Spectral Bodies, Dystopian Cities: Literature and Economy in Portuguese-speaking Southern Africa, 1986-2012

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Abstract

Drawing from recent work at the intersection of world-systems analysis and materialist theories of world literature, this thesis argues that literary production in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa has developed distinctive aesthetic idioms that critically respond to crises of global capitalism and related failures in postcolonial governance. Focusing on spectral effects in Mozambican literature, and images of dystopia in Angolan fiction, I posit an elective affinity between the heightening of irrealist modes of signification in these two social contexts and the cyclical rhythms of the capitalist world-economy. Where existing studies have overwhelmingly read the elaboration of spectral and dystopian aesthetics in Angola and Mozambique as an index for the trajectory of the post-independence Marxist-Leninist state, I contend that these genres of writing rather function to register a world-systemic horizon that both surpasses and includes more locally determined, national realities. Taking the world-economic downturn and subsequent neoliberal 'boom' period of the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s as a periodising framework, I thus demonstrate that the spike in spectral and dystopian fictions in the two states directly corresponds to the shifting local/global relations born out of the fraught passage between two phases of long-wave capitalist accumulation. This more expansive approach to the literature and economy of Portuguese-speaking southern Africa identifies a structural homology in the literary production of Angola and Mozambique that suggests comparison with texts produced at analogous yet historically specific moments across the long spiral of capitalist history, such as in mid-twentieth century Latin America. While the thesis thus engages in an exegesis of Latin American fiction typically labelled 'magical realist', it ultimately argues that the Warwick Research Collective's development of the category of critical irrealism is a more suitable rubric through which to study the literature of Portuguese-speaking southern Africa.

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1. Introduction: The Southern African World-System

On 1 April 1980 in Lusaka, Zambia, the nine frontline states of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe signed a declaration committing them to the economic liberation of southern Africa. The organisation which emerged from this summit meeting was known as the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), and the history of its inception and eventual liquidation will give a useful indication of the extent to which the region has been fundamentally shaped by forces and trends within a globalised arena of political economy, at the same time as it provides a benchmark by which to measure the more local transformations in its structures of everyday life. Riding the crest of revolutionary fervour inaugurated by the arrival of majority rule in nine of the southern African states and the undertaking of Marxist-Leninist projects of nation-building in Angola and Mozambique, the text of the SADCC's originary declaration is marked by a firebrand rhetoric that condemns the white-settler apartheid regime in South Africa while bemoaning the region's crippling dependence on the core states of the world-economy. Underlining the fact that southern Africa's peripheral status is no 'natural phenomenon' but rather the result of a long process of incorporation into a world-system of capitalist imperialism 'by metropolitan powers, colonial rulers and large corporations', the SADCC's declaration describes the state of the region in 1980 as 'fragmented, grossly exploited and subject to economic manipulation by outsiders'. The organisation's proposed alternative to this economic dependency was a programme of 'regional self reliance', which they outlined with the sort of self-determinist lexicon that had come to be associated with the

Non-Aligned Movement of nations established at the Bandung Conference thirty-five years earlier.[1]

The SADCC's gestures towards an anti-systemic future came at a time of epochal reorganisation at the world-systemic level. Following the structural crisis of the 1970s, in which Euro-American capitalists entered into a new alliance with the finance sector that would serve as a prelude to the ensuing phase of neoliberal hegemony, the year 1980 marked a watershed moment. After this date, hard-earned welfare securities would be stripped from the working classes and other marginalised populations in capitalist cores, production would be systematically outsourced to semiperipheries across the Global South, and the debt-ridden peripheries would be subjected to an intensification of extractivist projects via new policies of structural adjustment.[2] But despite the SADCC's apparent resistance to this global process of neoliberal reconfiguration, in practice the radical language of their declaration only gave rise to a set of debilitating contradictions. For one, while the organisation's programme was ostensibly an economic one, they failed to implement any common regional trade policies, such as the elimination of tariffs and quotas on intra-regional trade or the specification of a shared foreign investment code.[3] They saw no contradiction in asking for economic assistance from the United States and other core actors in order to reduce their crippling dependency on apartheid South Africa, despite the fact that many of these states were themselves either directly or indirectly supporting South Africa's racist regime.[4] And given

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[1] Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), *Southern Africa: Toward Economic Liberation* (London: Blackrose Press, 1980), pp. 2-3.
[2] Sharae Deckard and Stephen Shapiro, 'The Neoliberal World-System: An Introduction', in Sharae Deckard and Stephen Shapiro, eds., *World Literature, Neoliberalism and the Culture of Discontent* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 1-48 (p. 41). For a representative overview of the emergence of neoliberalism, see David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[3] William G. Martin, 'Southern Africa and the World-Economy: Regionality and Trade Regimes', in Sergio Vieira, William G. Martin and Immanuel Wallerstein, eds., *How Fast the Wind?: Southern Africa, 1975-2000* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992), pp. 33-82 (p. 67).
[4] Ibbo Mandaza, 'Perspectives on Economic Cooperation and Autonomous Development in Southern Africa', in Samir Amin, Derrick Chitala and Ibbo Mandaza, eds., *SADCC: Prospects for Disengagement and Development in Southern Africa* (London: Zed Books, 1987), pp. 210-230 (p. 216).

the deep-seated, structural character of the region's dependency on South Africa, it often seemed that full economic disengagement was in reality an unfeasible objective.[5] Indeed, the self-defeatism of these contradictions was quickly felt by the Carter Administration in the United States, which had supported the SADCC as a means of drawing the region's Marxist-Leninist governments into a Western-oriented body which would provide investment opportunities for the private sector while reducing Eastern bloc influence.[6] Nevertheless, at a time when racialised geopolitical tensions were threatening to curb the advancements only recently gained through the wars of national liberation, the establishment of the SADCC imparted a vital safeguard of resistance, and it was in these terms that Aquino de Bragança would uphold the organisation as 'the first and necessary step, in the face of the expansionist plans of the South Africans, to turn the independent sovereign states of the region into viable economic entities'.[7]

What little radical hope the Lusaka declaration held out was officially liquidated when in 1992 the SADCC became the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The acronymic shift ratified a process of capitulation to the global economic agendas of international financial institutions that had been immanent in the organisation from the outset, as the move was now made away from 'regional cooperation' and towards the EEC model of 'market integration'. This opening up of the local market to global capital flows was consistent with the 'strange mix of finance and empire' that had taken hold in the world-economy since the early 1980s as a cyclical response to the global downturn of the previous decade.[8] In order to resuscitate falling rates of accumulation, the producers of the Global

[5] Mandaza, 'Perspectives', p. 222.
[6] Hanlon, Joseph, *Beggar Your Neighbours: Apartheid Power in Southern Africa* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 25.
[7] Aquino de Bragança, 'Mozambique: Facing a war without end?', in Marco Mondaini and Colin Darch, eds., *Independence and Revolution in Portuguese-speaking Africa: Aquino de Bragança: Selected Articles and Interviews, 1980-1986* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2019), pp. 149-157 (p. 153).
[8] Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (London and New York: Verso, 2015), pp. 256-257.

South that had been permitted relative withdrawal from the world market during the 1970s by a contracting world-economy now had to be pulled back in. The infamous programmes of structural adjustment (SAPs) were the favoured means of regulating this reintegration and thus restoring world profitability. By the end of the 1980s, at least thirty-six African states had acquiesced to a total of 243 of these adjustment agreements under the supervision of the World Bank and (later) the IMF, as the Washington Consensus gained the status of 'development orthodoxy' across the continent.[9] The formation of the SADC in 1992 should be seen as an organisational counterpart to this rise of neoliberal politics in Africa which foreclosed all hope of that economic viability to which Bragança had referred, at the same time as it offers a more local certificate for the decline in post-independence revolutionary socialist ideals. Interestingly, while the SADC was basically an external creation, thought up in Brussels by a British managing director who sold it to the regional heads of state in order to gift himself a job upon retirement from the EEC,[10] there have been several attempts to uphold an image of the organisation as an autochthonous creation of the original frontline states. As Margaret C. Lee argues, this move to promote the SADC as a 'homegrown African initiative' is nothing more than a ploy on the part of its member states to lend the organisation greater regional and international credibility, thereby allowing 'Western governments and international financial institutions to feel they are supporting a legitimate indigenous entity'.[11] Set against the backdrop of neoliberalism's long march to global hegemony, the SADC's insistence on a primacy of local origins is as bogus as it is revealing of the extent to which localist agendas can still frame the production of goods and circulation of capital across a world-system of relations in which they have by definition been eclipsed.

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[9] Graham Harrison, *Neoliberal Africa: The Impact of Global Social Engineering* (London: Zed Books, 2010), p. 39.
[10] This is a factual anecdote related in Margaret C. Lee, *The Political Economy of Regionalism in Southern Africa* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2003), pp. 48, 49, 71n.10.
[11] Lee, *Political Economy*, p. 49.

Would this world-systemic horizon of economic transition, socialist decline and neoliberalisation help to explain the sudden appearance of specific sets of aesthetic forms during this period in the cultural production of Angola and Mozambique? From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, there is a pronounced trend in Mozambican literary production towards fictional representations of ghosts, spectral effects and gothic narrative techniques. Whereas prior to this period there is only one notable engagement with the gothic thematic — an isolated fragment of Orlando Mendes' episodic novel *Portagem* (1966) — beginning in 1986, and running up until 1990, there is a veritable irruption of spectral forms that can be found across a range of texts including: Mia Couto's *Vozes Anoitecidas* (1986); Suleiman Cassamo's *O Regresso do Morto* (1987); Heliodoro Baptista's *Por Cima de Toda a Folha* (1987); Aldino Muianga's *Xitala Mati* (1987); Lília Momplé's *Ninguém Matou Suhura* (1988); Aníbal Aleluia's *Contos do Fantástico* (1988); Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa's *Orgia dos Loucos* (1990); Elton Rebello's *Nyandayeyo* (1990); and Paulina Chiziane's *Balada de Amor ao Vento* (1990). Although there are texts produced after this period which also engage with a broadly gothic sensibility, such as the spectral staging of history in Mia Couto's novel *O Outro Pé da Sereia* (2006) or the ghost-narrator of João Paulo Borges Coelho's short story 'O Hotel das Duas Portas' (2005), there is nothing like the sort of aesthetic florescence seen between 1986 and 1990, and it thus becomes possible to speak of a rise and decline of spectral forms in Mozambican literature which peaks during the aforementioned four-year period and peters out into individual, heteroclite examples afterwards.

In the Angolan context, there is an analogous outburst of literary expression albeit at a later date and spanning a greater period of activity. Between 1995 and 2013, there is a marked tendency in the country's novelistic production towards dystopian images of apocalypse, ecological crisis, species extinction and the future disintegration of existing modes of social reproduction. Key texts exemplifying this tendency are: Pepetela's *O Desejo*

de Kianda (1995) and *O Quase Fim do Mundo* (2008); José Eduardo Agualusa's *Barroco Tropical* (2009) and *A Vida no Céu* (2013); and Ondjaki's *Os Transparentes* (2012). If at first glance the pattern seems to be less remarkable than in the Mozambican instance, it should suffice to point out that the literary environment that gave rise to the Angolan texts considered here is of a much less propitious nature than the level of organisational support offered to Mozambican writers during the late 1980s. Whereas authors such as Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa and Suleiman Cassamo sprang directly from a fertile constellation of Mozambican literary journals like *Charrua* and *Forja*, and received crucial backing from the prolific Associação dos Escritores Moçambicanos,[12] the literary landscape in Angola since the mid-1990s has been overshadowed by a limited reading public, inflationary book prices and a greater cultural and financial incentive to publish abroad than through domestic channels. Paired with the increasing capacity of online platforms and digital media to satisfy local needs for artistic expression, the restricted opportunities for Angolans to gain monetary reward for their writing have resulted in a concentration of literary celebrity among a select group of persons who are in turn encouraged to supplement their careers with alternative modes of textual production (e.g. journalism in the case of José Eduardo Agualusa).[13] Bearing in mind the changes to the global culture industry that have taken place in the interval, it is therefore possible to posit a relative degree of equivalence between the spectral turn in Mozambique and the dystopian turn in Angola, one which invites extended meditation on the structural similarities between the two cultural phenomena.[14]

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[12] For an indication of the level of creative ferment circulating in Mozambique during this period, see the interview with Marcelo Panguana in Ana Mafalda Leite et al., eds., *Speaking the Postcolonial Nation: Interviews with Writers from Angola and Mozambique* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), pp. 153-172 (especially pp. 156-158).

[13] Indeed, the same point could be made about some of the more successful Mozambican authors, such as Mia Couto. Furthermore, while the same challenges to grassroots publishing apply to the current literary landscape in Mozambique — expensive books, few publishers, increase in popularity of non-literary forms of cultural exchange etc. — these conditions were offset during the 1980s by the fertile support network alluded to above.

[14] A second point of contention is that, while the proliferation of spectral forms in Mozambican literature fits neatly within a demarcated four-year period, the sample of Angolan texts is unconvincingly scattered with one novel produced in 1995 and the rest of the texts clustered at the end of the first decade of the new millennium.

In my focus on spectrality and dystopia I do not mean to suggest that these aesthetic forms are in some way more valuable than the non-spectral or non-dystopian elements of texts produced in Mozambique and Angola between 1986 and 2013. Rather, I have selected these two modes of writing because their specific waves of appearance suggest the presence of a social transformation in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that is intimately bound up with changes and developments at a world-systemic level. Some of the research questions that this thesis seeks to respond to are, therefore: what factors drove literary production towards the figure of the spectre in Mozambique and towards dystopia in Angola? What emerging energies and social contradictions found shape in these generic idioms in ways that existing vocabularies were unable to express? What does the geo-temporal passage from spectrality to dystopia tell us about the history of capitalist development in southern Africa, and about the restructuring of political-economic parameters across the globe?

In attempting to identify an elective affinity between the literature and economy of Portuguese-speaking southern Africa, I have drawn inspiration from Brazilian cultural critic Roberto Schwarz's celebrated analyses of economic dependency and literary form in late-nineteenth-century Brazil. In his famous essay '*As idéias fora do lugar*' [Ideas out of place],[15] Schwarz demonstrates how the anatopic oddities and formal dislocations of the late-nineteenth-century Brazilian realist novel sprang directly from the country's peripheral integration within a world-system of capitalist trade, insofar as the slippage between its

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Although in statistical terms it might appear anomalous, the case for including Pepetela's *O Desejo de Kianda* lies in its paradigmatic relation to these later texts, which, I believe, are more productively understood as a continuation of the dystopian themes introduced by Pepetela over a decade earlier.

[15] I have here translated '*As idéias fora do lugar*' as 'Ideas out of place', against the widely accepted version 'Misplaced ideas', which is also the title of a popular collection of Schwarz's essays first published by Verso in 1992. For a discussion of the problems involved in translating Schwarz's phrase as 'misplaced ideas' — 'misplaced' implying that these ideas could somehow be 'put back again' or 're-found', which fails to capture the structural connotations of Schwarz's use of '*as idéias fora do lugar*' — see Roald W. Sousa's introduction to Roberto Schwarz, *To the Victor, the Potatoes! Literary Form and Social Process in the Beginnings of the Brazilian Realist Novel*, trans. Ronald W. Sousa (Chicago, IL: Haymarket, 2020), pp. x-xi.

'backward' system of slave latifundium and the imported ideals of European liberalism gave rise to a correspondingly disjunctive set of representational devices. While the Brazilian ruling class were compelled by the enlightened culture of their time to champion the principles of free labour and equality before the law, Brazil's incorporation into circum-Atlantic trade networks as an importer of West African slave labour tied them to a plantocratic economic model founded upon the same principles of favour and feudal privilege that the imported liberal ideas were supposed to have overcome, giving rise to a situation of combined and uneven development that could not but form the subject matter for Brazilian cultural production. For Schwarz, Brazilian realism thus emerges as part of what he calls '*o efeito local e opaco de um mecanismo planetário*' [the local and opaque effect of a planetary mechanism], telescoping the movement of world history itself into its very mode of signification.[16] The formal principle of '*volubilidade*' [volubility] in the prose of Machado de Assis was for Schwarz an exemplary instance of this process of world-literary encoding, insofar as it reproduced the structural distortion of liberal ideas at the level of narrative form through the ceaseless oscillation between apparently incommensurate ideas, attitudes, convictions and literary mannerisms. As Schwarz demonstrates in his magisterial study *Um mestre na periferia do capitalism* [A master on the periphery of capitalism] (1990), the contradictory implications of disrespect and self-satisfaction, of the inadmissible and of affront, contained within the rhythm of Machado's prose, telescope or 'accordionise' the contemporary trajectory of the Brazilian ruling class, for where this latter could neither fully absorb nor wholly discard the culture of European liberalism, but was instead forced to acclimatise it to an institution of slavery whose reliance on forms of personal domination at once voided its claims to public legitimacy, so does Machado's narrative volubility

[16] Roberto Schwarz, *Ao vencedor as batatas: Forma literária e processo social nos inícios do romance brasileiro* (São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 2000), p. 30.

capriciously consume and subversively contrast a disparity of literary styles and intellectual positions in a way that undermines their validity within nineteenth-century Brazilian society.[17] This is then the sense in which Schwarz, in his earlier work on the importing of the novel to Brazil, spoke of literary forms as '*o abstrato de relações sociais determinadas*' [the abstract of determined social relations], and pointed towards a literary criticism in which '*a contingência da origem geográfica*' [the contingency of geographical origin] would be replaced by '*os pressupostos sociológicos das formas*' [the sociological presuppositions of the forms].[18]

In a similar vein, this thesis seeks to identify and evaluate the social contradictions emerging from the transition to neoliberal capitalism in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa through a reading of the reproduction of spectral and dystopian aesthetic forms in the region's literary production. A study of the '*pressupostos sociológicos*' of these literary trends will then reveal a structural homology between the two traditions that suggests comparison with texts produced at analogous yet historically specific moments throughout the capitalist world-system, such as the 'magical realist' fiction of mid-twentieth century Latin America. Just as Schwarz had discerned a global geography of uneven development in the formal procedures of the Brazilian realist novel, whereby the local specificity of Brazil's peripheral integration into nineteenth century international capitalism was found to have a direct literary analogue in the narrative volubility of Machado de Assis, so will this thesis approach the turn towards spectrality and dystopia in Mozambican and Angolan literature as a formal registration of the neo-liberalisation of southern Africa. Recent work at the intersection of world-systems analysis and materialist theories of world literature has drawn from Schwarz's work to theorise an aesthetics of peripherality that is determined not by its

[17] Roberto Schwarz, *Um mestre na periferia do capitalismo: Machado de Assis* (São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 2000), p. 41.
[18] Roberto Schwarz, *Ao vencedor*, p. 51.

geographical remoteness from the centres of capitalist power, but rather by its incorporation into the capitalist world-system precisely as peripheral. In his reading of the curiously dislocated and incongruous prose style of José de Alencar, Schwarz had spoken of '*a feição exata com que a História mundial, na forma estruturada e cifrada de seus resultados locais […] passa para dentro da escrita, em que agora influi pela via interna*' [the exact form with which world History, in the structured and ciphered form of its local effects, passes inside of the writing, which it now influences internally].[19] More recently, the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) have sought to build on this insight by resituating the problem of world literature as '*the literature of the modern capitalist world-system*'.[20] If the initial adoption of world-systems analysis in world-literary studies was less interested in 'the intersections between literature and economic history' than it was with applying macro-economic concepts such as '*longue durée*' in a revisionist attempt to reshape literary geography 'according to a more "global" or "transnational" frame', then the WReC will rather reverse the emphasis.[21] In their monograph *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (2015), the collective maps out a theory of world literature as determined in the last instance by the economic process of capitalist modernisation, which will be differentially inflected according to the particular literary text's mediated position within the world-system's axial division of labour. As such, Schwarz emerges as a central interlocutor for the WReC, who speak of 'extend[ing] Roberto Schwarz's argument about Brazilian literature to the larger context of world literature' by focusing on the various forms of disjunctive, incongruous, catachrestic or more broadly 'irrealist' aesthetic strategies that arise in

[19] Roberto Schwarz, *Ao vencedor*, p. 30.
[20] Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), p. 15, emphasis original.
[21] Matthew Eatough, 'The Literary History of World-Systems, II: World Literature and Deep Time', *Literature Compass* 12.11 (2015), pp. 603-614 (p. 604). Pascale Casanova had also problematised this methodological borrowing when she wrote that it is not enough, in world-literary studies, merely 'to import economic theories of globalization into the literary universe'. See Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. xi.

peripheral societies as an artistic response to the local experience of combined and uneven development.[22] Much in keeping with this line of argument, this thesis will draw from the tradition of world-systems analysis, as well as from the WReC's theory of 'world-literature', in its attempt to read the spectral and dystopian turns in Mozambican and Angolan fiction as irrealist registrations of the transition to neoliberal capitalism. While the texts I have selected for analysis here may initially appear to be preoccupied with one or the other locally specific aspect of this process of national transition, the irrealist nature of their forms promotes comparison between them, as well as with other texts produced at similar points across the long spiral of capitalist history. This is the sense in which the WReC speak of world-literature as comprising not only works 'whose narrative structure self-consciously encapsulates the structural relations of the world-system', but also 'those texts whose content, in stark contrast, is wholly rooted in a singular regional or national context, yet whose form nonetheless reflects their position within the world-system, and which might thus be productively compared to other texts from countries experiencing homologous relations'.[23] Departing from the latter of these insights, the wager of this thesis is that spectrality is to Mozambique as dystopia is to Angola.

Peter J. Maurits has argued that the turn towards spectrality in Mozambican literature is the moment at which it becomes possible to speak of a properly Mozambican ghost story.[24] Deploying Franco Moretti's triangulated formula for world-literary evolution — in which 'foreign forms' fuse with 'local materials' and 'local forms' in a cultural 'compromise' to

[22] Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development*, p. 97. For an assessment of the role of 'combined and uneven development' in Schwarz's work, see Justin Rosenburg's introduction to Roberto Schwarz, Nicholas Brown and Justin Rosenburg, 'National adequation and critical originality in the work of Antonio Candido', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 34.2 (2021), pp. 207-227 (pp. 207-209).
[23] Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development*, p. 97.
[24] Peter J. Maurits, 'The Mozambican Ghost Story: Global Genre or Local Form?', in Jernej Habjan and Fabienne Imlinger, eds., *Globalizing Literary Genres: Literature, History, Modernity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 180-192.

produce a world literature that is both 'one, and unequal'[25] — Maurits argues that the literary figure of the ghost was imported to Mozambique along with the novel and the short story under Portuguese colonialism where it was syncretised with pre-existing forms and modes of experience to produce a specifically Mozambican variant of the world-literary ghost story genre.[26] Tracing out a history of gothic forms in Mozambican literature, from the ghostly motifs in the romantic poetry of Campos de Oliveira and the haunting episode in Orlando Mendes's *Portagem* through to the novelistic fictions of the present day, Maurits singles out the late 1980s and early 1990s as a signal point where the Mozambican ghost story coalesces into a recognisable generic *topos* that aesthetically processes 'the withering away of the socialist state' and the transition to free market, neoliberal capitalism that was underway at that time.[27] The contradiction here is that, while the development of spectral forms in Mozambican literature is understood by Maurits to have occurred through a global process of cultural contact with European colonialism and 'Western formal imperialism',[28] the social circumstances to which this aesthetic register responds and which constitute the determining preconditions of its formative moment are limited to changes in state structures at the national level. If the emergence of the Mozambican ghost story is the product of a long history of capitalist competition between imperialist nation-states for profit through the exploitation of human labour and natural resources, might not the social realities registered by this form of artistic expression also exceed the arbitrary parameters of that historico-politico-legal entity known as 'Mozambique'? As was demonstrated through the optic of the SADC, the extent to which the period of socialist decline in Mozambique can be understood via exclusive reference to nationally bounded social phenomena is as contentious as it is

[25] Franco Moretti, 'Conjectures on World Literature', in *Distant Reading* (London and New York: Verso, 2013), pp. 43-62.
[26] Peter J. Maurits, 'The Mozambican Ghost Story', p. 181.
[27] Peter J. Maurits, 'The Mozambican Ghost Story', pp. 183, 188-189.
[28] Peter J. Maurits, 'The Mozambican Ghost Story', p. 181.

fundamentally mystificatory. The challenge for the interpretation of spectral aesthetics in Mozambican literature is then to specify how the macrolevel restructuring of the world market's political economy functions at the microlevel of literary strategy and narrative technique.

In a similar vein, the dominant reading of dystopia in Angolan fiction has tended to treat its projected images of social disintegration as a mere passive indication of the country's transition from Marxist-Leninist utopian ideals to neoliberal disillusionment. In her periodisation of the shift from the more rapturous narrative fictions of the anti-colonial struggle towards the literary scepticism of the 1990s, Ana Maria Mão-de-Ferro Martinho speaks of a 'disenchantment process' in Angolan literature 'that is under evaluation from a dystopian perspective' and that has as its artistic impulse the need 'to deconstruct certain ideological principles'.[29] This line of argument has been reproduced throughout the critical scholarship on Angolan literature to become the conventional mode of reading. Laura Cavalcante Padilha, for instance, has read the motif of collapsing buildings in Pepetela's novel *O Desejo de Kianda* as a metaphor for the collapse of the country's '*projeto político-ideológico*' [political-ideological project], and Grant Hamilton, echoing this sentiment, has characterised Pepetela's text as 'an exemplification of the corruption of the socialist principles that underscored Angola's Marxist-led anti-colonial revolution of 1975'.[30] However, in spite of their persuasive brand of historical symmetry, these readings strike me as incomplete for two reasons. Firstly, they are politically deterministic in that dystopia here merely functions to reflect its socio-economic context and validate political conclusions made in advance of the reading. Indeed, these readings run into problems where they misprize the

[29] Ana Maria Mão-de-Ferro Martinho, 'Utopian Eyes and Dystopian Writings in Angolan Literature', *Research in African Literatures* 38.1 (2007), pp. 46-53 (p. 50).
[30] Laura Cavalcante Padilha, *Novos Pactos, Outras Ficções: Ensaios sobre Literaturas Afro-Luso-Brasileiras* (Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS, 2002), p. 41; Grant Hamilton, 'Pepetela's Proposal: Desire and Anarchy in *The Return of the Water-Spirit*', *African Identities* 11 (2013), pp. 343-352 (p. 345).

paradox of literary form itself, which, in the manner of Fredric Jameson's political horizon, 'brings into being that very situation to which it is also, at one and the same time, a reaction [...] generating and producing its own context in the same moment of emergence in which it steps back from it'.[31] For, to interpret dystopia as the mere negative expression of a failed utopian nationalism is at once to assume a reflective status for the literary text and reify its social ground. Secondly, and not entirely unrelated, the move to read dystopia under the sign of the Angolan nation-state overlooks the fact that dystopian forms can be found proliferating across a range of world-literary texts during this period whose own socio-economic contexts differ markedly from that of Angola's.[32] What will need to be determined here are then both the semi-autonomous narrative properties of dystopia in the Angolan context and its structural relation to global economic developments and broader world-literary trends.

The central claims put forth in this thesis as a response to the extant scholarship on the spectral and dystopian turns in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa are therefore easily stated. Away from a restricted focus on the trajectory of the post-independence Marxist-Leninist state, I argue that the upswing in these two genres of writing rather functions to register a world-systemic horizon that both surpasses and includes more locally determined, national realities. While the texts under consideration here undoubtedly have a great deal to say about the locally specific aspects of the transition to neoliberal capitalism in the two nation-states, the fact that this transition was itself symptomatic of a much larger process of social reorganisation suggests that an equally expansive frame of reference is needed to fully

[31] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (2002 [1981]), p. 67 (sentence order rearranged).

