the independence of the former Portuguese colonies in Africa in 1975, the Portuguese language became *the* trope whereby the empire was given continuity in the narratives of Portuguese national identity. The imagination of Portuguese colonialism as a harmonious *encounter* served as the basis for the construction of a language community embracing former metropolis and former colonies (*Lusofonia*). This construct typifies Portuguese imperial exceptionality, which still has a strong hold on the national imagination. Postcolonial literature and theory on Portuguese colonialism and its aftermath attempt to question this narrative while harbouring their own reflections on/around the trope of language.

This research entails a critical analysis of narratives of the Portuguese language as a site of *encounter* with *Africa* in the canon of postcolonial theory and literature in Portugal, which I term the *postempire*. The analysis of postcolonial theory develops new insights based on the work of renowned Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos and explores an array of reflections from other salient postcolonial scholars. The analyses of postcolonial literature of high currency in Portugal focuses on three novels and commentary by the Mozambican Mia Couto, the Angolan José Eduardo Agualusa, and the Portuguese António Lobo Antunes, respectively. I scrutinise the main tropes and metaphors adopted by these theorists and authors to reflect on the Portuguese language vis-à-vis the empire. I look in particular for the (dis)continuous exoticisation of Africa and Africans, their (in)visibilization, and the rhetorical habit of approaching Portuguese colonialism without mentioning its gendered and racialised violent foundations. Finally these tropes and metaphors are associated with the narrative of Portuguese imperial exceptionality and the scholars' and authors' canonical location within the *postempire* to forward an understanding of how their writing overcomes and/or asserts the Portuguese empire at current times, with creativity, wit and pain.

This critical analysis sheds light on the colonial phantom of race that is the female black other—*Africa*—and identifies emergences in theory and literature that give her protagonism. I conclude by proposing that the postcolonial field foregrounds the analysis of race in Portuguese colonialism and in the afterlife of slavery, and that it gives room and prominence to the agency, analysis, and literary and further artistic intervention of the gendered and racialised subjects of Portuguese coloniality, in dialogue with the African diaspora—and beyond the Portuguese language.

## Samenvatting

Het beeld van het Portugese rijk in Afrika was en blijft sterk aanwezig in de narratieven rondom de Portugese nationale identiteit. Met de Anjerrevolutie van 1974 en de erkenning van de onafhankelijkheid van de voormalige Portugese kolonies in Afrika in 1975, werd de Portugese taal *de* troep waarin het rijk voortleefde in de narratieven over de Portugese nationale identiteit. De voorstelling van het Portugese kolonialisme als een harmonieuze *ontmoeting* diende als basis voor de creatie van een taalgemeenschap die de voormalige metropool met de voormalige koloniën verbindt (*Lusofonia*). Dit construct typeert het Portugese imperialistisch exceptionalisme, dat nog steeds een sterke greep heeft op de nationale verbeelding. Postkoloniale literatuur en theorie over het Portugese kolonialisme en de nasleep ervan doen pogingen om dit narratief te problematiseren, terwijl hierin ook op verschillende manieren wordt gereflecteerd op de troep van taal.

Dit onderzoek is een kritische analyse van de narratieven van de Portugese taal als een plaats van *ontmoeting* met *Afrika* in de canon van de postkoloniale theorie en literatuur in Portugal, dat ik de *postempire* noem. De analyse van postkoloniale theorie ontwikkelt nieuwe inzichten op basis van het werk van de invloedrijke Portugese socioloog Boaventura de Sousa Santos en onderzoekt reflecties van andere saillante postkoloniale denkers. De analyse van toonaangevende postkoloniale literatuur in Portugal richt zich op drie romans en opiniestukken van respectievelijk de Mozambikaanse Mia Couto, de Angolese José Eduardo Agualusa, en de Portugese António Lobo Antunes. Ik onderzoek de belangrijkste tropes en metaforen die deze theoretici en auteurs gebruiken om na te denken over de Portugese taal ten opzichte van het rijk. Ik kijk in het bijzonder naar de (dis)continue exotisering van Afrika en Afrikanen, de manier waarop zij (on)zichtbaar worden gemaakt, en de retorische gewoonte van het beschrijven van het Portugese kolonialisme zonder het gegenderde en geracialiseerde geweld waarop zij was gebaseerd te noemen. Tot slot, breng ik deze tropes en metaforen in verband met het narratief van Portugees imperialistisch exceptionalisme en de canonieke positie van deze denkers en auteurs binnen de *postempire*. Dit om een beter begrip te vormen over de manier waarop hun werk het Portugese rijk overstijgt of juist continueert met creativiteit, scherpe humor en pijn.