[32] For example, in neighbouring South Africa, where a significant number of apocalyptic fictions have been produced since 1994 depicting the future demise of the post-apartheid state. See Michael Titlestad, 'Future Tense: The Problem of South African Apocalyptic Fiction', *English Studies in Africa* 58.1 (2015), pp. 30-41 (p. 34). However, as I will argue in the conclusion through the prism of 'irrealist aesthetics', the notable departure from realist conventions in post-independence Angolan fiction also bears a more global comparison comparison with similar developments throughout the world-system.

comprehend the depth of these texts' structures of feeling.[33] The patterned repetition of spectral and dystopian aesthetic forms in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa occurred at a time of heightened capitalisation, which saw the region subjected to newly expropriative forms of accumulation and ecological enclosure via integration into a reconstellated world-system headed by neoliberal finance capital. This extraterritorial network of processes and flows transcends the bounding limits of the pluriethnic nation-state even while including them as significant and determining factors. The spectral and dystopian turns in Mozambique and Angola respectively emerged as local responses to a global recomposition of capital and class, not as self-evident indices for the workings of national transition.

1.1. Neoliberalisation

The time lag between the spikes in spectral and dystopian fictions, on the other hand, limns a cleavage in the economic history of southern Africa in which the process of neoliberal restructuring is bifurcated into two very different phases of the region's capitalist development. The same decade that witnessed the proliferation of spectral aesthetic forms in Mozambican literature was a period of primitive or original accumulation in which a new national bourgeoisie was established in alliance with multinational capital through a dismantling of the Marxist-Leninist state apparatus and a fresh wave of expropriations in the rural areas. The necessary preconditions for the creation of a domestic capitalist class in Mozambique were violently introduced under Portuguese colonial occupation with the mass dispossessing of agricultural populations and the regulated formation of a rural semi-

[33] 'Structure of feeling' is a term used by Raymond Williams to describe the cultural expression of the changes to experience that occur as a result of the capitalist modernisation of societies, and will be discussed in a more extended form in the analysis of Mozambican literary texts offered in chapter two.

proletariat partially reliant on wage-labour and the cash-nexus for its means of subsistence.[34] Due to Portugal's semi-peripheral status of economic dependency in the capitalist world-system, its claims to the human and material resources of Mozambique were subordinated to stronger regional forms of colonial capital, and the colony was accordingly integrated into a southern African sub-system dominated by South African mining capital for which it effectively functioned as a rentier state supplying cheap semi-proletarian migrant labour for coal and gold mining complexes at Witwatersrand and the Transvaal.[35] In order to exert downward pressure on the price of labour-power and thus maximise the extraction of surplus-value, the Portuguese colonial regime and its South African partners sought to keep these semi-proletarian migrant labourers tied to the land through redistributive modes of social reproduction that would externalise the costs of maintaining the workforce onto gendered labour and the *machamba* [family plot] instead of the infrastructural circuits of a national or regional capitalism.[36] This process of semi-proletarianisation functioned to strengthen the system of migrant labour recruitment even while weakening the acceleration of capitalist development, insofar as the geographically dispersed nature of the workforce as well as its reliance on pre-capitalist forms of social reproduction created a barrier to the formation of labour organisations such as trade unions through which workers might articulate their demands.[37] As Immanuel Wallerstein has shown, the semi-proletarian household typically

[34] Bridget O'Laughlin, 'A Questão Agrária em Moçambique', *Estudos Moçambicanos* 3 (1981), pp. 9-32.
[35] Ruth First, 'Subdesenvolvimento e Trabalho Migratório', *Estudos Moçambicanos* 1 (1980), pp. 2-8; Ruth First et al., *O Mineiro Moçambicano: Um Estudo sobre a Exportação de Mão de Obra em Inhambane* (Recife: Editora UFPE, 2015 [1977]).
[36] Hans Abrahamsson and Anders Nilsson, *Mozambique: The Troubled Transition: From Socialist Construction to Free Market Capitalism* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1995), p. 21; Marc Wuyts, *Camponeses e economia rural em Moçambique* (Maputo: Centro de Estudos Africanos, 1978).
[37] See Claude Meillassoux's observation that the proletarianisation of indigenous populations in Africa characteristically 'feeds off the pre-capitalist sectors through the mechanism of primitive accumulation — with the contradictory results of both perpetuating and destroying at the same time', in *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). For a discussion of the ways in which the system of migrant labour recruitment in southern Africa contributed to a weakening of the trade union sector and an upturn in alternative forms of worker resistance (e.g. desertion), see the section on 'Control and Resistance on the Mines' in Eddie Webster, ed., *Essays in Southern African Labour History* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1978); and also Ruth First's observation that: 'Contracted migrant labour keeps the

acts as a controlling mechanism in capitalist commodity chains that neutralises the bargaining power of working classes and lowers the minimum acceptable wage threshold by spreading household reproduction over a mixed pool of income-generating activities such as pre- or non-capitalist forms of reproductive work.[38] In Mozambique, this moment of formal subsumption marks the preliminary stage of primitive accumulation in which the expropriation of agricultural populations is met with the superimposition of capitalist wage-labour onto the pre-existing labour process.

With the overthrow of the colonial regime in 1975, Mozambique's newly independent Marxist-Leninist vanguard party sought to remedy the production crisis of Portuguese colonialism through a centralised economic programme that advocated the marketed surplus of peasant household production and the state-subsidised renewal of basic agricultural services in collectivised rural villages, thereby promoting the very redistributive forms of social reproduction on which the colonists had relied for the accumulation of capital.[39] But as the large-scale devastation of the civil war during the mid-1980s precipitated shortages in everything from consumer goods to fuel and medicines, and further caused a crippling decline in the country's industrial output through a war-time reduction in imported raw materials, the Mozambican government was forced to renounce its programme of economic planification and conform to the reformist demands of the World Bank and the IMF.[40] In

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African worker in a permanently weak bargaining position. He has no option but to accept the terms of the prescribed contract form; and there is no way in which the African worker can use a period of labour shortage to ask for higher wages', in Ruth First, 'The gold of migrant labour', in Don Pinnock, ed., *Voices of Liberation: Ruth First*, vol. 2 (Pretoria: HSRC Publishers, 1997), pp. 155-185 (p. 177).

[38] Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism with Capitalist Civilization* (London and New York: Verso, 1983), pp. 27-28; 'The Modern World-System and Evolution', *Journal of World-Systems Research* 1.19 (1995), pp. 1-15 (pp. 5-6); *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 35. See also Wilma A. Dunaway's discussion of 'resource pooling' and gender inequality in 'The Double Register of History: Situating the Forgotten Woman and Her Household in Capitalist Commodity Chains', *Journal of World-Systems Research* 7.1 (2001), pp. 2-29.

[39] Samora Machel, *O Partido e as Classes Trabalhadoras Moçambicanos na Edificação da Democracia Popular* (Maputo: Departamento do Trabalho Ideológico do Frelimo, 1977).

[40] Joseph Hanlon, *Mozambique: Who Calls the Shots?* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 113-122.

1987, the ruling party Frelimo accordingly announced an 'Economic Rehabilitation Programme' (PRE) that would pave the way for the transition to neoliberal capitalism by stipulating the sort of devaluations and deregulations that arrived with structural adjustment proper over the next two decades.[41] However, the redoubled tide of expropriations and land enclosures ushered in by structural adjustment toward the end of the 1980s rendered the pre-existing colonial model of capital accumulation untenable without a dangerous intensification of class tensions and workers' resistance, for the historical legacy of Portuguese colonialism left the country with a capital infrastructure incapable of coping with the rising mass of rural dispossessed and the total decimation of the means for redistributive peasant household production. While this conjuncture goes some way to explaining the rise of the neoliberal aid economy in Mozambique, which Joseph Hanlon has rightly identified as a form of 'recolonisation',[42] it also follows that a further proletarianisation of the workforce was needed in order to compensate for this growing 'liberation' of the peasants from the land, just as a new national bourgeoisie was required to valorise the increased supply of labour-power and mediate the influx of multinational capital.[43] Marx described primitive accumulation as the

[41] Marc Wuyts has argued that the announcement of the PRE in Mozambique was made necessary by two interrelated social factors: 1) the internal need to overcome the decline in the country's industrial production and the devastation caused by the project of destabilisation launched by apartheid South Africa against Mozambique; and 2) the external pressures exerted on Mozambique by the international financial community in response to the country defaulting on its IMF loans. As Wuyts makes clear, however, the fact that the PRE made significant concessions to the neoliberal agendas of the World Bank and the IMF does in no way prove the '*inerente superioridade das «forças do mercado*' [inherent superiority of "market forces"], as some Western economists were wont to argue at the time. Rather, the PRE was born out of the severity of an economic crisis that was itself fundamentally bound up in regional sub-systemic relations and global geopolitical tensions. To read the economic reforms stipulated by the PRE as some sort of pronouncement on the inevitability of the transition to capitalism in newly independent socialist African states like Mozambique is to overlook, on the one hand, the practical viability of their programmes of economic planification, and, on the other, the persistence of modes of non-capitalist, peasant household production within these states well into and alongside the process of capitalisation. See Marc Wuyts, 'Gestão Económica e Política de Reajustamento em Moçambique', *Estudos Moçambicanos* 8 (1990), pp. 97-124.

[42] Hanlon, *Mozambique*, pp. 1-6. See also the chapter on Mozambique in John S. Saul's *Recolonization and Resistance in Southern Africa in the 1990s* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1993), pp. 57-88.

[43] The Mozambican government's crushed attempts at post-independence economic planification thus delayed but did not significantly differ from the same process of capitalist class formation that Frantz Fanon identified in the newly independent African states of the 1960s. This emergent African national bourgeoisie, wrote Fanon, 'will insist that all the big foreign companies should pass through its hands, whether these companies wish to keep on their connexions with the country or to open it up [...] Seen through its eyes, its mission has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists, prosaically, of being the transmission line between the nation and a

historical process by which the producers are dispossessed of the means of production and must confront an emergent class of capitalists in the price-setting marketplace as a precondition to realising their labour and attaining the means of subsistence.[44] In these terms, as Carlos Nuno Castel-Branco has argued, the history of capital accumulation in Mozambique from colonialism to structural adjustment is almost identical to the Marxist conception of primitive capitalist accumulation.[45] Indeed, given the historical affinity between novelistic literature and the emergence of the capitalist bourgeoisie,[46] it is a telling fact that the novel would not become a dominant mode of literary expression in Mozambique until the late 1990s after this process of primitive accumulation was complete, whereas the Mozambican literary texts selected for analysis in this thesis are predominantly pieces of short fiction.

The period spanning the upturn in dystopian fictions in Angola, on the other hand, corresponds to a later phase of capitalist development in which the unimpeded penetration of the local market by multinational capitalists seeking to profit off the country's lucrative reserves of oil and precious minerals gave rise to the concentration of wealth among a select group of governmental kleptocrats while the majority of the population suffered from an

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capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the masque of neo-colonialism. The national bourgeoisie will be quite content with the role of the Western bourgeoisie's business agent, and it will play its part without any complexes in a most dignified manner'. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (London and New York: Penguin, 1990 [1961]), p. 122. For a more detailed analysis of the relationship between structural adjustment and the formation of the African national bourgeoisie, see Patrick Bond, *Looting Africa: The Economics of Exploitation* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2006), pp. 95-110.

[44] Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London and New York: Penguin, 1990 [1867]), pp. 874-875.

[45] Carlos Nuno Castel-Branco, 'Lógica Histórica do Modelo de Acumulaçao de Capital em Moçambique', in Luís de Brito, Carlos Nuno Castel-Branco, Sérgio Chichava, Salvador Forquilha and António Francisco, eds., *Desafios para Moçambique 2017* (Maputo: Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos, 2017), pp. 257-301 (p. 259).

[46] The classic work on the relationship between the novel and the emergence of the capitalist bourgeoisie is, of course, Georg Lukács' *Theory of the Novel* (1920), in which he argues that, while the epic is the form that corresponds to pre-capitalist or 'integrated' civilisations for which totality is still immanently present, the novel is 'the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, yet which still thinks in terms of totality' (p. 56). See Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel* (London: Merlin, 1971).

inadequate provision of social welfare and from manifold human rights violations.[47] As in Mozambique, the civil war in Angola was part of a destabilisation campaign led by apartheid South Africa and the United States that manipulated intra-ethnic tensions in the two states through a brutal right-wing insurgency intended to fabricate a proxy conflict for Cold War hostilities.[48] This international assault on the two Marxist-Leninist regimes in southern Africa should not be disentangled from the broader project to draw their planned economies into a deregulated global market spearheaded by neoliberal finance. In Angola, sharp increases in military spending and dwindling oil revenues in the mid-1980s allowed the IMF and other donor agencies to sweep in under the aegis of the European Economic Community's Lomé Convention[49] and disable any remaining political resistance to the neoliberal agendas of international financial institutions, thus heralding the arrival of structural adjustment through a liquidation of the local resources for economic self-determination.[50] Yet while these internationally funded civil wars did indeed establish the degree of destruction needed for the subsumption of Portuguese-speaking southern Africa into the neoliberal world order, it should also be noted that the policies of privatisation and market deregulation mandated by the SAPs conversely functioned to regulate the perpetuation of internecine warfare. In structurally adjusted societies stripped of all political-economic self-determinacy and yoked to primary product export models founded on the Ricardian ideology of 'comparative advantage', national economic actors are unable to enrich themselves through the purchase of

[47] For a comprehensive account of social developments in Angola since the dawn of the neoliberal era, see Ricardo Soares de Oliveira, *Magnificent and Beggar Land: Angola Since the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[48] William Minter, *Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1991).
[49] Singed in Lomé, Togo in 1975, the Lomé Convention is a 'development-assistance package' which is designed to provide essential aid and investment opportunities for African countries by increasing trade with Europe.
[50] David Sogge, 'Angola: Surviving against Rollback and Petrodollars', in Joanna Macrae and Anthony Zwi, eds., *War & Hunger: Rethinking International Response to Complex Emergencies* (London: Zed Books, 1994), pp. 92-110.

labour-power and instead must gain access to state power as a precondition to the accumulation of wealth. Thus, in the Angolan context, the war over state power was at the same time a war for admittance to a system of corrupt administrative mechanisms that enabled a governmental elite to profit off the country's natural resources via complicity with the interests of foreign companies and international donor agencies.[51] In the words of Silvia Federici, 'structural adjustment generates war and war, in turn, completes the work of structural adjustment'.[52]

The ramifications of this neoliberal war machine in the Angolan context were that the infrastructural capacity to provide the local population with the means of subsistence and basic social welfare services was roundly demolished by the escalation of armed conflict in such a way as to render a whole class of citizens effectively 'trapped in poverty',[53] while the massive influx of global capital flows engendered by the deregulation of Angola's oil sector in turn led to a concentration of the country's wealth within a new oil *nomenklatura* that siphoned off large amounts of the national oil revenue for its own private gain.[54] Yet, as James Ferguson has pointed out, insofar as the 1990s saw the further financialisation of Angolan oil production and a shift towards increasingly deep-water offshore extraction projects that use foreign workers contracted by parastatal corporations, the extractives industry in Angola is now characterised by a situation in which 'neither the oil nor most of the money it brings in ever touches Angolan soil'.[55] The pattern of class stratification that

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[51] Tony Hodges, *Angola: Anatomy of an Oil State*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, Oxford: James Currey, 2004), pp. 40-46. The turning point, according to Hodges' estimate, seems to have been the second party congress of the MPLA in 1985 'which, while not questioning the state's role in the economy as such, acknowledged that the system was not working well and advocated reforms that would give more prominence to market mechanisms (p. 44). However, as Hodges points out, it is not until the second half of the 1990s that a more accentuated widening of social inequality takes place (p. 41).

[52] Silvia Federici, 'War, Globalization and Reproduction' in *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012), pp. 76-84 (p. 77).

[53] Inge Tvedten and Gilson Lázaro, 'Urban poverty and inequality in Luanda, Angola', *CMI Brief* 15 (2016), pp. 1-4 (p. 4).

[54] Hodges, *Angola*, pp. 44-45.

[55] James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 35, 194-210.

emerged from Angola's encounter with structural adjustment and civil war was therefore one of tripartite asymmetry in which an impoverished majority of Angolan citizens denied the basic means of subsistence by a neoliberal economic model founded on privatisation and the free movement of capital became structurally subordinated to a rentier governmental elite who are in turn bankrolled by an absent oligarchy of multinational corporations. In contrast to the 1980s in Mozambique, in which the sedimentation of a new national bourgeoisie succeeded in establishing the preconditions required for the subsequent transition to neoliberal capitalism, the situation in Angola from the mid-1990s onwards has been a period in which the widening class inequalities, institutionalised corruption and intensified ecological violence attendant on this very transition have been fully brought to the fore.

1.2. Periodisation

The arc of this thesis will map this rise of neoliberal economics in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa through a historiography of its dominant literary forms. A leading assumption of this investigation is that the varying sets of dialectical images, affective modes and representational strategies proper to each of the spectral and dystopian turns bear an elective affinity to the social modalities of their respective historical moments. The reproduction of spectral motifs of ghostliness and haunting in the Mozambican literary texts of the 1980s, for instance, corresponds directly to the feelings of loss, the paucity of life and the trauma of coercion that accompany any period of primitive capitalist accumulation; while the projected anxieties over social disintegration and the dystopic images of ecological catastrophe prominent in Angolan novels since the mid 1990s offer an equally powerful registration of the financial volatility and fragile economic growth attendant on situations of neoliberal 'oil shock'. Tracing out an incremental gradient of capitalist development across

the two nation-states of Portuguese-speaking southern Africa, the passage from spectrality to dystopia is thus at once also a transition from dispossession to proliferation, from a dearth of wealth to concentrated wealth, from flickering presence to the cluttered metropolis and — in a dialectical inversion — from vanishing forms of sociality (the commons) to capitalist individualism and bourgeois property relations. This regional trajectory — at once sequential and unstable, gradational yet destructive — is indicated by the conjunctive function of the comma in the title of this thesis, which links the spectral and dystopian turns together in a way that both separates and conjoins them.

However, to begin to speak of southern Africa, let alone of Portuguese-speaking southern Africa, is already to presuppose a long and violent historical process whose cyclical rhythms of expansion and contraction are intimately bound up with economic developments at the macro-level of the *longue durée* of world history. While the previous section outlined the local path towards neoliberal transition from independence to structural adjustment in the two Portuguese-speaking nation-states of southern Africa, it will therefore also be necessary, before embarking on readings of individual literary texts, to take a longer, periodising perspective on the run up to these events so as to set in place the broader historical framework within which these texts take shape and to which they respond.

Immanuel Wallerstein and Sérgio Vieira have argued that it only became possible to speak of a region of 'southern Africa' as a result of the worldwide political upheavals attendant on the Great Depression of 1873-1897, in which British world hegemony entered into a period of terminal crisis that gave rise to a long struggle for succession between the United States and Germany only definitively decided in 1945 after two catastrophic world wars.[56] Symptomatic of this transitional conjuncture, in which the relative decline in British

[56] Immanuel Wallerstein and Sérgio Vieira, 'Historical Development of the Region in the Context of the Evolving World-System', in Sérgio Vieira, William G. Martin and Immanuel Wallerstein, *How Fast the Wind? Southern Africa, 1975-2000* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992) pp. 3-15 (p. 3). All further references are given after quotations in the main body of the text.

power combined with generalised world-economic stagnation, was the so-called 'scramble for Africa' of 1884-1885, which represented a preemptive attempt at economic enclosure that pitted colonial European powers against each other in the race to secure access to Africa's labour and resources, in hubristic contempt of the interests of those indigenous to the continent. The area of what is now called southern Africa was singled out during this inter-imperialist competition for its large reserves of carbon and mineral wealth (coal, gold, oil, diamond, copper) and by the size of the existing white settler population. Beginning with this periodising event, Wallerstein and Vieira propose to tell the history of the region via successive Kondratieff waves: 'the downturn from 1873-1897; the upturn from 1897-1913/20; the downturn from 1913/20-1945; the upturn from 1945-1967/73; the downturn since then' (5).

If the first B-phase saw the creation of the very concept of southern Africa through imperialist invasion and the drawing up of protectionist legislation, then the subsequent A-phase, which runs from the turn of the century through to the First World War, coincided with the British-led project of establishing and consolidating the political and material infrastructure necessary to exploit the region, such as a formal-labour recruitment structure (7). The ensuing inter-war B-phase, however, saw a radical revision of the region's political economy. With the world-economy again wracked by cyclical stagnation, the two Portuguese colonies of the region — Angola and Mozambique — began to weaken ties with South Africa and colonial Rhodesia to protect their own economic interests, while a world agricultural depression forced South Africa itself to draw inwards and reduce its migrant labour recruitment from other regional states in order to placate the exacerbated plight of its white Afrikaner farmers (8). When the post-1945 upturn occurred in the world-economy, 'South Africa was in a good position to try to create the "region" of southern Africa with itself as a now clearly semi-peripheral power' (9), which it successfully achieved in spite of

the mounting intra-regional calls for decolonisation from black nationalist movements, as well as globally from initiatives such as the Bandung Conference and the Group of 77 (10). As the United States consolidated its position as the world-system's new hegemonic power, the three settler-dominated zones of southern Africa — the Republic of South Africa, colonial Rhodesia, and the Portuguese-dominated states — were forced into a de facto alliance that insured them against the threat of the Marxist-inspired independence campaigns that were making headway across the continent. As a result, the region of southern Africa became 'an economic reality in a way that it had never been before' (11). But the overthrow of the Portuguese dictatorship and the victory of the anti-colonial movements in Angola and Mozambique in 1974-1975 transformed the political economy of the region once more, dovetailing with the commencement of the Kondratieff B-phase that signalled the start of the period of global economic stagnation in which neoliberalism would become ascendant, the local modalities of which were detailed at some length in the previous section.

This world-systemic perspective on the history of southern Africa, in which the transition from Marxist-Leninist planned economy to free market, neoliberal capitalism in Mozambique and Angola is presented as only the latest sub-cycle of a phase of regional history that stretches back (at least) to the Great Depression of 1873-1897, informs the analytical apparatus of this thesis, through which the texts of the spectral turn and the dystopian turn are to be situated and understood. The valences of this more expansive approach are twofold, and both comparative. On the one hand, it allows me to read Mozambican and Angolan literatures outside of the parameters of the (post-)colonial nation-state in a way that highlights similar trajectories in the history of both without forfeiting the insights to be gleaned from a particular study of the iterations of either. On the other, it understands the social realities to which these literatures respond, and which they take up in aesthetic form, to have been shaped and determined by global economic forces that have their

own patterned history of expansion and contraction, thus suggesting comparison between Portuguese-language southern African literatures and other texts produced at analogous yet historically specific points throughout the world-system, such as in mid-twentieth century Latin America, where writers responded to the waning of socialist politics with a literary experimentalism comparable in its use of supernatural and fantastic aesthetic forms with the spectral and dystopian turns in Mozambique and Angola. While the course taken here is largely restricted to the former of these claims,[57] it is my hope that by making explicit this more global perspective at the outset — which, in any case, is always implicit in the readings that follow — this thesis might contribute to the growing body of scholarship which is interested in world-literary responses to historical capitalism, and which is itself spread globally across a wide range of disciplinary fields, geographical locations and ethno-linguistic configurations, in opposition to the various barriers constructed by the neoliberal academy that would seek to entrench top-down, marketised forms of academic entrepreneurship and discourage collective-based and non-hierarchical knowledge production.[58]

In this sense, I follow the example of recent world-systems approaches to world literature, of which the WReC's 2015 collaborative monograph is a paradigmatic example. The work of the WReC, whose influence can be felt throughout the pages that follow, is instructive inasmuch as it pays close attention to the ways in which literary production, above all from the peripheries and semi-peripheries, will tendentially respond to and mediate the combined unevenness of global capitalism at the level of aesthetic form through the use of fantastic, gothic or more broadly irrealist representational techniques. This process of

[57] The homology between Portuguese-language southern African fiction and Latin American 'magical realism' will be dealt with in a more extensive form in the concluding chapter of this thesis.
[58] On the crisis of the humanities and academic labour in the neoliberal university, as well as on the connection between collective, self-organised modes of knowledge production and emancipatory politics, see Warwick Research Collective (WReC), 'Collectivity and Crisis in the Long Twentieth Century', *Modern Language Quarterly* 81.4 (2020), pp. 465-489.

'registration', however, is not to be understood as a mere elective choice on the part of the individual writer, but rather as a more or less reflexive response to the social conditions of historical capitalism, which encircle us all. A staple of Schwarz's work on Brazilian realism is that Brazil's insertion into world market after independence as a 'backward' slave-owning society, condemned to pursue liberal ideals of equality and bourgeois progress that remained structurally out of reach, acted as the '*matriz prática*' [practical matrix] within which all Brazilian culture of the period was produced, and to which it attempted to respond.[59] However, while Schwarz is emphatic in arguing that these 'misplaced' bourgeois liberal ideas furnished the material upon which literary form was set to work, he also argues that '*[o] escritor pode não saber disso, nem precisa para usá-Ias*' [the writer may well not know this, nor does he need to in order to use them].[60] The WReC, expanding Schwarz's insight, write that 'the world-system will *necessarily* be discernible in any modern literary work, since the world-system exists unforgoably as the matrix within which all modern literature takes shape and comes into being'.[61] For this reason, the WReC insist on hyphenating 'world literature' as 'world-literature', thereby underscoring the fact that the relationship between world literature and the capitalist world-system is a necessary and co-productive one, not arbitrary or discretional, an argument they state in programmatic form as follows:

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[59] On the concept of '*matriz prática*', which is roughly synonymous with the idea of an economic 'base', though without the economistic and deterministic way in which the latter of these terms was deployed in an earlier, 'vulgar' tradition of Marxist thinking, see Roberto Schwarz, *Um mestre na periferia do capitalismo*, pp. 25-32. I would argue that a counterpart term, analogous to the idea of a cultural 'superstructure', can be found in a long footnote towards the end of *Ao vencedor as batatas*. Here, Schwarz writes that his purpose in this latter book — the first part of his study of Machado, with *Um mestre* comprising the second, and *Duas meninas* (1997) serving as a sort of companion volume — was to study '*a formação de um complexo temático e formal que seja tanto observado como coerente*' [the formation of a thematic and formal complex that would be both observed and coherent] (p. 128, n. 33). It seems to me that this notion of a '*complexo temático e formal*' relates to that of a '*matriz prática*' as the concept of a cultural superstructure does to that of the economic base.

[60] Roberto Schwarz, *Ao vencedor*, p. 29.

[61] Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), p. 20, emphasis original. See also Nicholas Brown's argument that 'the forms imposed by global capitalism frame the interpretive possibilities available for any concrete cultural contents, even those of putatively ancient origin', and that global capitalism for this reason implies 'a certain baseline of universality' in the study of world literature. See Nicholas Brown, *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twentieth-Century Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 7, 2.