Deze kritische analyse belicht het koloniale fantoom van ras, de vrouwelijke, zwarte ander – Afrika - en identificeert nieuwe inzichten uit de postkoloniale theorie en literatuur die haar een centrale rol toekennen. Ik concludeer met het voorstel dat de analyse van ras in het Portugese kolonialisme en in de nasleep van slavernij een centrale rol moet spelen in het postkoloniale veld. Het is wenselijk en noodzakelijk dat postkoloniale theorie en literatuur ruimte en aandacht geven aan de *agency*, analyse en de literaire en artistieke interventies van de gegenderde en geracialiseerde subjecten van de Portugese kolonialiteit. Ik stel voor dat dit gebeurt in dialoog met de Afrikaanse diaspora – voorbij de Portugese taal.

# Curriculum Vitae

Patricia Schor was born in São Paulo, Brazil on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1969.

In 1992 she obtained her bachelor's at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation - São Paulo School of Business Administration. She then did a research internship at the Centre for the Study of Culture and Consumption at the same school, with a Scientific Initiation Grant from the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development – CNPq (Brazil). Subsequently she moved to the Netherlands. Between 1994 and 1996 she followed the Politics of Alternative Development Strategies' programme at the International Institute of Social Studies, part of the Erasmus University Rotterdam, in The Hague. In 1996 she obtained her master's degree, with a dissertation titled: "For a Sociology of Dona Flor: A Framework for Popular Culture Applied to the Study of Afro-Brazilian Religions in the Urban Space: São Paulo."

Between 1998 and 2003 she worked at the non-governmental organisation Novib – Oxfam Netherlands, as Program Officer Lusophone Africa. She conducted country analyses of Mozambique, Angola and Guinea Bissau, appraised and monitored development projects, facilitated exchange relations between social organizations across and between *Lusophone countries*, and lobbied donors. She carried extraordinary responsibilities in the Southern and Eastern Africa region as a focal point on human rights, on social and political citizenship, and on conflict resources.

Between 2003 and 2008 she followed the MPhil/PhD programme at the Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies at King's College London, on a part-time basis. She was supervised by Prof. Dr. Patrick Chabal and AbdoolKarim Vakil. She had a maternity leave (twins) in the period 2004-2006. In October 2008 she transferred to Utrecht University to give continuity to her research under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Paulo de Medeiros in Portuguese Studies, on a part-time basis. Since 2010 she has been a member of the Postcolonial Studies Initiative at the same university.

Between October 2008 and February 2009, she was an associate researcher at the Centre for Comparative Studies, Faculty of Letters - University of Lisbon (Group Dislocating Europe). In 2011, she spent a short period as a visiting student at the Centre for Social Studies, School of Economics – University of Coimbra.

In 2009, she was awarded a Prince Bernhard Scholarship by The Spanish, Portuguese and Ibero-American Institute and Utrecht University, for carrying out her project titled "Language as art object: Africa in the representations of the Portuguese language through the dialogue Brazil – Portugal."

Between 2004 and 2015 she was granted a series of bursaries to present her research at international conferences (such as grants from The Sociological Association, the Association of British and Irish Lusitanists, the Stichting Fonds Dr. Catharine van Tussenbroek, and the Stichting Jo Kolk Studiefonds).

Since 2012, she has been publishing in scholarly collections and peer-reviewed journals in the USA, the Netherlands, Brazil, Portugal and Mozambique. She co-edited the

“Brazilian Postcolonialities” issue of the journal *P. Portuguese Cultural Studies* (2012). She is a member of the editorial committee of the journal *Revista Ártemis* (Studies on Gender, Feminism and Sexualities) of the Federal University of Paraíba, and a peer reviewer of *Via Atlântica* (Journal of Comparative Studies of Literature in the Portuguese Language) of the University of São Paulo, and of the *Revista de Ciências Sociais Política & Trabalho* (Journal of Social Sciences: Politics & Labour) of the Federal University of Paraíba.

In 2012 she co-organised (with Prof. Dr. Paulo de Medeiros) a workshop titled “Atlantic Triangles: Lusophone Colonial and Postcolonial Crossings” at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences. In 2015 she co-organised the Decolonizing the University Symposium as part of the Decolonial Summer School, at University College Roosevelt.