> A single but radically uneven world-system; a singular modernity, combined and uneven; and a literature that variously registers this combined unevenness in both its form and its content to reveal itself as, properly speaking, world-literature. 'World-literature', as we understand it, is an analytical category, not one centred in aesthetic judgement.[62]

The hyphen is then intended to tie the idea of world literature to the uneven geography of the capitalist world-system, so that if Jameson famously emphasised the need to 'Always Historicize!',[63] the WReC add the injunction 'Always Hyphenate!'[64]

This world-systemic approach to world literature is all the more pertinent to the present investigation insofar as world-systems analysis, as a disciplinary formation, is deeply rooted in both the African experience of Portuguese colonialism and the economic history of southern Africa. Wallerstein himself, for example, was personal friends with figures such as Aquino de Bragança, with whom he edited the three volumes of *The African Liberation Reader*, and did much to galvanise support for the plight of the anti-colonial movements in all five of Portugal's African colonies from anglophone and francophone publics abroad.[65] A quick search of the Casa Comum archive collection (made available online by the Fundação Mário Soares) will reveal that Wallerstein maintained regular personal correspondence in French with Amílcar Cabral, leader of the liberation movement in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde; with Mário Pinto de Andrade, the Angolan poet and co-founder of the Movimento

[62] Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development*, p. 49.
[63] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. ix.
[64] Neil Lazarus 'The world-literary system and the Atlantic: Combined and uneven development — an interview with Stephen Shapiro', *Atlantic Studies* 16.1 (2019), 7-20 (p. 16).
[65] Aquino de Bragança and Immanuel Wallerstein (eds.), *The African Liberation Reader*, 3 vols. (London: Zed Press, 1982). This classic three-volume collection of anti-colonial writings agitating for the decolonisation of Portuguese-speaking and anglophone southern African originally appeared in Portuguese as Aquino de Bragança and Immanuel Wallerstein (eds.), *Quem é o inimigo*?, 3 vols. (Lisbon: Iniciativas Editoriais, 1978).

Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA); and with Sarah Maldoror, the director of the classic Angolan feature-film *Sambizanga* (1972). Furthermore, Wallerstein's own private collection of materials, obtained from his involvement in the liberation wars, contains fascinating and often indispensable documents such as contemporary press reports, party *communiqués*, congress proceedings and collections of resistance poetry, now digitised from the microfilm and accessible online via the Immanuel Wallerstein Collection of Political Ephemera of the Liberation Movements of Lusophone Africa and Anglophone Southern Africa (1958-1975). Significantly, in the auto-biographical essay that prefaces *The Essential Wallerstein*, Wallerstein argues that his links with the anti-colonial movements in Portuguese-speaking Africa, which can be traced back to his initial work on anglophone and francophone African political economy, were instrumental to the development of the world-systems perspective with which he would later become synonymous. 'Africa', he writes there, 'is no longer the empirical locus of my work, but I credit my African studies with opening my eyes both to the burning political issues of the contemporary world and to the scholarly questions of how to analyze the history of the modern world-system. It was Africa that was responsible for challenging the more stultifying parts of my education'.[66] Indeed, a similar intellectual trajectory can be traced in the careers of other eminent world-systems analysts such as Giovanni Arrighi, who cut his teeth studying the political economy of colonial Rhodesia and then, later on, the whole of the African continent in the classic work *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa* (1973) written in collaboration with John S. Saul, the latter a close friend and confidant of many Frelimo militants. It is then perhaps unsurprising to find that one of the most famous documents of world-systems analysis — the collaborative volume *Antisystemic Movements* (1989) by Arrighi, Wallerstein and Terence K. Hopkins — is dedicated to the memory of Bragança, who died in the Mbuzini air crash

[66] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Essential Wallerstein* (New York: The New Press, 2000), p. xvii.

alongside Mozambique's first president Samora Machel, as well as to Ruth First, the anti-apartheid activist who was assassinated by apartheid agents at her office at the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo in 1982.[67] If this thesis has elected to adopt the perspective of world-systems analysis in its approach to the literature and economy of Portuguese-speaking southern Africa, it is thus not merely — or not only — out of politico-theoretical affinity, but rather a genuine attempt to engage the intellectual history of the region by drawing from a scholarly tradition whose own disciplinary formation is intimately bound up with the history of the object it is being used to study.[68]

If world-systems analysis thus informs this thesis' analytical approach to Portuguese-language southern African fiction, then the readings and interpretations of individual literary texts themselves draw from the long tradition of dialectical literary criticism. Here again the WReC are instructive. Moving away from the focus on 'representation' that became dominant with the turn to theory in British Cultural Studies during the 1990s, whereby French (post-)structuralist approaches to semiology and linguistics were taken up and institutionalised in the form of professorial syllabi and (post-)graduate programmes,[69] the WReC deploy 'registration' (a term that has already been used judiciously throughout this

[67] Giovanni Arrighi, Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Antisystemic Movements* (London and New York: Verso, 1989), p. v.

[68] One might also point out in this context that dependency theory — the scholarly tradition considered to be one of the foremost theoretical forerunners of world-systems analysis (the others being Weberian modernisation theory and the Annales school, if one leaves out the more fundamental links with Marxism) — was also rooted in the experience of a country shaped by its subjection to Portuguese colonialism: namely, Brazil. Thus, Andre Gunder Frank, who would go on to become a famous world-systems analyst in his own right, began his career with a focus on 'the development of underdevelopment' in early-twentieth century Brazil in his seminal study *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil* (1971), which prepared the ground for much later work in world-systems analysis proper. I will return to Frank's work — and, more specifically, to his eventual break with Wallerstein and his critique of world-systems analysis — in the discussion of 'critical irrealism' in the conclusion.

[69] The representative volume is, of course, Stuart Hall (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997). It is important to note in this context, however, that in the last interview given before his death in 2014, Hall bemoaned the process by which Cultural Studies moved away from its original radical orientation, suggesting that what is now needed in order to continue the Cultural Studies project is to return to its original questions that were framed by Marxist theoretical approaches, in which the economic sphere is of prime importance. See Sut Jhally, 'Stuart Hall: The Last Interview', *Cultural Studies* 30. 2 (2016), pp. 332-345 (pp. 338-339).

introduction) to describe the relationship between literature and reality. If, in its less rigorous use, 'representation' risks condemning artistic form to the passive role of merely reflecting, refracting, relaying or participating in the signifying structures and symbolic codes of the particular discursive formation of which it is a part, then the cognate noun 'registration' rather functions to restore a sense of agency, activity, and, most importantly, of *critique* to the interpretation of cultural texts. In making this distinction, the WReC refer back to a long line of dialectical literary critics:

> We use the term 'registration' (rather than representation) to discuss the relation between literary form and social reality, and explicitly highlight its complexity and intricacy; we discuss the difficult Schwarzian understanding of literary form as 'the abstract of social relationships'; we assess the theory of mediation (into and through literary form) in Löwy, Adorno, Lukács, Marcuse, Jameson, and other theorists. […] What our account […] takes from and shares with the theories of Schwarz, Marcuse, Adorno, Jameson, and so on, is an understanding of mediation as an ever unfinished and open-ended process of disclosing and interpreting what perpetually remains 'still-to-be known' in a literary work.[70]

The fundamental uncertainty of literary form — doomed to try and take up or capture what must remain forever irrecuperable — emerges from the readings of the spectral Mozambican short stories offered in chapter one, which will be seen to rely on a narrative undecidability that places the ontological status of their protagonists in an interpretive ambiguity. As per the theory of mediation, this uncertainty is one that is left definitively unresolved, and the texts will subsequently be revealed as registrations of an analogous form of uncertainty that

[70] Warwick Research Collective (WReC), 'WReC's Reply', *Comparative Literature Studies* 53.3 (2016), pp. 535-550 (pp. 544-545).

belongs to the process of primitive accumulation by which the transition to neoliberalism was achieved in Mozambique. In this way, these spectral Mozambican literary texts are able to actively situate themselves within the practical matrix of their time and offer critical reflections of the course of contemporary events. Similarly, Adorno's insight (cited by the WReC) that '[t]here is no content, no formal category of the literary work that does not, however transformed and however awarely, derive from the empirical reality from which it has escaped',[71] is born out in the readings of the Angolan literary dystopias which make up Chapter Three of this thesis. Here, the novels of Pepetela and Ondjaki are seen to encode a dialectical oscillation between hope and despair that lends to their powerful visualisations of destruction and catastrophe a prominent political ambivalence. However, this apparently contradictory figuration of dystopian politics is far from specific to these literary texts themselves, but one which is objectively inscribed in the movement of the social process in neoliberal Angola, where an upsurge in protest movements has coexisted with an entrenchment of forms of clientelism and corruption. The category of registration will feature prominently in these readings as an attempt to capture the complex, shifting, 'open-ended' and critical relationship between Portuguese-speaking southern African literature and the social realities upon which it works.

1.3. Chapter Summaries

Beyond earmarking the publication dates of this thesis' primary corpus, the years 1986 and 2012 come with an added symbolic weight in the history of Portuguese-speaking southern Africa. In Mozambique, 1986 will be remembered as the year in which the first president of

[71] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Commitment', in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 2, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 89.

the People's Republic, Samora Machel, died in a plane crash on a trip from a summit meeting of frontline states in Mbala, Zambia. Machel's death was felt by all as a periodising event, a moment of rupture, in which the collective euphoria that underpinned the initial attempts at socialist nation-building was symbolically put paid to by the death of the figure who encapsulated all of the contradictions of this fraught period in Mozambican history. On the one hand, Machel was synonymous with an infectious charisma and an unswerving dedication to the project of establishing an independent Mozambican society that would be free of the racism, oppression and exploitation that had defined the previous colonial phase in the country's history. On the other hand, a creeping authoritarian streak and an intransigent cultural dogmatism prevailed during the Marxist-Leninist era that led to the persecution of the very people in whose name Machel purported to be ruling, as evidenced by the large-scale project of social cleansing known as the 're-education camps'.[72] As it dovetailed with the introduction of incipient privatisations and deregulations that would pave the way for the official adoption of a structural adjustment package in the following decade, the death of Machel signalled the de-facto end of the Marxist-Leninist nation-building project and the start of a new phase in Mozambican history. With casualties from the civil war continuing to rise alongside a drastic reduction in the capacity for industrial production, the dream of constructing a socialist society inclusive of all of Mozambique's manifold ethnic and regional communities now began to seem unfeasible. By the end of the decade, as Joseph Hanlon notes, an upsurge in Black nationalism and northern regionalism occurred as poor Mozambicans excluded from newly created, high-salary jobs began to express their frustration along increasingly ethnic lines, while a series of strikes and riots in 1990 'showed that working people were no longer prepared to be squeezed to satisfy the new comprador-

[72] For a helpful contextualisation of Frelimo's project of 're-education' within the broader discourse of eliminationism that became prominent in Mozambique in the years immediately following independence, see Eleanor Jones, *Battleground Bodies: Gender and Sexuality in Mozambican Literature* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2017), pp. 29-32.

donor alliance'.[73] These emergent class tensions would only intensify over the following three decades, and 1986 thus comes to stand for the unofficial end of the post-revolutionary era[74] that conjures up feelings of loss, death, mourning, uncertainty, transition and instability — precisely those feelings that are be registered by the undecidable images of spectrality that surge forth in such a remarkable way in the Mozambican literary production of the period.

2012 is here understood in much the same symbolic sense as a year that marks the emergence of a new cycle of protest movements and forms of popular resistance in post-independence Angola. The presidential elections of August 31, 2012 saw the incumbent José Eduardo dos Santos sworn in for a five-year term that extended his existing thirty-three-year premiership but which marked only his first victory by popular vote. If this event might seem to suggest a success on the part of the MPLA and a confirmation of its hegemony in the Angolan political sphere, a look at the wider social context behind the elections tells a very different story. On the eve before the elections, the opposition party UNITA had headed stormy protests calling for an end to government corruption and expressing doubt as to the credibility of the vote, leading to a series of conflicts with the authorities that resulted in several arrests. Furthermore, in the months leading up to the elections, there had been numerous cases of violence against protesters and activists by the Angolan police (many of whom were disguised in plain clothes) that functioned to create a 'climate of fear' that could not but serve to increase the MPLA's chance of securing their desired result.[75] Tellingly, a total of forty percent of eligible Angolan voters chose to refrain from casting a ballot altogether. But abstention has also coincided with an increase in the number of Angolans —

[73] Joseph Hanlon, *Mozambique*, p. 226.
[74] See Hanlon: 'In 1986 aid jumped, which meant goods in urban shops. But destabilization peaked in 1986, which meant that half the population needed food aid. The death of Samora Machel in 1986 ended the post-revolutionary era. Forced to choose between the great powers, Mozambique finally turned to the West. Agreement to an IMF structural adjustment marked the failure to find an alternative way out, and concession to western pressure'. Joseph Hanlon, *Mozambique*, p. 278.
[75] Human Rights Watch, 'World Report 2013: Angola', 2013, available online: https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/angola.

buoyed on by the successes of pro-democracy movements in the Arab Spring — taking to the streets to protest against the government's broader campaign to impose restrictions on their freedom of expression and assembly. The protest video *Liberdade Já* and accompanying demonstrations in 2015, for example, called for the release of unlawfully detained prisoners and is a prime example of the new feeling of defiance that has taken hold of Angola's population, and one in which several key literary figures in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa also participated, such as Mia Couto and Ondjaki.[76] In this way, 2012 can be used to periodise the emergence of a set of political contradictions: on the one hand, the consolidation of MPLA hegemony and increasing displays of force, matched by a consolidation of kleptocratic forms of postcolonial governance; on the other, a new if hesitant feeling that things could in fact be different, that another world is possible. As will be seen, these are exactly the sort of social contradictions that lie at the heart of the Angolan dystopian novel.

The two central chapters of this thesis — the first dedicated to Mozambique, the second to Angola — begin with periodisations that seek to map out the prehistory of the spectral and dystopian turns by tracing the emergence of the literary field in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa back to the development of proto-nationalist movements during the era of Portuguese colonialism. In both of the two states, this process divides into three broad-brush phases: first, a pre-independence moment in which Angolan and Mozambican writers develop a sense of national consciousness through forms of literary production, culminating in the militarisation of the anti-colonial struggle from the early 1960s; second, a phase of Marxist-Leninist hegemony in which cultural production is subordinated to the interests of the party *politburo* and the rigid strictures if Zhdavonite socialist realism; and finally, a

[76] On the *Liberdade Já* video, see Stephen Henighan, '"Memórias emprestadas": From the Post-national State to the End of Socialist Internationalism in Ondjaki's *AvóDeznove e o segredo do Soviético* and *Sonhos azuis pelas esquinas*', *The Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 94.10 (2017), pp. 1133-1149 (p. 1144).

period of post-independence critique in which writers break with the ideological project of the (post-)socialist state and aesthetic the conventions that had become standardised during the Marxist-Leninist era in order to stage new forms of scepticism and agitation. Both the spectral and the dystopian turns belong to this latter, third phase, and the parallels between their prehistories only further emphasises the angle of comparison between them.

After these initial periodisations, I then introduce the critical frameworks that will inform the readings to follow. Chapter Two's discussion of Mozambican literature makes reference to Raymond Williams' concept of 'structure of feeling' in order to understand how the upturn in spectral literary texts in 1980s Mozambique responds to the process of primitive accumulation by which the transition to neoliberalism was achieved. By casting the spectral turn as a structure of feeling, I am able to underline the unsystematic yet nonetheless patterned and coherent character of the reproduction of spectral motifs in 1980s Mozambican literary fiction, as well as the process of capitalisation and the loss of previously stable forms of livelihood out of which structures of feeling always emerge. This discussion will then set the stage for the readings of the motif of ontological uncertainty in short stories by Mia Couto, Sulieman Cassamo and Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa, which encode the feelings of indecision and anxiety that were so prominent during the period into the form of their prose through the use of spectral narrative techniques that fictionally distort the line between life and death. The discussion of the genre of dystopia in Chapter Three then serves a similar function to the introduction of the concept of structure of feeling in Chapter Two, as it provides a semantic matrix through which to read the ambivalent formal characteristics of dystopian novels by Pepetela and Ondjaki. Insofar as the genre of dystopia is here shown to be founded upon a generic continuum that spans between utopia and anti-utopia — covering political orientations of both the critical and the anti-critical variety — I am able to prepare the ground for my reading of the dialectical oscillation between hope and despair in the

Angolan dystopian novel, which, I argue, should not be resolved one way or the other but rather understood as a constitutive tension in the genre of dystopia itself — one which is also inscribed in the movement of the social process in neoliberal Angola.

The final, concluding chapter then brings the individual discussions of the spectral and dystopian turns together through a comparative perspective that seeks to situate them in terms of a break with the dogma of socialist realism that was the dominant form of literary production during the Marxist-Leninist era. This departure from the conventions of realist aesthetics, and the new form of political protest which it sets into motion, bears a structural similarity with similar experiments throughout the world, such as in Spanish-speaking South America. To this extent, the concluding chapter includes an extended discussion of magical realist fiction that seeks to emphasise, from a materialist perspective, the ways in which non-realist aesthetic forms have been deployed by writers from distinct geo-temporal positions in the world-system as a means of critiquing and exposing the corruption and failures of once-radical political campaigns, as well as the party structures within which they became ossified. In this way, I am able to present the turn towards the fantastic and the supernatural in the post-independence literature of Angola and Mozambique as a critique of the trajectory of the waning Marxist-Leninist state and the emergence of forms of neoliberal political economy. After the discussion of so-called 'magical realism' (almost an inevitability when discussing non-realist African literatures), I then turn to the WReC's theorisation of 'critical irrealism' in an attempt to search for an adequate generic concept with which to categorise these experiments in literary form. First used by French-Brazilian critic Michael Löwy to denote non-realist works of art that enact powerful critiques of the social order, critical irrealism promises to bypass some of the limitations that accompany the category of magical realism, such as the latter's now intensely commodified aesthetics in which the genre's original perspective of critique has gone missing if not functionally occluded. It is in this sense that

the WReC take up the concept of critical irrealism to redefine it as the determinate formal register of (semi-)peripherality in the world-literary system.[77] In my re-reading of critical irrealism, I place the emphasis on the relationship between irrealist aesthetics and unresolvable political or social contradictions so as to present the spectral and dystopian turns in Mozambican and Angolan fiction as irrealist resolutions of the contradictions emerging from the transition to neoliberal capitalism in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa. However, I also point to some potential shortcomings in the category of critical irrealism, which have to do with a tendency to overlook the determining force of locally specific cultural elements in (semi-)peripheral literatures, such as orature or non-hegemonic systems of belief. Ultimately, though, I argue that the advantages of the concept outweigh its deficiencies, and that the category of critical irrealism is useful insofar as it enables a world-literary comparison between literatures such as those of Angola and Mozambique and those of structurally similar societies throughout the world-system, such as in mid-twentieth century Latin America. A provisional list of the structural similarities between Portuguese-speaking Africa and Latin America would have to include the two regions' experiences of the predominance and consequent ossification of revolutionary socialist politics, as well as their subjection to the predatory interests of multinational finance capital, facilitated in both cases by IMF-imposed structural adjustment programmes. By approaching Mozambican and Angolan literature through this global and comparative lens, I arrive at the sort of expansive world-literary perspective that is the hallmark of this thesis' approach to Portuguese-language southern African fiction.

[77] Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development*, p. 51.

2. Spectres of Blood and Fire

In a summary periodisation of the history of Mozambican literature, João Paulo Borges Coelho suggests the existence of three overlapping phases of creative activity that rise and fall alongside cycles of political turmoil in the country.[78] The first phase begins at the turn of the twentieth century with the emergence of a vibrant *mestiço* literary culture centred around publications such as *O Brado Africano* [the African roar] (1918-1974) and characterised by demands for equal rights for Africans to those of Europeans. These anti-colonial claims to self-determination arose out of the atmosphere of uncertainty and indecision precipitated by the overthrow of the Portuguese monarchy in 1910 and the subsequent proclamation of the First Portuguese Republic (1910-1926), which opened up a space for experimentation and contestation in Portugal's African colonies that was duly seized upon by educated Africans seeking to assert their opposition to the dehumanisations of colonial discourse. In Mozambique, this literary awakening was geographically concentrated in the colonial capital Lourenço Marques, which had been transformed from an outlying trading post into a bustling colonial metropolis through developments such as the construction of the Transvaal rail link (1890-1915) and the expansion of local port facilities, leading not only to an increase in economic activity but also importantly furnishing the reception, production and exchange of both literary and radical political ideas. A key figure in this conjuncture was João dos Santos Albasini, a tireless campaigner against racial discrimination and colonial exploitation, founding member of the important political lobbying group *Grêmio Africano* [African guild], and a prolific producer of literary works in a range of different genres from poetry and opinion columns to autobiographical pieces.[79] The proto-nationalist sensibility elaborated by

[78] João Paulo Borges Coelho, 'Writing in a Changing World: The Difficult Relationship with Reality', *Luso-Brazilian Review* 50.2 (2013), pp. 21-30. Further references will be given after quotations in the main body of the text.

[79] Jeanne Marie Penvenne, 'João dos Santos Albasini (1876-1922): The Contradictions of Politics and Identity in Colonial Mozambique', *The Journal of African History*, 37.3 (1996), pp. 419-464; Stefan Helgesson, 'João

Albasini and others laid the groundwork for the development of *moçambicanidade* [Mozambicanness] in the subsequent generation of writers and intellectuals associated with names such as José Craveirinha, Noémia de Sousa, Rui Knopfli, João Dias and Orlando Mendes. These latter figures cut their teeth amid the changes ushered in by the establishment of the *Estado Novo* in 1933, whose pluricontinental ideology coincided with an increase in white settlement across Portugal's African colonies, sparking a surge of political dissidence and resistance whose chief mouthpiece in Mozambique was the literary and cultural journal *Itinerário* (1945-1955).[80] The cosmopolitan nature of Mozambique's anti-colonial literary culture was by now firmly set in place, and the pages of journals such as *Itinerário* accordingly speak to a wide range of cultural interests from Portuguese and Brazilian literatures to North American themes such as jazz and the Harlem Renaissance.[81] By the time of the 1960s, these Mozambican writers had, moreover, developed their own distinctive aesthetic style which oscillated between moods of melancholy, affirmation and revolt, and which Borges Coelho characterises as a '*saudade* of the future' (p. 25). The militarisation of the anti-colonial struggle in the early 1960s, however, put a damper on this emerging literary cosmopolitanism as thousands of Mozambicans took up arms to join the liberation wars, signalling the start of a second phase in Mozambican literary production.

The early literature of the independence struggle and immediate post-independence years predominantly took the form of combat or resistance poetry and was concerned to

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Paulo Borges Coelho, João Albasini and the Worlding of Mozambican Literature', *1616: Anuario de Literatura Comparada* 3 (2013), pp. 91-106.

[80] The pluricontinental ideology of the Salazar regime emerged with the repeal of the Colonial Act in 1950 and took the form of crude but strategic propaganda intended to sidestep the mounting international pressure for Portugal to decolonise in the wake of WWII. Drawn from Gilberto Freyre's thesis of 'lusotropicalism', which he formulated during his tour of the Portuguese colonies in 1950-1951 (including Mozambique), this pluricontinental ideology functioned as part of Portugal's desperate attempts to hold on to its colonies by dressing up its racism in a discourse of phony inclusionism.

[81] Stefan Helgesson, *Transnationalism in Southern African Literature: Modernists, Realists and the Inequality of Print Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 21-50. See also Borges Coelho's anecdote that 'this whole generation of writers would anxiously wait at the door of the Minerva bookshop for the arrival of the latest books by Jorge Amado or the Portuguese neo-realistic writers'. João Paulo Borges Coelho, 'Writing in a Changing World', p. 25.

communicate an anti-capitalist message and strong opposition to any residual forms of bourgeois colonial consciousness through the use of narrative devices such as the liberation saga and modes of collective authorship.[82] In Borges Coelho's words, this literature was marked by a technical fragility and naivety of approach that 'has not resisted well the passage of time' (p. 25), produced as it was during a time in which cultural pursuits were subordinated to more pressing social demands such as large-scale infrastructural projects, the industrialisation of agriculture and the rollout of national literacy programmes. As the Mozambican diplomat and social scientist Aquino de Bragança once put it: 'Socialism, in our conditions of underdevelopment, means first and foremost bread and rice'.[83] The continuation of armed conflict in the wake of independence, however, had by 1977 escalated into full-blown civil warfare, initiating a period of catastrophic destruction in Mozambique that decimated the country's physical and social infrastructures and created a widespread sense of disillusionment amongst its citizens as to the partisan narratives of the Marxist-Leninist regime, which persisted in its obstinate ascription of the country's suffering to the intrusion of a nebulously defined group of '*bandidos armados*' [armed bandits] in an attempt to galvanise a dejected and traumatised Mozambican population.[84] The dissemination of obfuscating rhetoric from the vanguard party machine, combined with daily increasing incidents of violence as a result of the military in-fighting, gave rise to conditions entirely hostile to any form of literary production within a cultural sphere already marked by the

[82] For a representative overview of the combat poetry that characterised this period's literary production, see the series FRELIMO, *Poesia de Combate*, 3 vols. (Maputo: Departamento de Trabalho Ideológico, 1971), which contains a selection of collectively authored poems as well as contributions from Mozambican poets such as José Craveirinha, Rui Nogar, Marcelino dos Santos, Sérgio Vieira and Jorge Rebelo.
[83] Aquino de Bragança, 'Reflections on the value of a journey', in Marco Mondaini and Colin Darch, eds., *Independence and Revolution in Portuguese-speaking Africa: Aquino de Bragança: Selected Articles and Interviews, 1980-1986* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2019), pp. 59-61 (p. 60).
[84] Margaret Hall and Tom Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique since Independence* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1997), pp. 74-75. At the same time, as Hall and Young also note, the Frelimo government's portrayal of the opposition party Renamo as an inchoate mass of *bandidos armados* 'was not purely propaganda — there were genuine difficulties in making contact with such an organisation, particularly one whose external "representatives" were out of touch with realities in Mozambique' (p. 205).

stifling presence of state censors and a rigid expectation of conformity. As Borges Coelho curtly puts it: 'Surrounded by obscene levels of violence, with buses set on fire with passengers inside, people having their tongues and ears cut off, villages burnt down, children smashed against trees, pregnant women eviscerated and combatants from all sides looting the peasants' meagre stock, there was little room left for citizenry, let alone for literature' (p. 26).

This non-correspondence between official party discourse and the daily suffering experienced by Mozambicans during the civil war prepared the ground for new modes of literary production to emerge with alternative explanations for the succession of the contemporary events, as narratives began to appear that broke with the dominant discourse of ideological unilateralism to offer a critical perspective on the trajectory of the post-independence regime through new experimentations with established literary forms. Towards the end of the 1980s, accordingly, an upsurge in literary activity occurred that orbited around cultural institutions like the prolific Associação de Escritores Moçambicanos (AEMO) and journal publications such as *Charrua* and *Forja*, and whose seismic effects are emblematised by the AEMO's influential book series '*Colecção Karingana*', which debuted some of the most famous titles in the history of Mozambican literature. Borges Coelho singles out this period as the moment at which Mozambican literature began 'timidly regaining its voice' through a return to the 'flair' that had distinguished the first phase of Mozambican literary development, only this time in a context which, 'unlike the previous socialist period, was much less defined by the tensions created by the proximity between the literary and political spheres' (pp. 26-27). It is thus possible to identify in the literary renaissance of the late 1980s a new aesthetic sensibility that rejected the dominant discourse of ideological conformity while simultaneously recuperating and moving beyond aspects from the first phase of Mozambican writers. The revivification of literary production that unfolded during this period marks the beginning of the third and latest phase of Mozambican literature, the onset

of which coincides with the signing of the Rome General Peace Accords in 1992 that signalled an end to Mozambique's fifteen-year civil war and the start of the country's formal transition to free market, neoliberal capitalism. Among the characteristics of this latest phase has been the rise of the novel as the dominant mode of literary production and the relative waning of poetry and the short story, which had been the favoured forms in the first and second phases. For Borges Coelho, however, while the relationship between the political and literary spheres is now 'more ambiguous and subtle than before', it nevertheless continues to be somewhat 'promiscuous' due to factors such as the 'extremely reduced body of readers and writers, almost non-existent publishers, very expensive books, etc.' (p. 28). With Mozambican literature now more fully subsumed into the distribution channels of the global publishing industry and its circuits of prestige and authentication, only a handful of non-sponsored local books can gain exposure within a literary marketplace hostile to new forms of experimentation and reinforcing of existing patterns of taste and consumption. As literary activity in Mozambique once again descends into a period of relative stagnation, it is useful to think of the periodisation proposed by Borges Coelho in terms of a wave-like signature that charts the rise and fall of cultural production in the country alongside its major political transformations.[85]

This chapter is interested in the period of the late 1980s in which Mozambique witnessed a resurgence of literary activity accompanied both by an encroaching sense of disillusionment with the trajectory of the Marxist-Leninist state and the first signs of the country's transition to neoliberal capitalism. How did Mozambican writers of this period register the tumultuous process of social transformation that was unfolding around them? What were the specific narrative devices or aesthetic techniques that they used to mediate the

[85] A similar, though more extensive, account of the emergence of Mozambican literature that corroborates Borges Coelho's periodisation can be found in Patrick Chabal, 'Mozambique', in Patrick Chabal, ed., *The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa* (London: Hurst & Company, 1996), pp. 29-102.

experience of political transition and economic restructuring? Peter J. Maurits has observed that the majority of the literary works that appeared during this period demonstrate a heightened sensibility to gothic forms, images of haunting, and spectral modes of narration. For Maurits, the post-independence upsurge in Mozambican literature begins with the publication of Mia Couto's short story collection *Vozes anoitecidas* [Voices made night] in 1986 and continues with the appearance of later texts such as Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa's *Orgia dos loucos* [Orgy of the deranged] (1990), Suleiman Cassamo's *O Regresso do morto* [The return of the dead man] (1989), and Paulina Chiziane's *Balada de amor ao vento* [Ballad of love to the wind] (1990), all of which are characterised by their use of tropes that draw from the modern ghost story genre.[86] Maurits argues that this spectral turn in Mozambican literature indicates the moment of consolidation of 'the Mozambican modern ghost story', and that its wave of appearance towards the latter half of the Mozambican civil war indicates an attempt to come to terms with 'the reintegration of Mozambique into the world-system' and the process of primitive accumulation through which this reintegration was achieved.[87] However, the upturn in the production of spectral literary texts that occurred towards the end of the 1980s in Mozambique is at the same time inseparable from more local cultural developments such as the emergence of a fertile constellation of literary journals and the institutional support provided by the Marxist-Leninist state in the form of the AEMO. In the words of Ubiratã Souza, the new generation of writers that emerged during the 1980s forged '*uma nova literatura, eminentemente em prosa, versando sobre a mais variada gama de assuntos, inaugurando uma literatura urbana, inovadora e absolutamente inventiva*' [produced a new literature, eminently in prose, dealing with a wide range of topics,

[86] Peter J. Maurits, 'The Mozambican Ghost Story'; *The Mozambican Modern Ghost Story (1866–2009): A Genealogy of a Genre* (Bern: Peter Lang, forthcoming).
[87] Peter J. Maurits, *The Mozambican Modern Ghost Story*, chapter 4. As Maurits writes in his introduction: '[t]he main thesis of this book is *there exists a Mozambican modern ghost story and it registers primitive accumulation*'.

inaugurating an urban literature, innovative and absolutely inventive].[88] And yet, it would not be possible to adequately account for the range of these writers' inventiveness, nor for the formal and aesthetic strategies through which they pursued their literary innovations, without attending first to the material conditions for the production of literature during the era of Marxism-Leninism in Mozambique, conditions which were themselves determined by a melee of historical forces including intra-ethnic tensions, political loyalties and regional geopolitics. This is the sense in which Maria-Bendita Basto, drawing from extensive archival material and first-person testimony, has argued that, in order to comprehend the paradigm shift that took place during the latter half of the 1980s in Mozambique, one must pay close attention to the process through which literary texts were circulated and consumed in the country, as well as to the public discussions that were played out in the pages of newspapers, journals and literary magazines of the time.[89] In Basto's words, these contemporary discussions were overwhelmingly preoccupied with the problem of '*um conflito de gerações* […] *resultado da progressiva institucionalização literária*' [a conflict of generations resulting from the progressive institutionalisation of literature].[90] In this vein, the present chapter seeks to evaluate the nature of the relationship between the spectral turn in Mozambican literary production, with its shared aesthetic sensibility and its imbrication within an emergent community of writers and intellectuals, and the political trajectory of the waning Marxist-Leninist state. How does the figure of the ghost, which featured so prominently in the literary texts of the period, respond to and critique the ideological shift that took place in the country towards the latter half of the 1980s? What is the relationship between spectral aesthetics and the broader transition from Marxism-Leninism to

[88] Ubiratã Souza, *Entre Palavras e Armas: Literatura e Guerra Civil em Moçambique* (São Bernardo do Campo: Editora URABC, 2017), p. 72.
[89] Maria-Bendita Basto, 'Relendo a Literatura Moçambicana dos Anos 80', in Margarida Calafate Ribeiro and Paula Meneses, eds., *Moçambique: Das Palavras Escritas* (Porto: Afrontamento, 2008), pp. 77-110.
[90] Maria-Bendita Basto, 'Relendo a Literatura Moçambicana dos Anos 80', p. 78.

neoliberalism that marks the beginning of the latest phase in Mozambican literary and economic history?

As Stephen Shapiro has argued, gothic forms such as ghosts, vampires and lycanthropes tend to cluster at similar moments in literary history during the passage between two phases of long-wave capitalist accumulation, where they serve a particular representational purpose as cultural responses to the violence and dispossession engendered by cyclical reconfigurations in the world market. What Shapiro calls 'gothic periodicity' is born out in the work of scholars such as Michael T. Taussig, who has demonstrated how the reorganisation of South American peasantries around plantation monocultures and their forced integration into liberal market economies throughout the nineteenth century produced a resurgence in devil mythology, spirituality and fetishisations of evil, as these communities attempted to come to terms with their experience of proletarianisation and commodity fetishism in culturally symbolic terms.[91] In a similar vein, Silvia Federici has highlighted how the transition to capitalism in fifteenth century Europe entailed a phase of primitive accumulation in which female reproductive rights were brutally suppressed through the manipulation of rising cultural fears over witchcraft, devil worship and rituals of the occult.[92] To follow Maurits and read the proliferation of spectral forms in Mozambican literature as an aesthetic registration of the country's reintegration into the neoliberal world-system is then consistent with a broader trend in world-cultural production whereby monstruous, grotesque, gothic or ghostly representations emerge at moments of heightened capitalisation to process the subordination of local populations to the relations of commodity exchange and the logic of the value form. Maria Paula Meneses has already demonstrated the extent to which

[91] Michael T. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).
[92] Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004).

magical beliefs have come to dominate forms of political discourse and public authority during the neoliberal era in Mozambique, with appeals to witchcraft and 'invisible forces' now serving as important cultural resources for making sense of the violence of global capitalism as it is manifested across the local landscape.[93] Meneses' findings confirm Shapiro's thesis of gothic periodicity as much as they advocate a reading of the spectral turn in Mozambican literature as an aesthetic response to primitive accumulation. As will be seen throughout the course of this chapter, the culture of uncertainty attendant on the socio-economic transition from Marxist-Leninist planned economy to free market capitalism in Mozambique is one which is directly registered by the figure of the ghost as it appears in the literary production of the period. By spectrally distorting the line between life and death, Mozambican writers were able to encode the violence and undecidability of this process of transition into their literary fiction. To this extent, the texts in question are intimately bound up with the contemporary play of forces and events. However, while these texts have much to say about the social modalities of economic transition within the bounding limits of the Mozambican nation-state, a study of the spectral turn in Mozambican literature therefore also suggests comparison with analogous cultural responses to capitalisation across the *longue durée* of world history.

2.1. Structure of Feeling

In order to better conceptualise this connection between the revival of Mozambican literature during the late 1980s and the process of primitive accumulation that established the conditions necessary for the country's transition to neoliberal capitalism, I want to argue that

[93] Maria Paula Meneses, 'Corpos de Violência, Linguagens de Resistência: As Complexas Teias de Conhecimento no Moçambique Contemporâneo', in Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses, orgs., *Epistemologias do Sul* (Coimbra: Edições Almedina, 2009), pp. 117-214.

the spectral turn in Mozambican literature should be understood as a 'structure of feeling', which was the term Raymond Williams used to describe the changes to experience that occur as a result of the capitalist modernisation of societies. Williams argued that, as pre-capitalist plebeian populations are driven from rural regions into urban centres where they are forced to sell their labour-power as a commodity and are coerced into proletarianisation, existing sociological frameworks for cultural expression such as oral folktales enter into a crisis in which what had previously existed as a 'knowable community' becomes 'harder and harder to sustain'.[94] This tension between, on the one hand, traditional forms of communication that had originally been fashioned in response to the conditions of a lifeworld that is now in the process of disappearing, and, on the other, the presence of new social relations that lack the cultural institutions and representational forms that would make them intelligible to their community of participants, produces a discursive gap in which the individual subject struggles to narrate her or his experience of the process of social reorganisation within which she or he is bound up. Out of this disjuncture emerge what Williams calls 'structures of feeling', which are attempts at cultural representation that push the boundaries of existing modes of expression by reaching towards the 'articulation of an area of experience which lies beyond them'.[95] In Williams' words, structures of feeling are

> especially evident at those specific and historically definable moments when very new work produces a sudden shock of *recognition*. What must be happening on these occasions is that an experience which is really very wide suddenly finds a semantic figure which articulates it. Such an experience I would now call pre-emergent.[96]

[94] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), p. 165; Raymond Williams, *The English Novel: From Dickens to Lawrence* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), p. 17.
[95] Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: NLB, 1979), pp. 164-165.
[96] Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 164.

It is my contention that the consolidation of the Mozambican ghost story during the late 1980s should be understood as just such a structure of feeling that arises to fulfil a social need for cultural expression in its provision of a semantic figure that attempts to articulate the experience of socio-economic processes that are not yet hegemonic. This process of economic restructuring can be described in terms of the Marxian concept of primitive accumulation, and the semantic figure or representational code within which this process finds cultural expression can be identified as the varying sets of ghostly images, spectral modes of narration and broadly gothic sensibilities that comprise the generic idiom of the period's literary production.

The concept of structure of feeling is also helpful inasmuch as it can be used to describe the extent to which the spectral turn in Mozambican literature, while being determinable and relatively coherent, was nonetheless a profoundly unsystematic cultural phenomenon. Indeed, what is remarkable about the spectral turn in Mozambican literature is that so many of the texts from this period mobilise spectral aesthetic strategies without any indication that they have learned them from each other. This contradiction between the near-unconscious repetition of cultural forms and its finished appearance as a more or less holistic movement or pattern is precisely what Williams was trying to capture with the term structure of feeling:

> The point of the deliberately contradictory phrase, with which I have never been happy, is that it was a structure in the sense that you could perceive it operating in one work after another which weren't otherwise connected — people weren't learning it from each other; yet it was one of feeling much more than thought — a

> pattern of impulses, restraints, tones, for which the best evidence was often the actual conventions of literary or dramatic writing.[97]

Williams's use of 'pre-emergent' to describe the bridge between the 'dominant set[s] of forms or conventions'[98] that structures of feeling are forced to work with, and the inarticulate experience with which they are trying to come to terms, also captures the ways in which these spectral Mozambican literary texts reactivated and transformed the canonical mode of the ghost story associated with figures such as Walter Scott and negotiated prior understandings of *moçambicanidade* inherited from writers like José Craveirinha and Noémia de Sousa. Writers from this period display an attitude that is at once respectful and irreverent towards the Mozambican literary establishment's intellectual celebrities, as is evident from one illustration in the '*Personagens*' [characters] section of *Charrua* (1984) — independent Mozambique's first literary periodical, and one run by a group of young writers who would go on to become influential cultural figures in their own right (Khosa, Cassamo, Panguana)[99] — in which Craveirinha is depicted in a caricatural style as an arboreal figure as stolid and sagacious as he is fundamentally outdated, the weight of whose literary influence is communicated through an overexposed realism which renders the poet at once acutely present and as an object of playfully dissenting mockery (see fig. 1 below). As Basto suggested in her analysis of the '*conflito de gerações*' that was played out during the period in the pages of literary magazines and newspaper supplements, the late 1980s upsurge was a moment in which writers re-engaged their literary history while carving out their own generic

[97] Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 159.
[98] Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 164.
[99] In the words of George Alao: '*Charrua* was quite typical of the Mozambican literary magazines of the period. Founded in 1984 in Maputo, by a group of young people, it is often considered as independent Mozambique's first literary periodical. One of its main objectives was to free its generation from the claws of the Marxist-Leninist party apparatus and ideology present in every domain of Mozambican cultural life'. See George Alao, 'The Development of Lusophone Africa's Literary Magazines', *Research in African Literatures* 30.1 (1999), pp. 169-183 (p. 181).

style of representation which was in turn used to critique the dominant discourse of cultural dogmatism promoted by the waning Marxist-Leninist state. This flourishing moment of 'pre-emergence' is thus identifiable with the broader culture of disillusionment that took hold in 1980s and corresponds to the diastolic prelude, or interstitial moment, which prepared the onset of the next phase of Mozambican literature, which commenced with the signing of the Rome General Peace Accords in 1992.[100] To this extent, the spectral turn can be framed as the cultural counterpart to the process of primitive accumulation in Mozambique that characterised the transition from Marxist-Leninist planned economy to free market, neoliberal capitalism.

[100] Indeed, as Maurits has shown, the representational strategies developed during the spectral turn were conventionalised during the subsequent third phase of Mozambican literature, even while certain discontinuities are discernible in changes such as the rise of the novel and relative waning of the short story, which had been dominant in the previous phase. See Peter Maurits, *The Mozambican Modern Ghost Story*, chapter 5.

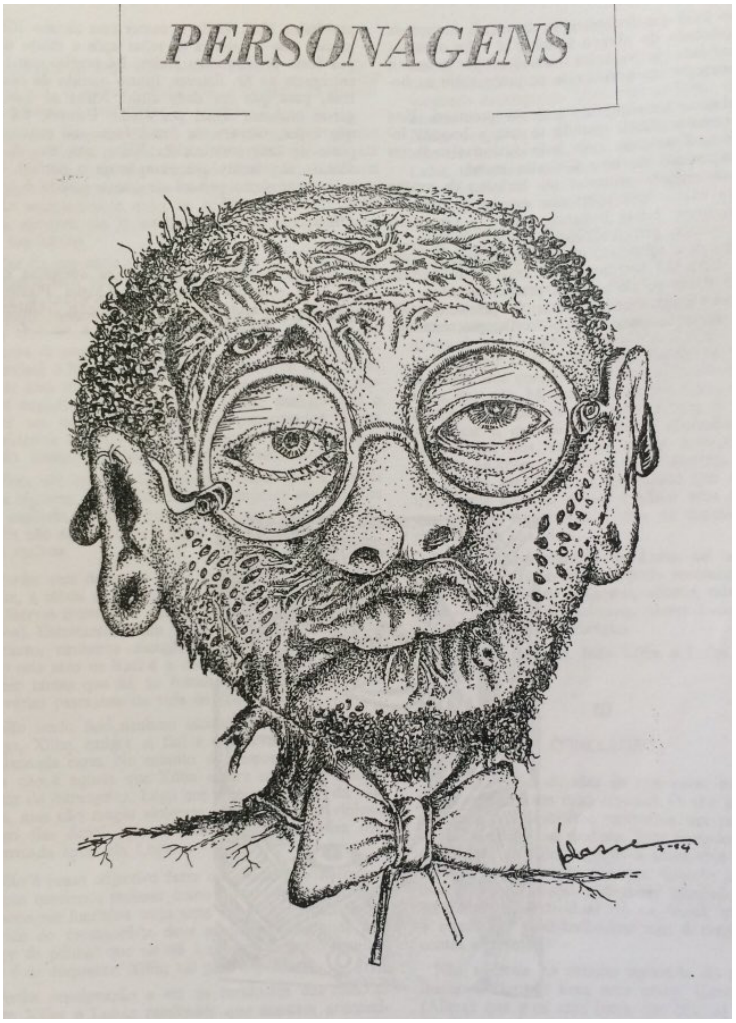

Fig. 1. Drawing of José Craveirinha in *Charrua* 4 (1984).[101]

This chapter focuses on one particular characteristic of the Mozambican ghost story that is reproduced throughout a number of texts during the late 1980s and which registers the climate of uncertainty and anxiety brought on by the prolongation of civil war, the intensification of South African destabilisation and the increasing authoritarianism of the Frelimo leadership, which moved towards economic policies of privatisation and deregulation that sharply contrasted with their initial focus on rural collectivisation and the

[101] For a list and discussion of the marvelous illustrations featured in *Charrua*, see Renata Beatriz Brandespin Rolon, 'O campo literário em Moçambique e o caso da revista *Charrua*', *Griots: Literaturas e Direitos Humanos* 4 (2020), pp. 241-258.

nationalisation of industry.[102] Through readings of short stories by Mia Couto, Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa and Suleiman Cassamo, I demonstrate how the feelings of disintegration and indecision that prevailed in this complex conjuncture are registered by these writers through an aesthetics of spectrality that fictionally distorts the line between life and death as a means of processing the moment of historical transformation within which these writings were bound up. In this way, my approach situates the texts within the context of a broader structure of feeling that both returns to and moves beyond existing cultural vocabularies through new experimentations with existing representational forms. In Shapiro's words, structures of feeling can be characterised in terms of an 'indirect ventriloquism' that 'can be discerned by disruptions within a text's chosen generic form, especially regarding the narrative voice, where an unevenness of perspective indicates the presence of a disjunction between a new lived experience and its formal articulation'.[103] In this spirit, I approach the motif of ontological uncertainty in the texts of Couto, Cassamo and Khosa as a registration of a situation in which a new phase of social life lies on the horizon for which an adequate means of expression does not yet exist. As the Marxist-Leninist nation-building project in Mozambique lay in tatters but the formal transition to neoliberal capitalism remained unconsecrated, the historical situation in late 1980s Mozambique was one in which, as in Gramsci's famous analysis of organic crises, 'the old is dying and the new cannot be born'. 'In this interregnum', Gramsci goes on, 'a great variety of morbid symptoms appear'.[104] By

[102] However, note also that the seeds of authoritarianism were already evident in many aspects of Frelimo's leadership during the Marxist-Leninist era, as evidenced by the concerted project of social cleansing known as the 're-education camps'.

[103] Stephen Shapiro, *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel: Reading the Atlantic World-System* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), p. 28.

[104] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison* Notebooks, trans. and ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 276. Gramsci used the term 'organic crisis' to denote a comprehensive breakdown of society that covers all of its component parts, from the economic to the political and the more broadly ideological. As Stuart Hall writes, the competing efforts at restructuring society that emerge during organic crises 'will be *formative*: aiming at a new balance of forces, the emergence of new elements, the attempt to put together a new "historic bloc", new political configurations and "philosophies", a profound restructuring of the state and the ideological discourses which construct the crisis and represent it as it

way of a textual analysis of moments of disjunction in these stories' narrative voice, which leave unanswered the question as to whether their characters are dead or alive, I read the texts of Couto, Cassamo and Khosa as precisely such 'morbid symptoms', which function to register the transition between two phases in Mozambique's literary and economic history, encoding the feelings of loss and disturbance brought on by the capitalisation of previously stable forms of being and livelihood. Indeed, the sheer violence of this process of transition is aptly described by Marx in his oft-quoted characterisation of primitive accumulation as 'written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire'.[105]

2.2. Ontological Uncertainty

1986 marks a crisis year in the history of post-independence Mozambique. Renamo, the opposition party in the Mozambican civil war backed by right-wing governments, had just launched a major offensive from a base in Malawi into central Zambezia province under the sponsorship of both apartheid South Africa and the United States. Frelimo's agrarian policy of village communalisation had stoked discontent and resistance in the country's hinterlands, while a series of recent droughts meant that famine loomed on the horizon. Meanwhile, international donors were withholding vital aid, as political leverage designed to pressure Mozambique into acquiescing to the neoliberal reforms of the World Bank and the IMF.[106] In October of that year, against the backdrop of this turbulence, a Soviet-built Tupolev Tu-134 jetliner set off from a summit meeting of frontline states in Mbala, Zambia, carrying Mozambican president Samora Machel and several other senior-ranking government officials

is "lived" as a practical reality'. See Stuart Hall, 'The Great Moving Right Show', in *Selected Political Writings* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), pp. 172-186 (p. 175).
[105] Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 875.
[106] Joseph Hanlon, *Peace Without Profit: How the IMF Blocks Rebuilding in Mozambique* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996), p. 91-92.

on board. After a series of complications — the details of which are still shrouded in conspiracy — the aircraft crashed in the small South African village of Mbuzini, killing Machel and thirty-three of its passengers, including Machel's close aid and friend Aquino de Bragança. With the Marxist-Leninist nation-building project in Mozambique mired in imbroglio, the death of Machel delivered a symbolic *coup de grâce*. In the words of Isabel Noronha, then a producer at the Instituto Nacional de Cinema (INC) in Maputo, '*era de fato o fim de uma etapa* [...] *sabíamos que esse sonho de país acabava ali*' [it was in fact the end of a phase … we knew that the dream of the country had ended there].[107]

As if baptising this moment of post-independence transition, 1986 also saw the publication of Mia Couto's short story collection *Vozes anoitecidas*, which marked a sharp break with its literary and ideological prehistory in at least two senses. On the one hand, it represented what Fátima Mendonça has described as the transition from a conception of literary production regulated by the rigid principles of Zhdanovist socialist realism to one which aims at the accommodation of diverse perspectives and modes of critical interpretation.[108] That is, in general literary terms, it presented a challenge to the Mozambican government's demands for cultural production to toe the party line by giving voice to the widespread feeling of mistrust generated by the period's oppressive ideological milieu. As such, it sparked a heated debate in the arts supplement of the weekly newspaper *Tempo* as to the role of literature within the changing Mozambican society of the time, the furore of which was only definitively quelled when Craveirinha came out publicly to defend Couto's book, putting paid to the controversy by virtue of his literary prestige and perceived political

[107] Quoted in Margarida Cardoso, *Kuxa Kanema: O Nascimento do Cinema*, DVD, 52 mins (Lisbon: Filmes do Tejo, 2004).
[108] Fátima Mendonça, 'Literaturas emergentes, identidades e cânone', in Margarida Calafate Ribeiro and Maria Paula Meneses, eds., *Moçambique: Das palavras escritas*. (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2009), pp. 19-34 (pp. 29-31).

credentials.[109] At a more fundamental level, however, the formal procedures with which Couto achieved this subversive effect demonstrate an innovative reworking of pre-existing aesthetic conventions in a way that both participated in and contributed to an upsurge of literary activity in Mozambique, establishing an artistic vocabulary of spectral metaphorics that would reappear in later Mozambican texts engaging with similar themes and preoccupations, and mobilising the figure of the ghost as a *topos* with which to register the changes to experience attendant on the transition to neoliberal capitalism in the country. Particularly relevant in this respect is the short story '*A história dos aparecidos*', which, as Maurits has argued, marries a neo-realist sensibility to elements of the fantastic and the supernatural in order to rework the form of the modern ghost story.[110] The full extent of the story's influence within the spectral turn in Mozambican literature can be gauged from the fact that the peculiar domestication of spectrality which it achieves through its narrative blurring of the line between life and death will re-emerge in much the same form in the later work of Suleiman Cassamo and Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa, among other Mozambican writers.

The plot of '*A história dos aparecidos*' follows the experiences of two men who have been displaced from their home by a flood and must re-locate to another, neighbouring village. Thinking they have died in the flood — or at least feigning to believe that they have died so as to avoid the work and expense of finding them food and shelter — the officials at the neighbouring village take the two men to be ghosts and refuse them entry, arguing that they are not included in the estimate of the aid programme and that if they try to register two ghosts for relocation they will be punished by their superiors for '*obscurantismo*' [obscurantism].[111] The two men respond that they are not ghosts but the authorities are unsure

[109] Fátima Mendonça, 'Literaturas emergentes, identidades e cânone', p. 31; Peter J. Maurits, 'The Mozambican Ghost Story', p. 183.
[110] Peter J. Maurits, *The Mozambican Modern Ghost Story*, chapter 4.
[111] Mia Couto, *Vozes anoitecidas* (Maputo: Ndjira, 2008 [1986]), p. 89. All further references are given after quotations in the main body of the text.

how to verify this fact, for the large-scale devastation caused by the flood has unsurprisingly left them without their documents of identification. Eventually, a government commission is installed in the village to arbitrate on the matter and rules that the two men are to be considered as '*populações existentes*' [part of the population in existence] (p. 92).

In this way, the story hinges on an ontological uncertainty surrounding the two protagonists in which neither the authorities nor the men themselves can be sure of their status as living human beings, with each party throwing into question the judgement of the other to the extent that the narrative is plunged into an interpretive grey area that undermines generic reading practices by supporting multiple and contradictory points of view. The clear-cut dichotomy established at the beginning of the text between the living and the dead, for example, is mystified in direct proportion to the progression of the narrative. '*É uma verdade*' [it is a truth], the narrator asserts in the story's opening lines,

> *os mortos não devem aparecer, saltar a fronteira do mundo deles. Só vêm desorganizar a nossa tristeza. Já sabemos com certeza: o tal desapareceu. Consolamos as viúvas, as lágrimas já deitamos, completas.*
>
> [the dead should not appear, cross the frontier of their world. They only come to disorganise our sadness. We already know with certainty: this person has disappeared. We console the widows, the tears already shed, complete] (87).

Yet this sense of existential disturbance is precisely what is precipitated by the return of two men from a natural disaster in which they were thought to have died. Instead of granting the reader a definitive cue to interpret this return as an apparition of two souls from the world of the dead, however, the text proceeds to undermine the very opposition between life and death on which such a return is predicated. Indeed, the description of the flood is crucially left

open-ended, so that the authorities' hesitation is reproduced within the reading experience itself in such a way that the story can functionally be read from either of the two competing perspectives:

> *As cheias levaram a aldeia, puxada pelas raízes. Nem ficou a cicatriz do lugar. Salvaram-se os muitos. Desapareceram Luís Fernando e Aníbal Mucavel. Morreram por dentro da água, pescados pelo rio furioso. A morte deles era uma certeza quando uma tarde apareceram mais outra vez.*
>
> [The storm lifted the village up and pulled it by its roots. Not even a scar of the place remained. Many were saved. Luís Fernando and Aníbal Mucavel disappeared. They died inside the waters, dragged like fish by the furious current. Their death was a certainty when one afternoon they appeared yet again] (87).

Did Luís and Aníbal die in the flood or were their fellow villagers mistaken in their judgement? What the foregoing description leaves unsaid is precisely what provides the story with the impetus for its narrative development, for while the deaths of the two men are taken for a certainty, the equivocal use of the verb '*aparecer*' [appear] — which, due to its implication of both a physical world of actually existing 'appearances' and an immaterial one of spectres and ghosts, can equally refer to the two men's survival from the flood as to their post-mortem 'apparition' — crucially opens up the story's main event to an interpretive ambiguity that unfolds with the protagonists' desperate attempts to verify the ontological credentials. Incidentally, the debate around the ontological status of the two protagonists neatly mirrors the bifurcation in the terms of the text's reception by literary critics, with

critical consensus split along the same lines dividing the claims of the state officials, on the one hand (Afolabi, Gonçalves), and those of Luís and Aníbal, on the other (Maurits).[112]

But whereas Luís and Aníbal are initially indignant at their treatment at the hands of the authorities and are accordingly vocal in affirming their status as living human beings, the hesitation of the state officials begins to weigh on the two men as they end up questioning their previous convictions of their own worldliness.

> *—Será que é verdade? Não será que somos mesmo falecidos? Pode ser eles têm razão. Ou talvez estamos nascer outra vez.*
>
> *—Pode ser, meu irmão.*
>
> [—Might it be true? Might we not really be dead people? They could be right. Or maybe we are being been born again.
>
> —It could be, brother] (90-91).

This line of self-questioning is then also accompanied by a more active desire to cease to be human, as Aníbal expresses his desire to swap his being for a state of nothingness by confessing to his friend that he has '*saudades de ser ninguém*' [a longing to be no one]; a

[112] Thus Niyi Afolabi, for instance, has argued that the state securitisation of the means of subsistence in the text as against the expropriated mass of internally displaced persons should be read as a critique of the corruption of a Mozambican government that denies its citizens social welfare while citing vague administrative clauses as a self-justification, while Luis Gonçalves has similarly suggested that the exclusion of the two villagers by their compatriots and the labelling of them as ghosts flag up the issue of state bureaucratisation in Mozambique insofar as Luís and Aníbal are deprived of aid and their ontological status is challenged on the basis of a mere administrative quibble. While these readings subscribe to the opinion that the two protagonists are in fact alive and that the branding of them as flood apparitions is an error of judgement that serves to buttress the arbitrary jurisdiction of the bureaucratic state apparatus, Maurits, on the other hand, contends that the two men should in fact be taken at their word and read as ghosts, enabling him to situate the text within a broader genealogy of spectral Mozambican prose fiction which he labels the 'Mozambican ghost story'. See Niyi Afolabi, *The Golden Cage* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001); Luis Gonçalves, 'Mia Couto and Mozambique: The Renegotiation of the National Narrative and Identity in an African Nation', PhD Thesis, The University of North Carolina (2009); Peter J. Maurits, 'The Mozambican Ghost Story', pp. 184-185, *The Mozambican Modern Ghost Story*, chapter 4.

confession which Luís quickly reprimands by telling him that '[*e*]*ssa conversa já parece dos espíritos*' [this conversation is beginning to sound like one between spirits] (90):

> *—Sabe o quê? Antigamente o mato, tão vazio de gente, me fazia medo. Pensava só podia viver nas pessoas, vizinho de gente. Agora, penso o contrário. Já quero voltar no lugar dos bichos. Tenho saudades de ser ninguém.*
>
> [—You know what? Before, the bush, so empty of people, used to scare me. I used to think that I could only live among humans, as a neighbour of people. Now, I think the opposite. Now I want to return to where the animals live. I have a longing to be no one] (90).

Aníbal's longing for self-erasure and, more specifically, his existential affinity with species of animal life are consistent with the belief among many of Mozambique's manifold ethnic groupings that the dead and the living exist on an existential continuum rather than as mutually opposable states of (non-)being and (un)consciousness, and thus carry with them the semantic weight of spirituality, magic and witchcraft or *feitiçaria* as these practices are differentially figured in the country's many local belief-systems. One such local belief-system belongs to the Tawara of Tete province, central Mozambique. As João Paulo Borges Coelho explains, the Tawara

> are part of a complex of Shona peoples whose structure of knowledge is based on the belief that, after death, the spirit of particular individuals is embodied in an animal, the most preponderant being in the lion (*m'phondoro*). The embodied spirit returns to contact the community through a medium, the *mvula*, whose exclusive status is socially recognized. It is through this medium of the *m'phondoro* that the dominant

> spirit advises the community on difficult decisions or those of vital importance, particularly where agricultural crops are concerned and in everything connected with water. It is not by chance that the *mvula* signifies either the spirit medium or the rain.[113]

Tellingly, Aníbal's desire for self-annihilation and his expressed existential kinship with extra-human modes of social being — the *mato* where only the animals live — corresponds with Tawara beliefs in the interminability of the present as a continuum that joins the dead and the living with species of animal life. The fact that the homeland of the Tawara has historically been susceptible to floods of the sort described in '*A história dos aparecidos*' then further encourages a reading of this sort, for the Tawara are indigenous to a region in Tete province that is vulnerable to disastrous overflowing from the Zambezi river and nearby Cahora Bassa lake. To this extent, the homonymity of the word *mvula* — which signifies both spirit medium and the rain — can be seen to establish a formal relation between water and spectrality that is also at the heart of Couto's short story.

The same motif of ontological uncertainty around which Couto's short story unfolds is also taken up in the title story of Suleiman Cassamo's short story collection *O regresso do morto*, published three years after *Vozes Anoitecidas* in 1989. As an author who also came of age in the traumatic and creatively fertile years of the civil war period in Mozambique, death can be considered as the overarching theme of all of Cassamo's literary fiction, but the particular inflection it is given in his work is rather presented as a mode of 'death-in-life' and has accordingly be read by critics such as Eleanor Jones as a literary response to the necropolitical discourse by which African life is both categorised and constituted as radically

[113] João Paulo Borges Coelho, 'The State, the Community and Natural Calamities in Rural Mozambique', in *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*, ed. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (London and New York: Verso, 2008) pp. 219-245 (p. 229).

precarious.[114] Yet this discursive intervention should at the same time be situated at the level of literary form in terms of an experiment in narrative structure and placed within a genealogy of Mozambican literature that encompasses the domestication of spectrality achieved by Couto in his short story '*A história dos aparecidos*'. As Francisco Noa has argued, the experience of reading Cassamo's fiction is one in which

> *o leitor é, desde logo, colocado perante uma situação não muito* ortodoxa*, mas, mesmo assim, verossímil, isto é, que o que lhe é proposto ler é uma* fala dirigida a um ser ausente. *Pode ser feito aqui um contraste curioso, por exemplo, com as machadianas* Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*, onde é o morto que se dirige aos vivos*.
>
> [the reader is, from the start, placed in a situation which is not at all *orthodox*, but, even so, realistic (*verossímil*), that is, what is being presented to the reader is an *utterance directed at an absent being*. A curious comparison can be made here, for example, with Machado's *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*, where it is the dead man that directs himself to the living].[115]

The suggested comparison with Machado de Assis is salutary insofar as it grounds the distortion between life and death so characteristic of Cassamo's literary project in terms of an innovation in strategies of narration that simultaneously preserves and surpasses the modes of realistic narration that had become dominant in Mozambique through Frelimo's championing

[114] Eleanor Jones, *Battleground Bodies: Gender and Sexuality in Mozambican Literature* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2017), p. 133.
[115] Francisco Noa, 'Dez Anos, Dez Autores, Dez Obras: Tendências Temáticas e Estéticas da Literatura Moçambicano', *Literatura, Política, Cultura (1994-2004)*, Isabel Margato and Renato Cordeiro Gomes, ed. (Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2005), pp. 155-170 (p. 158).

of Soviet-style socialist realism.[116] Indeed, both Couto's and Cassamo's texts can be conceived not as a total rupture with pre-existing generic paradigms but rather as a heightening of literary realism that borders on a form of *irrealism*, which is the term used by Michael Löwy to describe the moment at which the 'ideal-type' of realism falters as it is pervaded by the fantastic and the supernatural.[117] The contradictions of Cassamo's literary style, which combines a recognisably realist sensibility with a narrative voice that is, in Noa's words, 'not at all orthodox', are forcefully demonstrated in his short story '*O regresso do morto*'.

Thematically, this text is preoccupied with the legacy of migrant work in Mozambique and the sexual division of labour on which this system relied for its reproduction, as it narrates the return of the nineteen-year old Moisés to his family home after a spell of contract work in a South African mining complex. In the period before Moisés' return, however, one of his co-workers has travelled to visit his mother to inform her of her son's death after hearing that Moisés has been killed in an accident down one of the mines. When Moisés opens the door to his family home and bellows out '*Hodi!?*', the Ronga word for 'may I enter?', his mother is thus still dressed in her mourning clothes and is astonished to see what would appear to be the ghost of her deceased son:

> *— Hooodii! — fez novamente, com mais ar.*
>
> *O raio parou no ar. A velha voltou-se, lentamente, e procurou o dono da voz. Depois, os olhos esbugalhados, o corpo tremeu, o machado caiu.*

[116] Noa's comparison between Cassamo and Machado becomes more problematic once one attends to the question of class, for the dead narrator of the *Memórias* is a slave-owner and as such belongs to the land-owning elite in nineteenth century Brazil, while the spectral characters of *O Regresso do Morto* are rather the dispossessed or proletarians.

[117] Michael Löwy, 'The Current of Critical Irrealism: "A moonlit enchanted night"', in *Adventures in Realism*, Matthew Beaumont, ed., (London: Blackwell, 2007) pp. 193-206 (p. 195). Indeed, the Warwick Research Collective have proposed a reading of Machado's *Memórias* in precisely these terms, as an irrealist corruption of conventional realist narrative. See Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development*, pp. 63-65.

> *— Hoyo-hoyo — o Morto esperava ouvir tal saudação. Mas nunca ninguém desejou boas-vindas a fantasmas.*
>
> [— Maaay I enter? — he tried again, with renewed force.
> Everything froze. The old woman turned around, slowly, and looked for the origin of the voice. Then, eyes bulging, her body trembled, the axe fell.
> — Greetings — the Dead Man had hoped to hear this salutation. But no one ever says welcome to ghosts.][118]

With his mother clutching him tight, tears streaming from her eyes, Moisés whispers to her words of reassurance, promising that he did not die in the mines and that there is therefore no need to worry. Yet in the preceding lines the third-person narrator is literally referred to as '*o Morto*' [the Dead Man], and at the beginning of the story his physical appearance is similarly described only by reference to common conceptions of the returning dead. In an allusion to his unkempt and careworn features, for example, the narrator speculates that '*se é que os mortos se cansam, devia estar muito cansado*' [if it is possible for the dead to get tired, then he must be very tired indeed], and when describing Moisés' laboured gait, the narrator makes similar recourse to the belief that when the dead return they come bearing the weight of their own personal cross (p. 81). In this way, an ontological uncertainty is introduced into the narrative in which the protagonist can be read as at once dead and alive. The epigraph to the story is only half helpful in this respect, listing a dedication: '*Aos magaíça, va mafelandlelene (Aos mineiros quando regressam, aos que morrem pelo caminho)*' [to those miners that returned, and to those who died along the way] (p. 81) — thus effectively reproducing the alive-dead confusion that is established by the text, seeing as Moisés can be

[118] Suleiman Cassamo, *O Regresso do Morto* (Lisbon: Caminho, [1989] 1997), p. 82. All further references are given after quotations in the main body of the text.

read as either one of these categories or, alternatively, both. The opening lines present a similar obstacle to any decisive interpretation, informing us that Moisés has come '*do poente incendiado, lá no fim do mundo*" [from the burning sunset, there at the end of the world] (p. 81), which could refer to the gates of hell or the afterlife with as much force as the perilous working conditions in the coal and gold mines at Witwatersrand and the Transvaal.

By the time of Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa's '*Orgia dos loucos*', published as part of his eponymous collection short story collection in 1990, the motif of ontological uncertainty had become one of the Mozambican ghost story's most defining characteristics, if not, arguably, a sub-genre in its own right, appearing in texts such as Paulina Chiziane's novel *Balada de amor ao vento* (1990) with the ambivalent ontological states of its uprooted cast of characters, and in Elton Rebello's *Nyandayeyo* (1990) in the form of the phantasmagoric somnambulism of the village of Matchoquene.[119] Khosa's short story reproduces the formal distortion between life and death that was seen in Couto's and Cassamo's texts, only this time in a more explicit registration of the psychic trauma caused by the Mozambican civil war. In the words of Niyi Afolabi, '*Orgia dos loucos*' plays out like 'a drama where the protagonists question their own existence since their reality is so anguishing that is seems like a dream', and as a result of this phantasmatic distortion, the reading experience is defined by an

[119] The mode of spectrality elaborated in Chiziane's novel is one in which the protagonists of the text are unsure as to the solidity of their own state of being, such as Mwando who, expelled from his local community, roams around aimlessly across a landscape haunted by ghosts and monsters, feeling himself uprooted and dispossessed, more dead than alive, '[*d*]*e corpo presente e espírito ausente*' [of present body and absent spirit] (p. 65). By contrast, the ghostliness to be found in Rebello's text is more appropriately described as a spectrality of the land, as the village around which the entirety of the novel's action is organised appears to float in a liminal non-space. In the words of this latter novel's third-person narrator: '*As árvores verdes, de folhas dançando o ritmo cadenciado do vento, e depois flores a delirar da união entre a vida e a morte, tornam-na na gruta fantasmagórica e misteriosa das poucas pessoas que não vão morrendo*' [the green trees, with leaves dancing the rhythm of the wind, and the flowers delirious from the union between life and death, transform it into the phantasmagoric and mysterious cave belonging to those few people who are not yet dead] (p. 5). See Paulina Chiziane, *Balada de Amor ao Vento* (Lisbon: Caminho, [1990] 2003) and Elton Rebello, *Nyandayeyo* (Maputo: Associação de Escritores Moçambicanos, 1990).

inability 'to decipher where fantasy stops and reality begins'.[120] The story itself is told in a catachrestic form of free indirect discourse which unfolds amid an overload of grotesque images that reappear in disconnected flashes to create a hallucinatory or dream-like effect, while the accompanying shifts between first-person analepsis and third-person present-tense narration serve to enhance the overall disorienting quality of the narrative. The plot follows the attempts of António Maposse to reconnect with his missing wife and son in the wake of a village massacre orchestrated by Renamo, the right-wing-backed insurgency in the Mozambican civil war, and begins with the contradictory description of him waking up from '*a consciência da morte*' [the consciousness of death] into a world that conversely has the appearance of '*as profundezas abissais dos espíritos*' [the bottomless depths of the spirits] (53). As he starts to refamiliarise himself with his surroundings, Maposse is plunged into a nightmare world of terror populated by pools of blood and decaying corpses. These scenes of death and abjection then work to prepare the reader for the sudden trauma to which Maposse is exposed when he finds his wife Maria and discovers that she has been beaten, violated and killed. In despair and overwhelmed by feelings of futility and isolation, Maposse is briefly re-energised by the need to locate his missing son João, but this need is in turn quickly subdued by the sheer force of the necro-dystopia in which he finds himself stranded. After he calls out his son's name repeatedly only to be met with the same resonant silence, Maposse loses all hope and believes that he himself has died and that he is now living in the world of the spirits:

> — *João!*

[120] Niyi Afolabi, 'Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa: A Rebllious Voice of Mozambican Regeneration', in *Emerging Perspectives on Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa: Prophet, Trickster, and Provocateur*, Niyi Afolabi, ed. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2010), pp. 59-98 (pp. 80-81).

Grito sem eco. Olhar angustiado. Gestos mortos. Estou morto. Sou um fantasma. Estou entre os espíritos.

[—João!
A shout without echo. An anguished look. Dead gestures. I am dead. I am a ghost. I am among the spirits.][121]

But just after it seems that Maposse has been able to resolve the dilemma of his self-preservation in the face of so much trauma and devastation by convincing himself that his son is lost and that he is a spectre living among the world of ghosts, a new problem arises when João finally appears and has great difficulty trying to convince his father that he has in fact survived the disaster engulfing them:

—Pai!

—Uma voz.

Estacou. Rodou o corpo.

—Quem é?

Voz moribunda.

—Sou eu.

—Quem?

—O teu filho.

—Estás morto.

—Estou vivo [...]

—Tu não existes, João.

[121] Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa, *Orgia dos Loucos* (Maputo: Alcance Editores, [1990] 2008), p. 58. All further references are given after quotations in the main body of the text.

[—Father!

—A voice.

He halted. He turned his body.

—Who is it?

A dying voice.

—It is me.

—Who?

—Your son.

—You are dead.

—I am alive.

—You do not exist, João] (p. 59).

Maposse cannot accept the fact that his son is alive precisely because this would contradict his effort to impose order on the surrounding chaos through an appeal to spectrality as a revitalising or compensatory psychological manoeuvre. Indeed, in her study of the 'psychopathology of post-colonial Mozambique', Chesca Long-Innes reads the propensity towards fantastical elements in Mozambican literary texts of the civil war period in precisely these terms, as a means of coming to terms with the psychic effects 'of a society traumatised by its continuing history of poverty and extreme violence'.[122] To recognise that his son is alive would obstruct Maposse's attempts to psychologically organise this collective trauma: it would make him confront his own position as living, and thus force him to face his loss and suffering in an unmediated way that might unsettle the equilibrium of his post-traumatic psyche. But insofar as the fast-paced back-and-forth between the two characters rehearses that opposition between life and death which Maposse had just ostensibly overcome through

[122] Chesca Long-Innes, 'The Psychopathology of Post-colonial Mozambique: Mia Couto's Voices Made Night', *American Imago*, 55.1 (1998), pp. 155-184 (p. 158).

his embrace of a spectral mode of being, the text returns to the same motif of ontological uncertainty that was seen in Couto's and Cassamo's short stories. For just as Luís and Aníbal had trouble convincing the state officials of their status as living human beings in '*A história dos aparecidos*', and just as Moisés was taken for a dead man in '*O regresso do morto*', so is João's claim to life denied by Maposse in such a way as to produce an interpretive ambiguity in the very fabric of the text. In the case of Khosa's text, the reader can interpret João's appearance as either the fact that proves Maposse's appeal to spectrality to be a mere compensatory psychological manoeuvre — and, *a fortiori*, that confirms his living ontological status — or, alternatively, the entry of João himself into that 'world of the spirits' in which Maposse claims to be living, and thus a marker of his ontological spectrality. As will be seen in the next section, the ambivalent structure of Maposse's psychic state corresponds to the guilt and oneiric alienation that typically characterises the responses of genocide survivors to the trauma they have suffered. For now, however, I want to emphasise how in all three texts, the double entendre of the word 'appearance' and the ontological uncertainty attendant on its polysemy, correspond to a kind of quantum superposition whereby the protagonists can be read as at once dead and alive in a way that requires the act of interpretation to make a decision one way or the other.

2.3. Primitive Accumulation

The peculiarly domesticated form of spectrality, however, to be found in these three short stories is used in each case to register a different aspect of the same historical process; namely, the culmination of that phase of primitive accumulation that paved the way for full transition to free market capitalism in Mozambique during the 1990s. The dichotomising logic of Couto's text, for example, which carves up characters up into multiple and at times

contradictory binary categories — the world of the living and the world of the dead; those in possession of the means of subsistence and those who have been displaced from their home by the flood; registered villagers and paperless refugees — can be shown to satirise the biopolitical character of the neoliberal aid transaction.[123] For the first nine years of independence up to 1984, Mozambique had actually managed to keep many aid agencies out of the country, barring most NGOs from crossing its borders altogether and refusing to sign up to membership with either the IMF, the World Bank, or the Lomé Convention. By 1989, however, the financial support the country had been received from the Soviet Union was abruptly cut off, leading to a situation of 'desperate economic weakness' that gave Mozambique's major creditors 'enormous leverage', while allies such as Tanzania and Zimbabwe began to withdraw their military forces from the civil war, exacerbating the crisis.[124] In 1990, the World Bank's *World Development Report* had Mozambique down as the 'poorest, hungriest, most indebted, most aid-dependent country' in the world — a situation even worse than the already severe food crisis precipitated by the droughts of 1982-1983, after which event the Mozambican government made its first food aid appeal.[125] What had elapsed during this six-year period was a brutal destabilisation campaign of 'civil' warfare covertly supported by apartheid South Africa and the United States that functioned alongside structural adjustment in Mozambique to herald the transition from Marxism-Leninism to neoliberal capitalism by breaking the country's resistance to political and economic dependency, draining its capacity for industrial production, and destroying its national infrastructures. The crisis of social reproduction precipitated by this situation was subsequently outsourced to foreign donor aid and the recently-arrive NGO sector, to the

[123] While biopolitics it is a tern that has been taken up and developed by later theorists such as Giorgio Agamben and Roberto Esposito, it is here used in a specifically Foucauldian sense to refer to the control of human life, at the level of population, through mechanisms of power, technologies of knowledge and forms of political economy.
[124] Margaret Hall and Tom Young, *Confronting Leviathan*, p. 204.
[125] Joseph Hanlon, *Mozambique*, p. 1, 21.

effect that if 'aid were not available, people would be squeezed too hard, there would be riots, and the whole structural adjustment package would collapse'.[126] But far from providing a solution to this developmental impasse in socialist Mozambique, the rise of a neoliberal aid economy in the country rather contributed to what Joseph Hanlon has rightly identified as a process of 'recolonisation'.[127] In the words of Silvia Federici:

> The use of "food aid" delivered to displaced people and victims of famine [ensures] compliance with economic conditionalities, create[s] long-term food dependency, and undermine[s] a country's ability to control its economic and political future. It must not be forgotten that food aid is a great boost to U.S. agribusiness, which profits from it twice, first by being relieved of its huge surpluses and, later, by cashing in on the "aided" country's dependence on imported food.[128]

The so-called 'aid invasion' in Mozambique played out exactly in the way that Federici is describing insofar as it functioned to draw Mozambique's Marxist-Leninist regime into a neoliberal world order headed by the same global powers that were sponsoring the domestic right-wing insurgency. As William Minter has argued, structural adjustment and aid dependency went hand in hand in Mozambique, since the interests that served to benefit from these twin processes of economic restructuring — on the one hand, U.S. capital investment, on the other, USAID (United States Agency for International Development) — were the same that had aligned themselves with the opposition party in the Mozambican civil war through the supply of military training and financial support.[129] As the great Ghanaian

[126] Joseph Hanlon, *Mozambique*, pp. 158-159.
[127] Joseph Hanlon, *Mozambique*, pp. 2-8.
[128] Silvia Federici, 'War, Globalization and Reproduction', in *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction and Feminist Struggle*, PM Press, 2012, pp. 76-84 (p. 82).
[129] William Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, pp. 272-276.

revolutionary Kwame Nkrumah once quipped: 'Before the decline of colonialism, what today is known as aid was simply foreign investment'.[130]

The two flood refugees' deprivation of the means of subsistence in '*A história dos aparecidos*' can then be seen to register the role played by aid dependency in Mozambique's reintegration into the neoliberal world-system by casting the international capitalist division of wealth in terms of an ontological confusion over the status of life itself. When Luís and Aníbal are referred to the head of social affairs, for example, he informs them that regrettably they are not eligible for relocation by the state. When pressed on the injustice of this exclusion, however, the functionary's conviction begins to waver and he finds himself in need of advice on how to properly proceed:

> *—Olha: mandaram os donativos. Veio a roupa das calamidades, chapas de zinco, muita coisa. Mas vocês não estão planificados [...]*
> *—Como não estamos? Vocês riscam a pessoa assim qualquer maneira?*
> *—Mas vocês morreram, nem sei como que estão aqui.*
> *—Morremos como? Não acredita que estamos vivos?*
> *—Talvez, estou confuso. Mas este assunto de vivo não-vivo é melhor falarmos com os outros camaradas.*
>
> [—Look: they have sent us the aid supplies. The donated clothes, the sheets of zinc, many things. But you were not planned for.
> —How weren't we? Do you exclude a person just like that?
> —But you died, I don't know how you are here.
> —How did we die? You don't believe that we are alive?

[130] Kwame Nkrumah, *Axioms of Kwame Nkrumah* (London: Panaf Books, 1967), p. 21.

> —Maybe, I'm confused. But it is better to speak about this matter of alive and not-alive with the other comrades] (p. 88).

As Mark Duffield has argued, aid 'embodies a biopolitics of self-reliance harnessed to strengthen social cohesion in the interests of international security', and relies upon a 'distinction between "developed" and "undeveloped" species-life' that promotes the regulation of the latter according to the former's legal machinery.[131] This division between the developed and the un(der)developed is precisely what is registered in Couto's short story in the narrative split between the living and the dead, so that the uncertainty around the protagonist's ontological status is at the same time a protest over who gets to decide the terms of access to the means of subsistence and the conditions on which states, territories and populations will either live or die. The fact that this uneven relationship of power is allegorised in the text through a legal dispute over the claims of two flood refugees to the condition of life itself then throws into relief the regime of biopower undergirding this economy of neoliberal donor aid. As Achille Mbembe has argued, biopower

> appears to function by dividing those who must live and those who must die. As it proceeds on the basis of a split between the living and the dead, such power defines itself in relation to the biological field — of which it takes control and in which it invests itself. This control presupposes a distribution of human species into groups, a subdivision of populations into subgroups, and the biological caesura between these subgroups.[132]

[131] Mark Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples* (London: Polity Press, 2007), pp. 143, 5.
[132] Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, [2016] 2019), p. 71.

'*A história dos aparecidos*' literalises this biological split by establishing a world of the living and a world of the dead that is breached when two flood refugees dare to cross from one to the other. Insofar as the ensuing confusion is centred around which of these worlds the two men belong to — with one entitling them to the means of subsistence and the other effectively disenfranchising them — the text is able to make a broader comment on the international division of wealth that regulates this exercise of biopower on a world scale, and thereby also on the role that the 'aid invasion' played in bringing about the transition to neoliberalism in Mozambique.

In a similar vein, rather than resolve the dilemma of Moisés' ontological status in '*O regresso do morto*' one way or the other, it seems that what is required is to register the reality of the social experiences to which this uncertainty is referring, which in this instance is centred around the precarious position of wives, mother and daughters who did not know when or if their loved ones would ever return from periods of contract work in neighbouring South Africa. In the classic study *O mineiro moçambicano* [the Mozambican miner], co-ordinated by anti-apartheid activist Ruth First for the Centro de Estudos Africanos at the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane in 1977, the authors detail the extent to which the historical legacy of migrant labour in Mozambique had contributed to the country's state of economic underdevelopment and presented obstacles to socialist transition that would ultimately prepare the ground for the neoliberal turn of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the words of First *et al*.:

> *As forças produtivas de Moçambique foram organizadas não de acordo com as necessidades do desenvolvimento capitalista em Portugal, mas segundo as necessidades da acumulação capitalista na África Austral. Portugal desempenhou o papel de 'rentier', retirando a maior parte dos seus lucros do comércio invisível e especulando na venda de força de trabalho da sua mão de obra africano.*

> [The productive forces of Mozambique were not organised according to the necessities of capitalist development in Portugal, but in line with the necessities of capitalist accumulation in southern Africa. Portugal played the role of 'rentier', deriving most of its profits from the informal economy and from speculating on the sale of its African workforce].[133]

The development of coal and gold mining operations in South Africa created an expansive regional labour market which enlisted Mozambique in this role of rentier to provide a cheap and expendable workforce that would maximise profits for South African capitalists by externalising the cost of the migrant's reproduction onto subsistence agriculture in their country of origin. This system of migrant labour in turn relied on a sexual division of labour which is the source of the ontological confusion in Cassamo's short story, whereby Moisés' mother is kept in the dark as to whether her son has died or survived in the mines across the border. Indeed, First *et al*. recognise the structural character of the uncertainty emerging from this sexual division of labour when they speak of the '*complexidade da inserção social da mulher casada com um mineiro durante longos meses de incerteza sobre se o marido voltará ou não, são e salvo, após o contrato*' [complexity of the social insertion of the woman married to a miner throughout long months of uncertainty over whether her husband would return or not, alive and well, after the contract].[134] The interpretive ambiguity which enables Moisés to be read as at once dead and alive, as both the miner that returned and the one that died along the way, can then be said to introduce this structural uncertainty into the text at the most basic level of the structure of narrative, much in the manner in which the biological split

[133] Ruth First et al., *O mineiro moçambicano: Um estudo sobre a exportação de mão de obra em Inhambane* (Belo Horizonte: Editora UPFE, [1977] 2015).
[134] Ruth First et al., *O mineiro moçambicano*, p. 21.

between the living and the dead commented on the inequalities of the neoliberal aid industry in '*A história dos aparecidos*'.

The collapse of this system of migrant labour in the immediate years of post-independence created a surplus population which exacerbated the crisis of reproduction in Mozambique and contributed to the transition to neoliberalism by burdening an already strained national infrastructure with a historical legacy of underdevelopment. Cassamo's decision to return to the hegemonic moment of migrant labour from the vantage point of the late 1980s can thus be read as an appreciation of the role that this trajectory of collapse played in the process of neoliberal transition from within which he was writing. Indeed, this mode of overlapping temporalities is consistent with Cassamo's method of literary composition in general, as Jones has shown in her analysis of the way in which spatio-temporal ambiguity functions, paradoxically, to index the historicity of gendered colonial oppression in '*Ngilina, tu vai morrer*', another of the texts collected in *O Regresso do Morto*.[135] Yet this combination of historical sensibility with a propensity towards the fantastic and the supernatural is also a characteristic feature of irrealist writing more generally, for this same heightening of ideal-type realism is discernible in the work of other peripheral writers who are similarly preoccupied with the lived experience of combined and uneven development. As the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) have argued:

> In (semi-)peripheral aesthetics, the 'shock' of combined unevenness is registered with particular intensity and resonance. Insofar as the mode of representation is (ir)realist,

[135] Eleanor Jones, *Battleground Bodies*, p. 147. This method of overlaying temporalities and fusing together experiences from disparate historical moments as a means of critiquing present-day social injustices is also discernible in other forms of Mozambican cultural production. As I have tried to show elsewhere, this sort of combined and uneven aesthetics is a characteristic feature of Mozambican contemporary art and has been used by artists such as Félix Mula to register the same legacy of cross-border migrant labour with which Cassamo is preoccupied in '*O regresso do morto*'. See Thomas Waller, 'Translatability in Mozambican Contemporary Art', *The Contemporary Journal*, 1 (2019), https://thecontemporaryjournal.org/strands/on-translations/translatability-and-the-african-modern-in-mozambican-contemporary-art (pp. 4-8).

> the writing will take the present social order as its object. But the *epistemology* of irrealist representation is quite often historicist: the attempt will be made to peer back into the past, by way of recovering both the specific history of the present and the alternative histories that might have been but were not, yet that (paradoxically) still might be.[136]

In this sense, the aesthetics of spectrality in '*O regresso do morto*' are doubly inscribed: on the one hand, Moisés' ontological uncertainty functions to register the structural precarity of wives mothers, and children who were economically dependent on the return of the *magaíças* [migrant miners] from periods of contract work across the border in South Africa; on the other, the hegemony previously achieved by the structural uncertainty attendant on this system of migrant labour was itself absent by the late 1980s, so that the story's decision to conjure up a history of the present can be said to instance a mode of spectral aesthetics in its own right, overlaying the more specific historical reference made by Moisés' ontological uncertainty with an appreciation of the continuity of Mozambique's economic underdevelopment. The ghost story, as Fredric Jameson has noted, is a genre particularly suited to this sort of genealogical resuscitation, seeing as it is defined by an 'undifferentiated sense of the presence and the threat of history and the past as such' that allows it to recuperate a sense of historicity for a present in which it may appear to be missing or functionally occluded.[137] To this extent, the motif of haunting in Cassamo's story can be seen to telescope that draining of productive forces to which First *et al*. alluded into the contemporary neoliberal moment of epochal reorganisation out of which Cassamo was writing.

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[136] Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development*, p. 72.
[137] Fredric Jameson, 'Historicism in *The Shining*', in *Signatures of the Visible* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007 [1992]), pp. 112-134 (p. 124).

After the dismantling of the Breton Woods currency agreement in 1971, which severed all ties between the dollar and the gold standard and signalled the start of a new hegemonic phase for neoliberal capitalism, the gold mining industry in southern Africa was changed completely, as firms could now achieve higher profits than before, the expected life of the mines was extended, new shafts were opened, and new labour-saving technologies were introduced. To meet the need for secure long-term reserves of skilled and unskilled workers created by these world-systemic developments, South African mining capital turned to its own industrial reserve army in the form of the Bantustans and away from Mozambican migrant labour.[138] This restructuring process subsequently deprived Mozambique of a major source of domestic revenue in the form of remittance money, while burdening the country's infrastructure with a newly unemployed section of its male population — a burden that the country was unable to cope with due in part to the level of underdevelopment created by this very system of migrant labour. The Mozambican government's attempts at productive autonomy in the post-independence era were thus, to an extent, doomed from the outset, and the restructuring of the southern African economy over the long 1980s in accordance with the imperatives of capital accumulation on a world scale then coincided with Frelimo's appeal for help from the international community in the form of foreign donor aid and loans from the World Bank and the IMF. As Cassamo's short story returns to the history of migrant labour in Mozambique through the lens of spectral aesthetics, it thus registers what was a significant vector in the collapse of the project of Marxism-Leninism in the country and the subsequent transition to multi-party democracy, and its themes of loss and instability can accordingly be read as a cultural anxiety as to the commencement of a new phase of capitalist accumulation in southern Africa — one brought to fruition under the sign of multinational

[138] Gottfried Wellmer, 'Regional Labour Flows', in *How Fast the Wind? Southern Africa, 1975-2000*, Sérgio Vieira, William G. Martin and Immanuel Wallerstein, eds. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992) pp. 83-97 (pp. 88-91).

finance capital and the consolidation of a new, neoliberal world order. As disparate historical periods are here combined in response to a persistence of forms of economic underdevelopment, the Mozambican ghost story as it appears in Cassamo's text can be said to register what Perry Anderson has described as capitalism's 'complex and *differential* temporality'.[139]

If the narrative split between the living and the dead in Couto's short story functioned to comment on the biopolitical implications of the neoliberal aid economy's international division of wealth, and the Mozambican ghost story as it is figured in Cassamo's text was seen to stage the multiple temporalities of combined and uneven development at the local level of Mozambique's post-independence crisis of production, then Khosa's short story '*Orgia dos loucos*' will rather be seen to focus on the regional dimension of the country's neoliberal turn through its literary rendering of the psychological effects of the campaign of South African destabilisation. The crucial point in the text is directly after Maposse believes himself to have entered the 'world of the spirits' when his son João appears to problematise his attempt at psychic rehabilitation. As he prevents the story from settling into any stable ontological dimension, João stages within the narrative an opposition between a world of the living and a world of the dead of which it is the merit of text's formal ambiguities to leave definitively unresolved. He is, in this way, 'between-two-deaths' in the Lacanian sense: symbolically dead for the 'world of the spirits' in which Maposse claims to be living but not yet 'biologically' dead in actually existing physical 'reality'; or, conversely, still alive within that symbolic order from which Maposse has been excluded but nonetheless 'biologically' dead, and therefore the only true ghost of the short story.[140] In addition to the antinomies of

[139] Perry Anderson, 'Modernity and Revolution', *New Left Review* 141.1 (1984), pp. 96-113 (p. 101), emphasis original.

[140] 'Between-two-deaths' is a concept developed by Lacan in his reading of Sophocles' play *Antigone* in Seminar VII on 'the ethics of psychoanalysis'. The heroine of this play is Antigone, the daughter of Oedipus, who defies the orders of Creon, ruler of Thebes, to leave the corpse of her brother Polynices to be mangled by the dogs and birds rather than receive a proper burial in accordance with local traditions. In an act of rebellion

the protagonists' ontological states, however, the text's spectral aesthetic is endowed with a more socio-political modality, for not only does Maposse refuse to acknowledge that João is alive, but he also claims that the condition of life itself belongs explicitly to what he can only describe as 'the others':

> *—Tu não existes, João.*
>
> *—Estou vivo.*
>
> *—Ninguém está vivo. Estamos mortos. Somos espíritos angustiados à porta duma sepultura decente. A vida está com os outros, João.*
>
> *—Outros quem?*
>
> *Maposse não respondeu. Tirou as mãos dos ombros, olhou para o moço, e retirou-se da zona, perseguido pelas moscas insaciáveis.*

> [—You do not exist, João.
>
> —I am alive
>
> —No one is alive. We are dead. We are anguished spirits in search of a decent tomb. Life is with the others, João.
>
> —Who are the others?
>
> Maposse did not respond. He loosened his hands from his shoulders, looked at the boy, and walked away from the area, pursued by the insatiable flies] (p. 59).

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the consequences of which will mean Antigone's effective exclusion from the social life of Thebes, she stubbornly persists in her desire to give her a brother a proper burial and proceeds to perform the outlawed funeral rites. In response, Creon sentences her to be imprisoned in a cave with just enough food to spare his own feelings of guilt, but the insufferable conditions of the imprisonment eventually drive Antigone to suicide. In his interpretation of the play, Lacan argues that, insofar as Antigone is excluded from the social community and stripped of her rights for opposing the rule of Creon, she suffers a 'symbolic' death that precedes her 'biological' death in the suicide in the cave, so that her act of defiance places her in the liminal position of being 'between-two-deaths' and renders her as a model of desire in the ethical sense. See Jacques Lacan, 'Antigone between Two Deaths', in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 322-353.

On the one hand, this assertion corroborates the feelings of guilt that accompany the experiences of survivors of genocides and massacres such as the one imagined with such force in Khosa's short story. Indeed, Maposse's character arc throughout the text, from the discovery of the corpse of his wife to his entry into the 'world of the spirits', calls to mind to Theodor W. Adorno's meditations on the possibility of metaphysics after Auschwitz, whereby the surviving subject is seen to 'resist any claim of the positivity of existence as sanctimonious, as wronging the victims', seeing as such an affirmation of life in the face of the omnipresence of death would overlook exactly that mockery made of existence itself by the murders that the subject has just witnessed.[141] The sheer quantitative accumulation of the dead in this scenario must give rise to a qualitative change in the consciousness of the individual, to the extent that '[t]here is no chance anymore for death to come into the individual's life as somehow conformable with the course of that life'.[142] Ergo the existential crisis of Maposse in '*Orgia dos loucos*', where the constant reminders of the loss of human life and the mounting numbers of the dead themselves appear as incompatible with the fact of his self-preservation, and an appeal to spectrality is made in order to resolve the contradiction. For Maposse's dilemma here is precisely to come to terms with the fact that he has survived, while his family members have been deprived of this fate. 'By way of atonement', writes Adorno, the individual 'will be plagued by dreams such as that he is no longer living at all',[143] but equally, and by contrast, the surrounding world itself will appear as spectral due to that very accident of self-preservation:

> The only trouble with self-preservation is that we cannot help suspecting the life to which it attaches us of turning into something that makes us shudder: into a specter, a

[141] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Continuum, [1966] 1973), p. 361.
[142] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 362.
[143] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 363.

> piece of the world of ghosts, which our waking consciousness perceives to be nonexistent. The guilt of a life which purely as a fact will strangle other life, according to statistics that eke out an overwhelming number of killed with a minimal number of rescued, as if this were provided in the theory of probabilities — this guilt is irreconcilable with living. And the guilt does not cease to reproduce itself, because not for an instant can it be made fully, presently conscious.[144]

This irreconcilability of personal survival amid an abundance of death and destruction is poignantly illustrated by one scene at the beginning of '*Orgia dos loucos*' in which Maposse, recently returned to consciousness after narrowly surviving the village massacre, stands up for the first time among a wreckage of human bodies and exclaims: '*Chamo-me António Maposse*' [my name is António Maposse], before immediately beginning to cry (p. 54). What good is a name among a sea of corpses? In his attempts to psychologically process the trauma to which he has been exposed, Maposse can then be said to have become what Adorno describes as a 'piece of the world of ghosts'.

At the same time, however, Maposse's claim that life is with 'the others' sets up a binary between 'us' and 'them' that was a major feature of Mozambican responses to the atrocities of the civil war period as well as to the broader campaign of South African destabilisation. As Aquino de Bragança argued, the escalation of armed conflict in the post-independence era in Mozambique acted as a surrogate for the promotion of a *Pax Pretoriana* in southern Africa. Insofar as the South African Defence Forces supplied substantial military support and training to the domestic right-wing insurgency as part of their own 'scorched earth' policy towards Marxist-Leninist Mozambique, the civil war itself was intended to 'guarantee the southern African market to an aggressive and imperialistic South African

[144] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 364.

capitalism', and to turn the People's Republic of Mozambique into a 'client state of the apartheid regime'.[145] 'The others' is then the codeword that ties Khosa's negotiation of the motif of ontological uncertainty to competitions for power at the world-systemic level, and in this way it is possible to situate the text within a long tradition in Mozambican literature in which the presence of neighbouring South Africa is registered as a determining and monolithic yet nonetheless unseen or invisible social force — a response which itself emerged in tandem with the rise of South Africa to the status of regional hegemon in the southern African region. As Immanuel Wallerstein and Sérgio Vieira have noted, 'when the post-1945 upturn in the world-economy occurred, South Africa was in a good position to try to create the "region" of southern Africa with itself as a now clearly semi-peripheral power, one that would dominate the region economically, and even politically and militarily'.[146] As was seen in the discussion of Cassamo's short story, South Africa's aspirations towards regional hegemony predominantly took the form of the development of a system of migrant labour which recruited the workforces of peripheral countries in southern Africa for the expansion of South Africa's own coal and gold mining industries. Richard Bartlett has detailed the extent to which South African hegemony in the regional southern African economy has consistently been figured in Mozambican texts in terms of a socio-political 'Other' that is at once 'distant, unknown and virtually invisible', but one that clearly has as its referent an 'idea of South Africa as destructive and elusive'.[147] This is then the sense in which Maposse's claim that life is with 'the others' must be read in '*Orgia dos loucos*', as an implicit registration of the paradoxically domineering influence of a power that is structurally concealed and phenomenologically absent. To this extent, Khosa's text returns to the same

[145] Aquino de Bragança, 'Mozambique: Facing a war without end?', pp. 149, 151.
[146] Immanuel Wallerstein and Sérgio Vieira, 'Historical Development of the Region in the Context of the Evolving World-System', in *How Fast the Wind? Southern Africa, 1975-2000*, Sérgio Vieira, William G. Martin and Immanuel Wallerstein, eds., (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992) pp. 3-15 (p. 9).
[147] Richard Bartlett, 'Beneficial Parasite to Heroic Executioner: South Africa in the Literature of Mozambique', *Alternation*, 3.1 (1996), pp. 94-108 (pp. 94, 105).

strategy deployed by Couto in '*A história dos aparecidos*', whereby the systemic horizon of the international division of wealth is codified into a legal dispute over the biological status of two flood refugees. Spectral aesthetics are the most suitable means of rendering this contradiction at the level of literary form since spectrality is itself founded upon the paradox of a presence that is at one and the same time absent and materially insubstantial. For each of the writers considered thus far, the motif of ontological uncertainty is used as a device for registering a dimension of experience which cannot be perceived by the empirical senses but which is not for this reason any less 'real' or determining.

3. Luanda Syndrome

In his comparative study *Literaturas Africanas de Expressão Portuguesa* (1995), Pires Laranjeira proposes a seven-phase periodisation for the history of Angolan literature.[148] The first two phases span the introduction of printing technology in Angola and the emergence of the '*imprensa livre*' [free press] in 1886, which led to a flourishing of largely journalistic literary endeavours spurred on by the growth of a hotly contested sphere of public debate in which prominent members of the creole intellectual elite could discuss questions of equality and racial justice free from state and economic tutelage. After a series of bilateral treaties between Portugal and Britain extended the enforcement of a slave trade ban to Portuguese ships operating south of the equator (1818, 1842), the two main port cities of Angola's Atlantic coastline — Luanda and Benguela — could no longer offer merchant elites the same degree of access to the Atlantic basin's commodity chains and were subsequently transformed into sites of intense cultural activity and hotbeds of political subversion, as rising creole class fractions sought to assert their claims to political autonomy by championing the liberal ideals of the French Revolution. The intellectually effervescent character of this emergent Angolan literary culture is signalled by the fact that the number of recorded newspaper publications totalled over fifty different titles in the final quarter of the nineteenth century, many of which were bi-lingually printed with Kimbundu and Kikongo sections, while notable literary works began to appear by José da Silva Maia Ferreira in a recognisably Romantic mode (*Espontaneidades da minha Alma*, 1849), and by Alfredo Troni, whose *Nga Mutúri* (1882) marks an occasional foray into realism (pp. 36-37).[149] The following decades,

[148] Pires Laranjeira, *Literaturas Africanas de Expressão Portuguesa* (Lisbon: Universidade Aberta, 1995), pp. 36-43. All further references are given after quotations in the main body of the text.

[149] See also Pepetela, 'Sobre a génese da literatura angolana', *Revista Angolana de Sociologia*, 5/6 (2010), pp. 207-215; and Jacopo Corrado, *The Creole Elite and the Rise of Angolan Protonationalism: 1870-1920* (New York: Cambria Press, 2008). One particularly high-profile case in this burgeoning journalistic literary culture was the publication, in a 1901 edition of *A Voz de Angola*, of a set of responses by journalists and intellectuals

however, are marked by a relative decline in Angolan literary activity which only picks up in the 1930s and 40s with the publication of texts such as Tomaz Vieira da Cruz's *Quissange* (1932), António Assis Júnior's *O segredo da morta* (1935) and Geraldo Bessa Victor's *Ao som das marimbas* (1943), by which time Portugal's African colonies had become an increasingly central part of the economic and cultural agendas of the nascent *Estado Novo*, which sought to buttress its overseas policy of colonial import substitution with a discourse of assimilationism and Freyrean 'luso-tropicalism'.[150] The texts produced during this third phase of '*prelúdio*' [prelude] (1903-1947) reflect the political ambivalences of their socio-economic milieu by displaying a prominent if often conflicted cultural exoticism in which the colonised was still viewed through a principally administrative lens as an ethnological curiosity.

The ensuing fourth phase of '*formação*' [formation] (1948-1960) dramatically broke with the presuppositions of this exoticist perspective as a concerted attempt to develop an anti-colonial national consciousness began to take hold in the form of cultural organisations such as the Movimento dos Novos Intelectuais de Angola (MNIA) (1948), magazines like the highly influential *Mensagem*, and the popular book series 'Edições Imbondeiro' published by Sá da Bandeira (pp. 37-38).[151] A key objective of this incipient anti-colonial literary culture was to elevate the claims of the Angolan people over those of the colonial bourgeoisie through a Promethean discourse of prophecy and identity, evocative of the Romantic tradition of *Volksgeist*. Principal exemplars of this can be found in the early poetry of the 'Geração de

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to an allegedly racist article that had appeared in the *Gazeta de Luanda*. See Ana Mafalda Leite, 'Angola', in *The Post-Colonial Literature of Lusophone Africa*, Patrick Chabal, ed. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), pp. 103-164 (p. 108).

[150] On the *Estado Novo*'s economic policy, see Richard Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal: A History* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1979), p. 138. For a discussion of the relationship between the *Estado Novo*, assimilationism and Luso-tropicalism, see Cláudia Castelo, *"O Modo Português de Estar no Mundo": O Luso-tropicalismo e a Ideologia Colonial Portuguesa (1933-1961)* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 1998).

[151] It should also be noted that the Casa de Estudantes do Império (CEI), founded in 1944 and based in Lisbon, continued to provide a meeting point which furnished exchange between similar initiatives across Portuguese-speaking Africa, and which was instrumental to the consolidation of this fourth formative phase in Angolan literature.

Mensagem', which included such figures as António Jacinto, Agostinho Neto and Viriato da Cruz (p. 38). As Mário Pinto de Andrade has explained, this formative phase in Angolan literature took inspiration from both Portuguese neo-realism and Francophone *négritude* writers such as Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire in its attempt to promote a wholesale rejection of assimilation into colonial metropolitan culture.[152] Over the course of the 1960s, however, many Angolan writers were incarcerated by the Portuguese authorities for political subversion, as the anti-colonial movement entered into the period of armed struggle that would triumph in the victory of independence mid-way through the following decade. Predictably, as Ana Mafalda Leite has noted, much of the literature that appeared during this fifth phase of '*nacionalismo*' [nationalism] (1961-1971) took the liberation war as its overarching theme and mobilised an epic and often delirious register of expression which, as in Mozambique, frequently assumed the form of *poesia de combate*.[153] A major literary event of the period was the publication of José Luandino Vieira's short story collection *Luuanda* (1963), written during incarceration between 1961-1962 at the notorious Tarrafal prison camp in Cabo Verde, which occasioned a stylistic revolution in Angolan literature by fusing Portuguese prose narrative with the musicality of the Kimbundu-speech of the *musseques* [shanty towns] (p. 40).[154] The brief and hesitant pre-independence years of the

[152] Mário Pinto de Andrade, 'Prefácio', in *Antologia Temática de Poesia Africana*, vol. 1, Mário Pinto de Andrade, ed. (Praia: Instituto Caboverdiano do Livro, [1976], 1980), p. 7. Of course, Andrade himself was also a key figure in this conjuncture. Co-founder (1956) and first president (1960) of the MPLA, Andrade was also responsible for editing the first anthology of Portuguese-language African poetry — *Antologia da poesia negra de expressão portugesa* (1958) — which highlighted similar currents of resistance throughout Portugal's African colonies.

[153] Ana Mafalda Leite, 'Angola', p. 123. As Leite also points out, depictions of liberation wars are in fact sparse in African literature due to the fact that, 'with the exception of Algeria, few colonies were forced into struggle in order to gain independence' (p. 117), and so the *poesia de combate* that appeared during this time in Portugal's African colonies might be understood as a genre relatively specific to the African experience of Portuguese colonialism.

[154] It is perhaps hard to do justice to the sheer commotion and revolutionary excitement which followed the publication of Luandino's *Luuanda* in 1963 from the vantage point of such a culturally remote historical period and when the transformative effects of its prose style, which at the time would have been experienced as a radical break with prevailing literary and artistic values, have become in many ways the benchmark against which the category of 'Angolan literature' is measured. For an indication of the furore caused by the terms of the text's contemporary reception, it should suffice to note that, in 1965, despite the incarcerated status of its author, the book was awarded the Grande Prémio da Novelística in a decision which utterly infuriated the

Caetano regime (1968-1974) then allowed for a recrudescence of publication activity across the country in which previously censored works began to appear for the first time such as Luandino's *Nós, os do Makalusu* ([1967] 1974); new book series were established like the '*cadernos Capricórnio*' edited by Orlando de Albuquerque in Lobito; poems were printed in the pages of politically charged periodicals like *Ecos do Norte* in Malange; and Luandan literary journals like *Kuzuela* provided a platform for writers to continue to publish against the backdrop of an anti-colonial struggle that was fast approaching its crescendo (pp. 41-42). The most significant moment of this sixth phase of '*independência*' [independence] (1972-1980) was the founding of the União de Escritores Angolanos (UEA) in 1975, after which date the majority of published works began to subscribe more rigidly to the atmosphere of exultant patriotism attendant on the establishment of the post-independence Marxist-Leninist state, which immediately enlisted the country's literary sphere in the collective project of constructing a national imaginary, defending the MPLA's socialist orientation, denouncing the invasion of troops from South Africa and Zaire, and inveighing against the internal right-wing opposition UNITA (p. 42).

Laranjeira's seventh and final phase of '*renovação*' [renovation] (1981-1993) begins with the establishment of the Brigada Jovem de Literatura in 1981, which marked the first attempt at constructing a university-level literary education in Angola in the face of a deep-seated institutional and administrative underdevelopment inherited from the Portuguese colonisers. Yet while the express aim of the Brigada was to train the next generation of Angolan writers in the mould of *engagé* literature associated with the neo- and socialist

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Salazar regime. As *Luuanda*'s English translator Tamara Bender explains in her preface to the book: 'Within a few weeks of the award, the Portuguese secret police raided the Society's headquarters in Lisbon, physically destroyed its offices and officially closed the Society down for the first time in its history'. José Luandino Vieira, *Luuanda*, trans. Tamara Bender (London: Heinemann, 1981), p. viii. For more on *Luuanda*'s subversive reputation, as well as on the problems that its prose style poses for the act of translation, see Thomas Waller, 'Recreating Resistance: Translating José Luandino Vieira's *Luuanda*', *Xanthos: A Journal of Foreign Languages and Literatures* 1, pp. 55-65.

realist traditions, the organisation quickly ran up against the limitations bound up with its financial reliance on state patronage and its need for public sanction from the MPLA *politburo* (pp. 42-43).[155] At this point in Angolan literature, a certain degree of friction therefore begins to emerge between the creative aspirations of writers and intellectuals and the ideological apparatuses of the Marxist-Leninist state, leading to '*a publição de obras consideradas incómodas para o poder político*' [the publication of works considered uncomfortable for the political powers] and the appearance of texts distinguished by their subversive use of '*[v]ariadas tendências estéticas e ideológicas*' [varied aesthetic and ideological tendencies] (p. 43). Leite defines this moment of rupture as a time in which 'authors started to take a step back and gain perspective on their country, casting a critical look at some of the new national myths' through the use of aesthetic strategies such as irony and satire.[156] It is also possible, however, to be more specific in periodising a generic shift at this time in which writers increasingly discarded the utopian style of much anti-colonial literature in favour of a more dystopian sensibility that communicates a sense of disillusionment with the trajectory of the Marxist-Leninist project and an anxiety as to the process of neoliberal transition that was then being brought to fruition. This is the sense in which Ana Maria Mão-de-Ferro Martinho has identified a 'disenchantment process' in Angolan literature of the early 1990s 'that is under evaluation from a dystopian perspective' and which sets out 'to deconstruct certain ideological principles'.[157] Fernando Arenas, likewise, has suggested that the human suffering and political discontent generated by the intensification of civil warfare in Angola during the 1990s led to 'the exhaustion of Marxist-Leninist utopias of post-independence years and the emergence and contestation of

[155] See also *Brigada Jovem de Literatura de Angola*, in Infopédia [online]. Porto: Porto Editora, 2003-2021, available online: https://www.infopedia.pt/$brigada-jovem-de-literatura-de-angola [accessed 25th March 2021].
[156] Ana Mafalda Leite, 'Angola', p. 124.
[157] Ana Maria Mão-de-Ferro Martinho, 'Utopian Eyes and Dystopian Writings in Angolan Literature', p. 50.

"neoliberal utopias"', as writers began to feel that 'the ideals of a truly egalitarian and democratic state were betrayed' and consequently turned to narrative strategies for expressing this disillusionment that 'no longer serve exclusively the interest of a grand national cause', but that are rather characterised by 'broken promises, failed utopias, and a profound disenchantment regarding the postcolonial national project'.[158] As it moves from a period of pre-independence florescence, through to the buoyant yet dogmatic years of Marxist-Leninist hegemony, and finally into a phase of disenchantment and post-independence critique, the history of Angolan literature corresponds exactly with the arc of development traced out by Borges Coelho in his cursory periodisation of the emergence of the Mozambican literary field, and the seven phases of Laranjeira's periodisation are thus better understood as nested sub-cycles within the type of broader tripartite chronology proposed in the previous chapter. To this extent, the trajectory of literary development in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa can be seen to contain features that transcend the bounding limits of the (post-)colonial nation-state in a way that suggests the need for a more expansive frame of analysis, which takes into account developments at the regional level of southern Africa as well as competition for power at the global level of the capitalist world-system.

This chapter is interested in the generic shift that took place in Angolan literature during the mid-1990s, in which recognisably dystopian themes began to appear in the novelistic fiction of writers such as Pepetela, Ondjaki and José Eduardo Agualusa as a response to Angola's political transition from Marxist-Leninist planned economy to a form of neoliberal capitalism structured around the violent extraction of the country's natural resources.[159] After the MPLA formally renounced their socialist orientation at the Third Party

[158] Fernando Arenas, *Lusophone Africa: Beyond Independence* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp. 159, 164-165, 160. For more on this 'disenchantment process', see Raquel Ribeiro, 'Angola, a Nation in Pieces in José Eduardo Agualusa's *Estação das chuvas*', *Journal of Lusophone Studies* 1.1 (2016), pp. 57-72 (pp. 60-61).

[159] Or, as Tony Hodges puts it in the title of the first edition of his canonical study on Angolan political economy, the transition 'from Afro-Stalinism to Petro-diamond capitalism'. See Tony Hodges, *Angola: From*

Congress of 1990 and the signing of the Bicesse Accords the following year heralded the arrival of multi-party democracy in the country, a social system was put in place founded upon neoliberal policies such as the deregulation of the local economy, the privatisation of government-owned assets and the devaluation of the national currency, leading to the consolidation of a practice of cronyism and opaqueness in the management of state resources that Christine Messiant has identified as 'clientelist redistribution'.[160] Among the catalogue of detrimental effects precipitated by the neoliberal turn in Angola and the intermittent spells of 'civil' warfare that have punctuated the greater part of the post-independence era in the country have been the internal displacement of the domestic population — disproportionately affecting the same ethnic groups persecuted by the military in-fighting — and a situation of environmental destitution resulting from the capitalist development of the northern enclave economy, whose offshore pollution and emissions of toxic chemicals have produced catastrophic damage for local sea-life and nearby farming communities.[161] Concurrent with these developments has been the emergence of narrative fictions comparable in their use of dystopic images of ecological catastrophe and social disintegration, from the post-apocalyptic universe of Pepetela's *O Quase Fim do Mundo* (2008), in which (almost) all signs of human, animal and biophysical life have mysterious vanished from the planet; to the impending sense of doom that runs through José Eduardo Agualusa's narrative of encroaching catastrophe in his futuristic novel *Barroco Tropical* (2009); the material devastation caused by the climactic

Afro-Stalinism to Petro-diamond Capitalism, 1st ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001).

[160] Christine Messiant, 'The Eduardo dos Santos Foundation: Or, How Angola's Regime Is Taking over Civil Society', *African Affairs*, 100.399 (2001), pp. 287-309.

[161] For a discussion of the ethnic divisions in the Angolan civil war, which resulted in the disproportionate persecution of the country's Ovimbundu community, who were identified as supporters of the opposition party UNITA in a form of ethno-political stereotyping, see Vasco Martins, 'Ovimbundu identity attributions in post-war Angola', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41.4 (2015), pp. 853-867 (pp. 866-867). On the environmental impact of the neoliberal turn in Angola see Tony Hodges, *Angola: Anatomy of an Oil State*, pp. 151-152, and, especially, Kristin Reed's study of the effects of oil production and neoliberal politics in Angola, *Crude Existence: Environment and the Politics of Oil in Northern Angola* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009).

water-spirit tsunami in Pepetela's *O Desejo de Kianda* (1995); the postdiluvian world of Agualusa's novel *A Vida no Céu* (2013); and the momentous oil explosion that marks the finale of Ondjaki's maximalist novel *Os Transparentes* (2012). What is the relationship between this 'dystopian turn' in recent Angolan literary production and the process of neoliberal transition initiated by the socio-economic restructurings of the early 1990s? How do these tales of ecological crisis and societal collapse register the ongoing terraforming of land and environment in post-independence Angola? Are these writers' dystopian sensibilities marked solely by an attitude of disenchantment and dissatisfaction with regard to the post-independence political project in Angola, or is there a 'utopian impulse' embedded within their powerful narratives of social disintegration?

Sharae Deckard has argued that the genres of apocalypse and dystopia are particularly well suited to (semi-)peripheral regions of the world-system where the violence of extractivism is felt most acutely insofar as the literary motifs of disaster and collapse in these social contexts often function as 'insistent barometers of the contradictions of global capitalism and of the impending crises of ecocide and irreversible climate change'.[162] Thus in Mexico, for example, Miguel López-Lozano has shown how 'dramatic images of the eco-apocalypse' reappear in fictions from writers such as Carlos Fuentes, Alejandro Morales and Carmen Boullosa in order to critique both 'the impact of neoliberal policies on indigenous communities and […] the detrimental effects of industrialization on the environment',[163] while Lawrence Buell, in more general terms, has claimed that the trope of apocalypse is 'the single and most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination

[162] Sharae Deckard, *Paradise Discourse, Imperialism, and Globalization: Exploiting Eden* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 195; Sharae Deckard, '"Not even a sci-fi writer": Peripheral Genres, the World-System Novel, and Junot Díaz', in Sharae Deckard and Rashmi Varma, eds., *Marxism, Postcolonial Theory and the Future of Critique: Critical Engagements with Benita Parry* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 96-114 (p. 97).
[163] Miguel López-Lozano, *Utopian Dreams, Apocalyptic Nightmares: Globalization in Recent Mexican and Chicano Narrative* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), p. 231.

has at its disposal'.[164] The dystopian imaginary of much recent Angolan fiction can then be seen to voice a similar collective anxiety in its registration of the ecological fallout of the country's transition from Afro-Marxism to free market, neoliberal capitalism. Kristin Reed has noted at length the degradation of eco-systems and livelihoods brought about by the intensification of petroleum extraction in Angola, drawing attention not only to the toxification of fishing and farming reserves but also to the impact on local subjectivities in resource-dependent communities, whose experience of ecocide and oil spills so often coincides with a rise in traumatic stress syndromes, substance abuse and depression.[165] Politically, the rise of the neoliberal petroleum economy has been identical with the concentration of wealth within a new oil *nomenklatura* that siphoned off Angola's petroleum and diamond wealth for their own private gain by manipulating residual administrative mechanisms inherited from the Marxist-Leninist era.[166] This chapter will thus read the Angolan literary dystopia not only as an aesthetic response to the environmental devastation caused by situations of neoliberal 'oil shock', but also in terms of that 'disenchantment process' to which Martinho alluded above, whereby Angolan writers exchanged the more rapturous and utopian tone of anti-colonial literature for a dystopian register. In this sense, the motifs of architectural destruction, societal collapse and climate catastrophe that have permeated Angolan fiction since the mid-1990s are just as much expressions of literary protest against the post-independence turn of events in the country as they are indices of the same neoliberal transition that has determined the experiences of (semi-)peripheral societies throughout the capitalist world-system.

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[164] Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 285.
[165] Kristen Reed, *Crude Existence*, pp. 44-69.
[166] Tony Hodges, *Angola: Anatomy of an Oil State*, pp. 44-45.

3.1. Critical Dystopia

The politics of the genre of dystopia itself, however, are not so clearcut, but rather encompass a matrix of contradictory positions whose ideological implications range from the critical and optimistic to the cynical, contemptuous and the downright reactionary. This is the gist of Tom Moylan's distinction, in his canonical study *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (2000), between 'critical' and 'anti-critical' dystopias.[167] Periodising the emergence of dystopian narrative around the turn of the twentieth century, Moylan singles out E.M. Forster's short story 'The Machine Stops' (1909) as an early and paradigmatic example of the sorts of 'dystopian maps of social hells that have been with us ever since', and proceeds to use this text to demonstrate the extent to which what might initially appear to be pessimistic and anti-utopian fictions can suddenly shift in tone 'from the apocalyptic to the prophetic, if not yet the historical' (p. 111). Although Forster's short story is cast in a residual Romantic humanism that launches an aristocratic critique of modernity through the anti-technological metaphor of the machine, Moylan notes that the narrative distances itself from the anti-utopian form with which it is nonetheless closely related to become 'not an anti-utopia but a dystopia that speaks eloquently and effectively to its times' (p. 121). This analysis then gives Moylan the occasion to argue that the dystopia proper should be understood as an 'inverted subgenre of utopia', to be distinguished from the kinds of foreclosure of hope enacted by properly anti-utopian texts, but also contrary to the world-ending pessimism of the apocalypse as such (p. 121). Indeed, Moylan bemoans the 'tendency to reduce dystopian and anti-utopian texts to a single "anti-utopian" category', precisely because 'the deployment of a simple binary opposition between Utopia and Anti-Utopia

[167] Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2000). All further references are given after quotations in the main body of the text.

efface[s] the complex continuum that stretches between these powerful forces' (p. 122). The anti-utopia is therefore defined as 'the text that refuses all utopian hope and effort', whereas the dystopia is 'the one that enters the fray between Utopia and Anti-Utopia' (p. 139). For this reason, dystopias can be identified with either of these two generic poles, and Moylan thus argues for the need to distinguish between 'critical' and 'anti-critical' dystopias. Whereas the former of these categories stands for those texts which 'negotiate the necessary pessimism of the generic dystopia with an open, militant, utopian stance', the latter, by contrast, aligns itself with 'the camp of nihilistic or resigned expressions that may appear to challenge the current social situation but in fact end up reproducing it by ideologically inoculating viewers and readers against any form of anger or action, enclosing them within the very social realities they disparagingly expose' (pp. 195-196). Moylan's distinction between the critical and the anti-critical dystopia is thus useful inasmuch as it enables an approach to dystopian texts that allows for a recuperation of the utopian impulse that can just as easily lurk behind these sorts of catastrophic narratives as the anti-utopian orientation with which the genre would initially appear to share a more direct generic kinship. In this way, the distinction between the critical and the anti-critical dystopia will allow me to be more specific in clarifying both the socially critical implications of the dystopian turn in recent Angolan literature and its oppositional stance towards the post-independence turn of events in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa.

And yet, while the critical/anti-critical distinction is salutary in its provision of a theoretical tool for identifying the utopian possibilities of dystopian narrative, what remains to be determined is the relationship between dystopia and the two terms to which it is implicitly tied by way of its negative prefix: the utopia as such and its simple negation, the anti-utopia. Moylan, for his part, proposes a complex 'dystopian continuum' in a diagrammatic attempt chart the set of correspondences and contradictions implied in the

relationship between the utopia, the anti-utopia and the dystopia (p. 195). Also pertinent to the discussion, however, is Fredric Jameson's work on science fiction, which is characteristically sensitive to the ways in which each of the categories of the utopia and the anti-utopia can suddenly slide or shift into the apparent form of its generic opposite. Like Moylan, Jameson challenges the critical tendency set up a simple opposition between utopia and dystopia in a way that foregoes the need for the category of the anti-utopia. In *The Seeds of Time* (1994), for example, he cautions against 'the facile deployment of the opposition between utopia and dystopia' since these formal or generic concepts are in fact 'not opposites and in reality have nothing to do with each other'.[168] While Jameson may here overstate the lack of affinity between utopia and dystopia (a claim he will nonetheless go on to nuance and qualify in *Archaeologies of the Future*, as will be seen presently), he does proceed to highlight an elective affinity between dystopian narrative and ecological crisis that speaks directly to the environmental preoccupations of much recent Angolan fiction:

> the dystopia is always and essentially what in the language of science-fiction criticism is called a "near-future" novel: it tells the story of an imminent disaster — ecology, overpopulation, plague, drought, the stray comet or nuclear accident — waiting to come to pass in our own near future, which is fast-forwarded in the time of the novel (even if that be then subsequently disguised as some repressive society galactic ages away from us).[169]

This was, indeed, the substance of Raymond Williams' own conception of the dystopian novel as a 'future story' formula whereby 'a particular pattern is abstracted, from the sum of social experience, and a society is created from this pattern', and in which the narrative is

[168] Fredric Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 55.
[169] Fredric Jameson, *The Seeds of Time*, p. 56.

focused around some central 'future device' that allows for a simultaneous relation of likeness and estrangement to that social reality which the fiction in question is registering.[170] This notion of a social pattern that is abstracted from a particular historical conjuncture and projected onto a not-so-distant future — underpinned by the sort of ecological consciousness to which Jameson alludes in *The Seeds of Time* — aptly describes the narrative structures of the two novels selected for discussion in this chapter, which bookmark opposite ends of the roughly two decades (thus far) spanning Angola's dystopian turn.

Both Pepetela's *O Desejo de Kianda*, published in 1995, and Ondjaki's *Os Transparentes*, published in 2012, are set against the backdrop of a Luanda threatened by an encroaching environmental disaster. In *O Desejo de Kianda*, the tower blocks of Luanda's Kinaxixi district have begun to spontaneously crumble and collapse, to the widespread bemusement of all and sundry. This supernatural phenomenon, in which towering apartment blocks fall to ground without any signs of violence or physical harm, accompanied merely by a light tinkling music and the faint glimmer of all the colours of the rainbow, is then gradually revealed to be the work of Kianda, the Kimbundu water-spirit, who is seeking revenge for the development of luxury housing complexes sanctioned by the emergent neoliberal state, and who will eventually decimate the ruins of the city in a climactic water-spirit tsunami that reunites her with the high seas off of Angola's Atlantic coastline. Taking up the mantle of Pepetela's preoccupations in *O Desejo de Kianda* — and, indeed, it is the wager of this chapter that Pepetela's and Ondjaki's novels are more productively read when compared alongside each other — *Os Transparentes* begins with the proleptic narration of an apocalyptic oil explosion that lends to the text a claustrophobic atmosphere of impending doom. As the city of Luanda is progressively torn apart for oil wealth that will result in the

[170] Raymond Williams, 'The Future Story as Social Formula Novel (1961)', in Andrew Milner, ed., *Tenses of the Imagination: Raymond Williams on Science Fiction, Utopia and Dystopia*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 43-50 (p. 45).

total destruction of all of the novel's cast of characters, the narrative circles back to the schemes of corruption and kleptocracy within the Angolan ruling elite that result in the text's apocalyptic finale. In each case, a pattern of capitalist extractivism is abstracted from the neoliberal turn in post-independence Angola and projected onto a not-so-distant future in which the most catastrophic yet not therefore farfetched consequences of the creative destruction — and destructive creation — of global capital are brought to the foreground.

What is lost in this initial and rudimentary comparison between the two novels, however, is their differing approaches to dystopian politics, as well as their negotiation of the genre's relationship to the two terms of utopia and anti-utopia, without which the dystopia itself could not be adequately understood. In *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (2005), Jameson intimates the existence of a fourth term that would complete the triadic opposition of dystopia, utopia and anti-utopia, and which helps to capture precisely the sorts of tensions and contradictions that are at stake in the interpretation of Pepetela's and Ondjaki's novels. In a central chapter on what readers are likely to find in properly utopian texts, and why the utopia necessarily bears on the problem of boredom that comes with narratives of the 'end of history' — 'the unspoken thought being that a society without conflict is unlikely to produce exciting stories' — Jameson reflects on what is excluded from, yet nonetheless presupposed by, the utopian framework, and cites the examples of two historical events: 'the convulsions of the various dystopias in store for our own world, and the systemic transformation or revolution that ushers in Utopia itself'.[171] In this way, the utopia is seen to be founded upon a foreclosure of the kinds of transformative events and messy dystopian 'convulsions' that are required for the establishment of its own generic framework, suggesting a sort of erasure or repression of undecidable factors such as

[171] Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London and New York: Verso, 2005), pp. 183, 188. All further references are given after quotations in the main body of the text.

'the existential act, the momentous decision, the anxiety of heroic choice and of genuine historical praxis' (p. 189). The implication here is thus that what is at stake in any specification of utopian narrative is the need 'to distinguish various kinds of negativity from one another' (p. 198). The names Jameson gives to these kinds of negativity are the dystopia, the anti-utopia and a fourth term which he tentatively labels 'the Apocalypse'.

Jameson concedes Moylan's proposal for the category of a 'critical dystopia', which he aptly describes as the 'negative cousin of Utopia' (p. 198), and opposes it to the decidedly unhopeful category of the anti-utopia. While the dystopia makes room for a critical impetus and often aligns itself with a more or less covert utopian impulse, the anti-utopia displays 'a central passion to denounce and warn against Utopian programs in the political realm' (the prime example of which being Georg Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* [1949]) (pp. 198-199). However, in which case, Jameson points out that 'a fourth term or generic category would seem desirable', which he explicitly associates with the observation, first cited in *The Seeds of Time*, that 'it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism'.[172] This term he then calls the 'Apocalypse', which, while strictly opposed to the kinds of utopian possibilities implied by the critical dystopia, also serves to differentiate 'from the anti-Utopia as well, since we do not sense in it any commitment to disabuse its readership of the political illusions an Orwell sought to combat, but whose very existence the apocalyptic narrative no longer acknowledges' (p. 199). And yet, the category of apocalypse only 'brings us around to our starting point again', since what is included in this category is precisely the sorts of catastrophic events and implications of fulfilment that were found to be both presupposed by and foreclosed from the genre of utopia, thus squaring the circle of this matrix of oppositions.

[172] Or, as Jameson puts it in the introduction to *The Seeds of Time*: 'It seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and nature than the breakdown of late capitalism' (p. xii).

The task of this chapter will be to use this matrix to determine the specific nature of Pepetela's and Ondjaki's dystopias, and to tease out the two novels' relationships to utopian politics and their legacy in the socio-political landscape of post-independence Angola. Does the upturn in literary figurations of destruction and collapse in Angolan fictions of the neoliberal era invite utopian and 'hopeful' readings of a new society emerging out of the ruins of the old social order? Or do their powerful visions of social disintegration rather align more closely to an anti-utopian tendency that forecloses all hope of amelioration and post-conflict reconstruction? Do the dystopian landscapes of Pepetela's and Ondjaki's novels carry with them a critical impetus that throws into relief the destructive tendencies of Angola's neoliberal turn, making room for a utopian impulse best characterised by way of the ambiguous double negation 'not-unhopeful'?[173] Or do their respective figurations of environmental disasters correspond more closely to that anti-critical category of the apocalypse, which invites no straightforward political readings but is rather concerned to visualise the world-ending fear of what Jameson calls 'total destruction and the extinction of life on Earth'? (p. 199).

Through a comparative reading of *O Desejo de Kianda* and *Os Transparentes*, it will be seen that, rather than being able to pin the two texts down to any one specific generic category, their ambivalent imaginings of a Luanda in ruins cover the full matrix of oppositions outlined above, and that the contradictions and oppositions inherent in this quadrilateral relationship are constitutive not only of these novels' generic features, but also of contemporary politics in neoliberal Angola, which is characterised by an oscillation between hope and a paralysing sense of historical despair. To demonstrate this will entail paying close attention to those undecidable events and existential acts that are necessarily

[173] Indeed, Jameson, in *Archaeologies of the Future*, characterises the dystopia in precisely these terms, as a 'double negation' (p. 198).

excluded from the utopian framework but without which the utopia itself would be unthinkable. Thus, in *O Desejo de Kianda*, a recalcitrant protest group of the marginalised and dispossessed arises to confront the cronyism and corruption at the heart of Angolan politics with demands for a more just and equal society that would be stripped of all authoritarian or clientelist tendencies. This critical-dystopian impulse is then seen to ambivalently intersect with the utopian desire expressed in the climactic water-spirit tsunami, which both channels and effaces this newly arisen political sentiment in the form of a return of the repressed of nature. Similarly, in *Os Transparentes*, the messianic character of its principal protagonist, Odonato, who emblematises the suffering of Angola's most impoverished, goes on hunger strike to protest against his structural exclusion from the accumulation of wealth among Angola's rich and powerful, and in the process articulates a powerful dystopian critique of Angola's current 'petroleum dictatorship'. However, Odoanto's radical *propagande par le fait* is at the same time belied by a self-mocking tone of political satire and ultimately undermined by a catastrophic oil explosion that sends the whole of the city of Luanda up in flames as in a single 'apocalyptic instant', one that leaves the question of the text's utopian orientation decidedly undecidable. As will be seen, within and between these two novels, the friction between the utopian, the anti-utopian, the dystopian and the apocalyptic is encoded at the level of form through the figure of a Luanda in ruins in a way that accommodates opposing interpretations both of the critical and anti-critical variety.

3.2. Allegory in Ruins

The plot of Pepetela's novel *O Desejo de Kianda* [The desire of Kianda] (1995) hinges on a supernatural series of events in which the tower blocks of Luanda's Kinaxixi district begin to

spontaneously crumble and collapse, to the large-scale bemusement of a range of engineers, scientists and politicians. As news of the self-destructing buildings travels across the world, the city becomes a hotbed for tourists and international news agencies who quickly dub the phenomenon the '*síndrome de Luanda*' [Luanda syndrome].[174] Unfolding in the midst of this dystopian milieu is the ideological trajectory of a young politician, Carmina Cara de Cu (referred to in the text as CCC), from Marxist partisanship to the adoption of an emergent neoliberal consumerism and practices of predation and corruption, as she attempts to work her way up the party ranks of Angola's leadership. The character development of Carmina in this way works to mirror the broader transition from Marxist-Leninist planned economy to free market, neoliberal capitalism in which the Luanda of the text is chaotically embroiled, and her burgeoning entrepreneurship thus appears as a personal enactment of the asset-stripping, privatisation and deregulation that go in to form the novel's socio-economic *mise-en-scène*. As she cashes in on her mounting social capital and party privileges, Carmina obtains such benefits as a state-sponsored wedding, a complementary car with the mark of affluence, clientelist donations of expensive foods from successful businesses: in short, '[*q*]*uantidades de produtos sem limites e a preços simbólicos*' [unlimited quantities of products at nominal prices] (pp. 7, 11-12). She then plans to profit from the newly deregulated economy by supplementing her political commitments with a shady import-export business that supplies specialist foodstuffs to the new national bourgeoisie, thereby completing her transformation from ex-leader of the radical wing of the country's ruling party to a corrupt politician eager in championing the same free market principles she had previously been so vehement in denouncing (pp. 16-24). But Carmina's success as a career politician is repeatedly undermined in the text by the continued succession of the

[174] Pepetela, *O Desejo de Kianda* (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, [1995] 2012), p. 5. All further references are given after quotations in the main body of the text.

spontaneously falling buildings, which gives rise to an atmosphere of chaos and destruction that puts the very fate of the nation at risk. The feelings of insecurity and uncertainty resulting from the ongoing process of economic adjustment, as well as the epidemic of homelessness generated by the mysterious collapse of residential apartment blocks, both reach a climax when the cause of Luanda syndrome is finally revealed towards the end of the narrative as the work of Kianda, the Kimbundu water-spirit, who is seeking revenge after the great lake of Kinaxixi was filled in and replaced by a luxury housing development. The text then closes as a water-spirit tsunami sweeps through the wreckage of a Luanda in ruins and Kianda is reunited with the high seas off of Angola's Atlantic coastline, free at last.

The correspondence between Carmina's ideological conversion and the historical trajectory of the Angolan society of which she is a part has led critics to read Pepetela's novel through an allegorical framework. Grant Hamilton, for instance, has characterised the text as 'an exemplification of the corruption of the socialist principles that underscored Angola's Marxist-led anti-colonial revolution of 1975', arguing that it is 'through the character of Carmina […] that Pepetela chooses to show this transition of the "revolutionary" administration of post-independence Angola'.[175] Inocência Mata, likewise, has argued that with his protagonist Pepetela was seeking to convey the '*profanização ideológica da doutrina marxista*' [ideological desecration of the Marxist doctrine] that unfolded with the decline of the post-independence Angolan state.[176] Other examples abound. Philip Rothwell writes that the ideological transformation of Carmina 'mirrors the manner in which the nation was truly neocolonized by stealth and cooption';[177] Talize Melo Ferreira considers Carmina to be a symbol of '*o dilaceramento da nação, que vai perdendo seus valores éticos e morais*'

[175] Grant Hamilton, 'Pepetela's proposal: Desire and anarchy in *The Return of the Water Spirit*', *African Identities* 11.4 (2013), pp. 343-352 (p. 345).
[176] Inocência Mata, 'Pepetela: Um Escritor (Ainda) em Busca da Utopia', *Scripta* 3.5 (1999), pp. 243-259 (p. 244).
[177] Philip Rothwell, 'Rereading Pepetela's "O Desejo de Kianda" after 11 September 2001: Signs and Distractions', *Portuguese Studies* 20 (2004), pp. 195-197 (p. 198).

[the laceration of the nation, that is losing its ethical and moral values];[178] Maria Theresa Abelha Alves draws a metonymic relation between the acronym CCC and that of the *Comité Central*, suggesting that the novel sets up an identity between the party militant and the political party itself;[179] while Zuleide Duarte and Izabel Cristina Oliveira Martins argue that Carmina acts as a '*personagem símbolo*' [symbolic character] signifying the '*descalabro politico-social instaurado no país*' [the socio-political meltdown established in the country].[180]

As Jameson famously argued, cultural texts necessarily come before us as the 'always-already-read', approachable only through the sedimented layers of previous interpretations to the extent that the object of a literary or cultural criticism 'is less the text itself than the interpretations through which we attempt to confront and appropriate it'.[181] In this sense, the dominant reading of *O Desejo de Kianda* as an essentially allegorical text, one in which the character arc of Carmina works to index the broader process of Marxist-Leninist decline in Angola, might be singled out as something of an interpretive key or 'master code' by which the text itself is systematically rewritten. According to this line of argument, the fictional atmosphere of architectural destruction and its themes of personal transformation function as the literary registration of Angola's demise from revolutionary socialist ideals to the dystopian present of concentrated wealth, rampant poverty and the unimpeded penetration of the local market by global capitalist elites.

This sort of allegorical connection is evident from the very first pages of Pepetela's novel, wherein is narrated Carmina's marriage to João Evangelista, a character whose links to

[178] Talize Melo Ferreira, 'História e ficção em *O Desejo de Kianda*, de Pepetela: uma abordagem intertextual', *Cadernos CESPUC de Pesquisa* 11 (2003), pp. 179-188 (p. 184).
[179] Maria Theresa Abelha Alves, '*O Desejo de Kianda*: Crônica e Efabulação', *Scripta* 1.1 (1997), pp. 237-245 (p. 241).
[180] Zuleide Duarte and Izabel Cristina Oliveira Martins, 'No Largo do Kinaxixi, o Território é Sagrado', *Revista Prâksis* 15.2 (2018), pp. 37-50 (p. 40).
[181] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, pp. ix-x.

the Protestant Church (his grandfather was a pastor in Huambo and his parents both strictly religious), paired with Carmina's own reputation as a promising figure in party politics, singles out the newly-wed couple as a sign for the emergent national bourgeoise at the same time as it intimates the rise in class tensions that will unfold during the course of the rest of the text.[182] It is then quite appropriate that on the very same day of João and Carmina's wedding the first of the falling buildings should come down in Kinaxixi Square, leading the narrator to speculate as to whether there might not be some connection between the two events: ''*A existir relação*' [if there is a relation], he concludes, '*parece claro ser o casamento a causa e nunca o suicídio do prédio. O problema é que as coisas nunca são tão límpidas como gostaríamos*' [it seems clear that the wedding is the cause and not the suicide of the buildings. The problem is that things are never as clear as we would like them to be] (p. 5). The peculiar function of this statement, however, is to establish the same connection it sets out to problematise, for the reader would surely not have made such a crude cause-and-effect relation between the marriage and the self-destructing buildings were it not for the narrator's own suggestion, but just as that connection has been made, the reader is at once forced to assimilate it into a broader hermeneutics of suspicion.[183] As the newly-wed couple drive away from their wedding ceremony, they then witness the fall of the first building of Luanda syndrome, which the narrator proceeds to describe as a 'national event':

[182] As Maria Theresa Abelha Alves has pointed out, the alliance between politics and religion that is represented by João and Carmina's marriage is one which is also taken up in Pepetela's earlier novel *A Geração da Utopia*, where an old party militant, an emergent bourgeois and an opportunistic pastor collude to form the '*Igreja da Esperança e Alegria do Dominus*'. Alves' insight is then to read these political-religious class alliances in terms of the Althusserian 'ideological state apparatus'. See Maria Theresa Abelha Alves, '*O Desejo de Kianda*: Crônica e Efabulação', *Scripta* 1.1 (1997), pp. 237-245 (p. 239).

[183] Narratorial intrusions of this sort are a consistent feature of *O Desejo de Kianda*, and the diegetic playfulness of the text can be read in terms of both postmodern autoreferentiality and the tradition of African orature which, as Inocência Mata has argued, functions for Portuguese-speaking African writers in the postcolonial era as a means of recuperating those lifeworlds that the injustices of colonialism had so brutally suppressed. See, for example, Inocência Mata, 'Géneros narrativos nas literaturas africanas em português —entre a tradição e o "cânone occidental"', *Scripta* 19.37 (2015), pp. 79-94.

> *O primeiro prédio desabou pouco depois da partida do cortejo automóvel levando noivos e convidados para o banquete de casamento de João Evangelista e Carmina Cara de Cu. Foi um acontecimento nacional. Todos os relatos são coincidentes. Não houve explosão, não houve fragores de tijolos contra ferros, apenas uma ligeira musiquinha de tilintares, como quando o vento bate em cortinas feitas de finas placas de vidro. As paredes foram-se desfazendo, as mobílias caindo no meio de estuques e louças sanitárias, pessoas e cães, papagaios e gatos, mais as ninhadas de ratos e baratas, tudo numa descida não apressada, até chegaram ao chão. Luzes estranhas, contam os relatos, de todas as cores do arco-íris, acompanhavam a sua queda.*
>
> [The first building collapsed a short while after the exit of the marital motorcade leading the bridegrooms and the guests away from the wedding banquet of João Evangelista and Carmina Cara de Cu. It was a national event. All the accounts are the same. There was not an explosion, there was not the thunder of bricks against steel, merely a light tinkling music, like the sound of a glass wind chime. The walls came undone, the furniture floating amid the plastering and sanitary ware, people and dogs, parrots and cats, even the babies of rats and cockroaches, all in an unrushed descent, until landing on the ground. Strange lights, the stories told, of all the colours of the rainbow accompanied their fall] (p. 8).

But by a narratorial sleight of hand, the insertion of the statement '*Foi um acontecimento nacional*' can be seen to lend itself to both sides of the event in question — to that of the collapsing buildings, and to that of João and Carmina's wedding — so that the same connection against which the narrator has just cautioned is now reaffirmed under the sign of 'the nation', for while the reference to nationality comes directly after the description of the wedding, the next sentence — '*Todos os relatos são coincidentes*' — would simultaneously seem to tie this reference to the supernatural phenomenon of Luanda syndrome.

At the same time, though, the narrator's caution holds true, since what becomes clear with the development of the plot is that the connection on which the argument of the book will turn is not that between the protagonists and the falling buildings, with the nation as the 'backdrop' against which this connection is played out, but rather that between Carmina and the nation itself, with the succession of the falling buildings acting as the device through which this connection is consecrated. Insofar as the framework is an allegorical one, the images of architectural destruction can thus be read as ruins that express or spatialise the gradual corruption of Carmina's socialist ideals, which is at one and the same time that of the Marxist-Leninist moment in Angola. Indeed, this was the sense in which Walter Benjamin understood the Baroque images of ruins in his readings of *Trauerspiel* [German mourning play], that is, as allegorical modes of expression that extend or spatialise the 'mystical instant' of historical transformation by petrifying it in a 'primordial landscape' that is then presented to the viewer in the uncanny form of 'the *facies hippocratica* of history' — the passage of time, the coming of change, the experience of death.[184] In this way, then, the 'national event' to which the narrator refers thus turns out to be neither the wedding nor the sundering of the apartment block, but both, with history embedded in the very fabric of this allegorical matrix as a transformative force that takes hold of the Luandan community of the text and reshapes its socio-material landscapes from the inside.

Early on in the narrative, for example, João begins to hear rumours of '*mudanças políticas*' [political changes] and the arrival of '*a chamada abertura democrática*' [the so-

[184] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osbourne (London and New York: Verso, 2003 [1928]), pp. 165-166. In fact, Pepetela's novel is couched in precisely the sort of Baroque sensibility with which Benjamin is concerned in his book on *Trauerspiel*, as it deploys a juxtapositional style of composition and a pictorial form of expression that cannot but call to mind the paradoxical combinations of the sacred and profane that were so characteristic of the artistic style of the Baroque era. As Maria Theresa Abelha Alves has argued: 'O romance de Pepetela constrói sua crítica de Angola dos dias de hoje através de procedimentos retóricos herdados do Barroco: exacerbada imagística que parte de uma metáfora estruturadora, bimembrismo que explora as antíteses, os paradoxas e as associações grotescas que sintonizam o sagrado e o profano, criando a concórdia discorde tão ao gosto do Barroco. Polarizados são os personagens, os espaços e o tempo, criando interessantes jogos de espelhamentos'. See Maria Theresa Abelha Alves, '*O Desejo de Kianda*: Crônica e Efabulação', p. 244.

called democratic opening], and these rumours are then quickly corroborated as it is announced that the state will begin to permit the existence of other political parties, open up the national economy to foreign and private capital, and sign a peace deal with the country's armed opposition (pp. 16-17). These announcements start to impact the daily lives of the novel's characters as a burgeoning new private service sector springs up that João describes as the '*primeiro sinal da passagem à chamada economia de mercado*' [first sign of the passage to the so-called market economy] (p. 18). Yet one of the principal contradictions of the transition to neoliberalism in Angola is that, while it may have been carried out under the sign of an emphasis on market pluralism and deregulation, it was nevertheless achieved through a further concentration of power and wealth among the country's ruling elite, who quickly adapted to their new role as rentier for the agents of multinational capital. This is the sense in which Tony Hodges has attributed the origins of the neoliberal turn in Angola to the opportunism of a group of 'closet capitalists' within the MPLA who manipulated residual administrative mechanisms in order to distribute the mounting accumulation of capital gained through joint-ventures with oil and diamond multinationals amongst themselves and their cronies.[185] Pepetela's novel signals to the contradictions at play within this twin process of democratisation and the concentration of wealth in one amusing passage in which Carmina attempts to justify the emergence of crony capitalism in Angola by reference to the Marxist notion of primitive accumulation:

> *Meu filho, o mais velho Marx explicou há bué de tempo. Para se criar os empresários, alguém tem de perder capital a favor deles. E sempre é melhor ser o Estado, assim é menos sensível, do que expropriar ou roubar directamente os*

[185] Tony Hodges, *Angola: Anatomy of an Oil State*, 2nd edition (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 44.

> *cidadãos. Não decidimos ir para a economia de mercado? Então, alguém tem de pagar, nesta vida não se multiplicam pães por milagre.*
>
> [My boy, as old man Marx explained ages ago, in order to create entrepreneurs, someone has to lose capital to them. And it is always better that this person is the State, this way it is less sensitive, rather than expropriating or robbing the citizens directly. Did we not decide to transition to the market economy? Well then, someone has to pay, for in this life bread doesn't multiply by miracles] (p. 23).

Yet Hodges's suggestion of 'closet capitalism' within the MPLA would seem to discount the widely encountered argument that clientelist tendencies had begun to appear at the vanguard long before the advent of multi-party democracy, and his argument can thus be seen to personify a phenomenon that was systemic in nature by an act of interpretation that is, it has to be said, profoundly allegorical.[186] For during the period of Afro-Marxism in Angola, kleptocratic capitalism had become the de facto if never-mentioned modus operandi, prevailing as a form of '*socialismo esquemático*' in which, as Fernando Arenas explains, 'bribes, favours, schemes, or connections were essential to get by in daily life at all levels of society'.[187] Other commentators have been more specific in identifying in the post-independence era the specific moment at which the Marxist-Leninist project entered a period of 'savage socialism' defined by a combination of 'the dictatorship of the single party, the "dollarisation" of the economy — in effect, the sanctioning of illegal practices — and the transition to a political economy of clientelism'.[188] This systemic framework is useful

[186] Personification being, as Jameson has recently argued, 'so closely linked with allegorical procedures as to give the impression that it is in and of itself the very quintessence of allegory as such'. See Fredric Jameson, *Allegory and Ideology* (London and New York: Verso, 2019), p. 38.
[187] Fernando Arenas, *Lusophone Africa: Beyond Independence* (Minneapolis and London: Minnesota University Press, 2011), p. 240, n. 25.
[188] Patrick Chabal and Nuno Vidal, eds., *Angola: The Weight of History* (London: Hurst and Company, 2007), p. 97.

inasmuch as it complicates the very idea of a Marxist-Leninist decline in Angola in a way that presents problems for the allegorical reading of Carmina's ideological conversion outlined above, for it throws into question whether the MPLA were ever properly Marxist, or for that matter Leninist, in the first place. Was it not Lenin, for example, who, in his 'Last Testament', recommended an expansion of the Central Committee to include more 'rank and file members' and a wholesale reform of the party's administrative machinery in response precisely to the sort of secrecy and factionalism that would emerge half a century later in the MPLA?[189]

But to concede that corruption and clientelism in post-independence Angola were at base systemic phenomena does not thereby absolve or downplay the importance of the actions of these so-called 'closet capitalists', whose secrecy and duplicity certainly played a protagonist role in Angola's transition to neoliberal capitalism, with career politicians like Carmina working hard behind the scenes to consolidate their wealth while proclaiming, on the stage of public discourse, a rhetoric of peace, progress and equality.[190] Yet the paradox is that the Angolan public were at the same time painfully conscious of the injustices concealed by this obfuscating rhetoric, revealing the discourse as nothing but a collective fiction in which almost nobody believes, that is, as a failure of ideology in the Žižekian sense of the term, 'a dreamlike construction hindering us from seeing the real state of things, reality as such'.[191] Primary among these injustices was the grossly disparate wealth divide which

[189] V.I. Lenin, '"Last Testament": Letters to Congress', in *Collected Works*, vol. 36, trans. Andrew Rothstein (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), pp. 593-611 (pp. 596-597). When one considers that one of the MPLA's most challenging tasks upon independence was to pursue the project of Marxism-Leninism while at the same time battling with the various administrative and institutional hierarchies that were inherited from their semi-peripheral colonisers, Lenin's comments and recommendations in the 'Last Testament' appear almost eerily prescient, above all his references to the joint pressures of war, famine and a hostile international community on the development of the Soviet Union, which can quite easily be transposed onto the historical situation in post-independence Angola, itself of course ravaged by political in-fighting and hostile treatment from global economic powers.

[190] The full insidiousness of this duplicity has recently been brought to the attention of publics across the world with the 'Luanda leaks' scandal that revealed the extent of the nepotistic corruption at the heart of the MPLA.

[191] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London and New York: Verso, 1989), pp. 47-48.

juxtaposes the luxury lifestyles of the political elite with the immiseration of the rest of population. This structural inequality is powerfully visualised by one scene in *O Desejo de Kianda* in which a series of wealthy Angolans drive past a group of homeless children and the handicapped in expensive cars with tinted windows designed to conceal the spectacle:

> *Milhares de crianças sem abrigo vagueavam pelas ruas, milhares de jovens vendiam e revendiam coisas aos que passavam de carro, mutilados sem conta esmolavam nos mercados. Simultaneamente as pessoas importantes tinham carros de luxo, de vidros fumados, ninguém que lhes via a cara, passavam por nós e talvez não olhassem para não se incomodarem com o feito espectáculo da miséria.*
>
> [Thousands of homeless children roamed the streets, thousands of youths sold and resold things to those that passed by in cars, the handicapped begged in markets again and again. Simultaneously, important people in luxury cars, with tinted windows to hide their faces, passed by us and maybe did not even see us so as not to discomfort themselves with the ugly spectacle of misery] (p. 98).

The tinted window, of course, functions as the integument which at once protects the '*pessoas importantes*' from being exposed to the necessary underside of their opulence that might break the spell of luxury, and at the same time prevents the dispossessed themselves from identifying the flipside to their misery with a recognisable face or person, with the adverb '*simultaneamente*' working to bring the passage together into something like an aesthetic unity. The window is then figured quite literally as an ideological screen on which the drama of social antagonism is played out, as the tinted glass disguises the location of wealth and luxury by presenting to the homeless and the handicapped the enigma of their own suffering and the trope of the tinted window comes to function as the 'generative matrix'

of ideology which regulates 'the relationship between visible and the non-visible, between imaginable and non-imaginable'.[192] This is then the sense in which the narrator, deprived of either transparency or visibility, is forced to consign the reactions of the wealthy passengers to the realm of speculation. What is notable about this act of imaginary projection, however, is that it quickly descends into the narrator's identification of himself with value descriptors like 'ugliness', so that what manifests is a sort of reverse interpellation by which the subject recognises his own subalternity in the absence of the structures of repression and domination, which are themselves nevertheless present as a kind of Spinozan 'absent cause'.

Yet this act of imaginary projection is remarkable in an altogether different sense, too, for it marks a rare moment in the text in which the narrator has departed from the impersonal third-person and entered into a first-person plural register that is then used to identify himself with the most oppressed sections of the novel's cast of characters. Indeed, the figure of the writer in Pepetela's novel is consistently portrayed in terms of the Gramscian 'organic intellectual'. Elsewhere, for example, the Angolan authors José Luandino Vieira and Arnaldo Santos are directly inserted into the narrative as '*grandes sabedores das coisas de Luanda*' [great cognizants of things to do with Luanda], whose wisdom is then consulted in order to decipher the mystery of the falling buildings (p. 45). As Sarah Brouillette has persuasively argued, one should always be suspicious of postcolonial writers using their fiction to portray a specific image of themselves as representatives of a people from whom they are materially and socially distanced by virtue of their very status as writers, since such figural strategies of self-construction are constitutive of the means by which postcolonial authors are marketed to global readerships as guardians or gatekeepers of a presumed touristic realm of cultural authenticity.[193] The situation is then further complicated by the fact that the image of the

[192] Slavoj Žižek, 'The Spectre of Ideology', in *Mapping Ideology*, Slavoj Žižek ed. (London and New York: Verso, 1994), pp. 1-33 (p. 10).
[193] Sarah Brouillette, *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). The full complexity of Brouillette's post-Bourdieusian approach to world literature is then revealed when

writer-intellectual as spokesperson for the Angolan people is one coveted by the MPLA itself as a means of fostering the illusion of a system founded on the principle of accountability by public critique. This is the sense in which Ricardo Soares de Oliveira has suggested that Angolan artists and intellectuals are permitted a wide berth of critique by the state so long as their work is 'on the right side of history' and confined to institutions such as the União de Escritores Angolanos and União Nacional de Artistas Plásticos, which are themselves contained within 'an MPLA-maintained eco-system'.[194] Indeed, in terms that recall Brouillette's arguments about authorial self-construction, Stephen Henighan has written that the target audience for the mode of literary critique elaborated in Pepetela's fiction is not the Angolan public itself, where inflationary book prices have in any case restricted the consolidation of a significant local readership, but rather an international group of literary consumers who want to read about a specific idea of Angolan nationhood:

> The commercial success of writers such as Ondjaki and Pepetela creates a contradictory situation where their ability to speak for Angola's now-abandoned revolutionary ideals is sanctioned, subsidized and amplified by the appetite of progressive audiences in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Lisbon, Paris, Toronto and Berkeley to read about the imagined community of Angolan nationhood that they continue to brandish, much like the Angolan flag, which still flaunts a machete-and-cogwheel design imitative of the Soviet hammer and sickle, even though socialism is no longer the country's governing ideology and the Soviet Union no longer exists.[195]

she demonstrates how these postcolonial authors act as consumers of *their own* literary personae whose images they have in part contributed to constructing, and she thus delineates something like a circuit of authorship which spans from the individual writer to the paratextual spheres of book reviews and literary magazines.

[194] Ricardo Soares de Oliveira, *Magnificent and Beggar Land: Angola Since the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 106.

[195] Stephen Henighan, '"Memórias emprestadas": From the Post-national State to the End of Socialist Internationalism in Ondjaki's *AvóDeznove e o segredo do Soviético* and *Sonhos azuis pelas esquinas*', *The Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 94.10 (2017), pp. 1133-1149.

While Pepetela's history as a guerrilla fighter in the struggle for independence marks him out as of a different caste of literary-intellectual to an author such as Ondjaki, the fact that literary production in the neoliberal era is now more than ever shaped by the global agendas of multinational publishing houses and their uneven geographies of circulation and consumption would seem to throw into question that *esprit de corps* with which the Angolan author is supposed to be endowed in Pepetela's book. The gist of the famous Gramsci quote — 'All men are intellectuals […] but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals'[196] — might then rather serve as a watchword to problematise *O Desejo de Kianda*'s equation of the literary-intellectual with the plight of the Angolan people, and to pose the important, but by no means clear-cut, question as to which side of the tinted window the text's narrator should really be on. For does not the change in subject position effected by the switch between the omniscient third person and the first person plural of the oppressed rehearse exactly that opposition between a consecrated sphere of cultural institutions and forms of state-sanctioned critique promulgated by that very 'MPLA-maintained eco-system'? To this extent, the promotion of the author as an organic intellectual would itself be part and parcel of the dominant ideology, while the representational mode by which this organic function is personified in the figure of the author is also a staple feature of allegory as such.

The character arc of Carmina is the direct inversion of the narrator's transposition from the power of omniscience to the position of the oppressed, as she leaves her radical past behind for a life of extravagance and corruption, passing over onto the inside of the tinted window of that luxury car which is here functioning as a metonym for the Angolan *nouveau riche*. Carmina's ideological conversion begins with the first announcements of the transition to multi-party democracy. In her role as radical leader of the youth wing of Angola's ruling

[196] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. and ed. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), p. 140.

party, she is initially furious at what she considers to be a betrayal of the country's socialist ideals, but as the liquidation of the old party structure renders her '*quase desempregada*' [almost unemployed], she enters a personal crisis whereby she becomes taciturn, nervous and emaciated (pp. 16-18). This crisis culminates as Carmina is pervaded by a '*paranoia antiamericana*' [anti-American paranoia] and starts to perceive '*o dedo satânico da CIA*' [the satanic hand of the CIA] behind the series of chaotic events taking hold of Luanda (p. 17). The irony of course here is that the United States did indeed play a major role in bringing about the neoliberal turn in Angola through its military support for the campaign of destabilisation and the withholding of aid relief, thus recalling Lacan's observation that through their radical distrust of the symbolic order the paranoiac subject in fact comes closest to the position of truth.[197] Yet Carmina moves away from this state of radical suspicion one evening in conversation with João, where she hatches a plan that will solve her worries and precarious financial position and suggests supplementing her political activities with a new career as an entrepreneur:

> *— […] Posso virar empresária, é o que todos fazem. Não agente económica, isso é nome para candongueiro. Esqueçamos a palavra capitalista, como chamávamos, e utilizemos empresário que não ofende ninguém. […] Também posso lutar para o CC do Partido, o que assegura um lugar na lista de deputados para as eleições. E é isso que te pergunto: empresária ou política?*
>
> *— É proibido ser as duas coisas?*

[197] In Lacan's words, 'the moving force of paranoia is essentially the rejection of a certain support in the symbolic order', and in the sense that the symbolic order is itself a fundamental deception, the paranoiac subject can thus be said to approach the position of truth. However, the paranoiac subject's mistake is then to presume the existence of what Lacan calls 'the Other of the Other', a hidden agent who manipulates this deception and who thus controls the fiction of the symbolic order. See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960*, trans. Dennis Porter, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1992), pp. 54, 66.

> *— Agora já não, claro… quer dizer que tu… és um génio, João. Pois está visto, vou fazer as duas coisas, casam perfeitamente, uma atividade ajuda a outra.*
>
> [— I could become an entrepreneur, it's what everyone's doing now. Not economic agent, that's a name for the *candongueiros*.[198] Let's forget the word capitalist, as we call it, and use the word entrepreneur instead, which doesn't offend anyone. I could also fight for the Party's Central Committee, which would put me on the list of deputies for the elections. So this is what I'm asking you: entrepreneur or politician?
>
> — Is it prohibited to be both?
>
> — Now it's not, of course… which means that you… are a genius João. That's it, I'll do both things, they go together perfectly, one activity helps the other.][199]

It then turns out to be Carmina's very success as a radical politician that enables her to prosper as a clientelist entrepreneur, as the start-up capital for her new import-export business is secured through connections she has made in her days as a party militant and whom she intends on repaying with further favours in the future (pp. 24-25). In this way, it becomes clear how the informal economy of the period of *socialismo esquemático* in Angola laid the groundwork for the new forms of corruption that would arise with the neoliberal era. On the one hand, then, as was alluded to above, the argument that Carmina undergoes an ideological conversion in the novel is disputable, since the very resources that enable her to flourish as an entrepreneur are inherited directly from the Marxist-Leninist era, and so while she undoubtedly experiences a transformation of character throughout the text, this change might thus more accurately be described in terms of continuity and adaptation than as any definitive

[198] *Candongueiros* are passenger vans used as public transport in Angola.
[199] Pepetela, *O Desejo de Kianda*, p. 21.

break with the past. This rather more nuanced perspective on the moment of neoliberal transition in Angola then problematises the implications of rupture, finality and historical 'failure' that the allegorical readings summarised at the beginning of this section seem to suggest, since here the character of Carmina is instead read as an index for the ways in which the structures of corruption that were sedimented during the era of 'socialism' were only able to fully flourish with the collapse of the vanguard party system and the transition to neoliberal capitalism in the late 1990s. If there is indeed an allegorical connection between Carmina and the trajectory of post-independence Angola, it is therefore emphatically not one of sombre reflection on the failures of Marxism-Leninism, nor does it subscribe to that flattened sort of temporality to be found in Fukuyama-style narratives of the 'end of history'. Rather, this allegorical connection is one just as rooted in a sense of history's continuity as it is indignant of the fact that the same campaign for social equality and human fulfilment that had underpinned the struggle for independence over half a century ago remains as relevant and unfulfilled now as it was then, and no less urgent.

Yet even to substitute a notion of historical development and continuity for one of failure or socialist decline ultimately leaves unanswered a raft of questions that not only threaten to undermine the very foundations on which this allegorical mode of interpretation is based but that are also just as central, if not arguably more significant, to the development of Pepetela's novel as is the ideological conversion of its principal protagonist. For which groups in society lose out from the collapse of the Kinaxixi apartment blocks? And who or what is responsible for the spontaneous collapse of these buildings? Is Luanda syndrome to be read as an ironic echo or mimicking of the effects of the neoliberal turn, or is this relationship something more directly analogous to the process of economic restructuring that forms the novel's socio-economic *mise-en-scène*? Indeed, the motif of architectural destruction can in fact be re-read not only as an allegorical expression of history in ruins but

also in terms of growth, progression and the productivity of organic life processes, and this mode of reading is directly encouraged by the plotline from which Pepetela's novel takes its name. For throughout the novel, the narration of Carmina's political exploits appears interspersed with seemingly incongruous descriptions of mysterious happenings associated with Kianda, the Kimbundu water-spirit, whose dominion is said to reach across Angola's rivers and lakes into the salt waters extending along the coast of the Angolan Atlantic.[200] Transcribed in italics, these descriptions centre on a particularly desolate area of the city which was once a great lake but which has been filled in and replaced with towering apartment blocks as part of the urbanisation process. As a child goes missing while playing at the meagre and green-looking remains of this great lake, only to reappear years later in a different place, it becomes clear that Kianda is exacting some sort of revenge for the ecological violence carried out in the name of neoliberalism, and that it is she who is responsible for the phenomenon of the falling buildings. The atmosphere of destruction to which the revenge of the water-spirit gives rise is then further seen to produce an emergent community of the dispossessed and economically marginalised that will provide a sort of insurrectionary counterpart to the accounts of luxury and consumerist opulence that take place on another narrative level. Indeed, the episodes dealing with Kianda are located amid the detritus of an abandoned construction site in the heart of Kinaxixi, and due to '*a falta constante de moradias*' [the constant lack of accommodation], the site is overwhelmed by an influx of homeless persons who use the dilapidated and unfinished construction works as a temporary residence. As this impromptu settlement increases in number, the construction site is pervaded by a disembodied chanting and a supernatural set of events begins to occur:

[200] For a discussion of the folkloric history of the Kimbundu water-spirit, as well as its close links to the development of the figure of Iemanjá in the Afro-descendent belief-systems of north-eastern Brazil, see, for example, Zora Seljan, *Iemanjá e suas Lendas* (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1967) (especially p. 32).

Um cântico suave, doloroso, ia nascendo no meio das águas verdes e putrefactas que durante os anos se foram formando ao lado dum edifício em construção no Kinaxixi. [...] Primeiro era uma poça, parecia de cano de esgoto, no meio dos ferros das fundações ao lado do prédio. Aí nasceram girinos, depois rãs. A poça foi crescendo, verde pelas plantas que irrompiam das águas. Apareceram peixes. E as crianças iam nadar. De vez em quando, havia notícia duma criança que desaparecera quando brincava na borda da lagoa ou no prédio incompleto e de lá caía. Acontecia também uma criança sumida nas águas aparecer anos depois em outro sítio, sem memória do seu trajecto. Vinha a notícia no jornal e era esquecida em seguida. O cântico era demasiado suave, ninguém ouvia.

[A soft, painful chant was emerging from among the green and rotting waters that for years had been forming by the side of an unfinished building in Kinaxixi. Initially it seemed like a puddle had formed from a leaking sewage pipe, but then tadpoles and frogs started to appear. The puddle started growing, its green colour taken from the plants erupting in its waters. Fish appeared, and then children started swimming there. From time to time, there was news of a child that had gone missing while playing at the lake's edge or that had fallen from the unfinished building. It also occurred that a child had entered the waters only to appear years later in a different place, with no memory of what had happened. It was reported in the newspaper at the time but then quickly forgotten. The chant was too soft, no one heard it] (p. 13).

Italicised in the text, the passages dealing with Kianda are intercalated among the progression of Carmina's ideological transformation to the extent that the reader is encouraged to interpret the events in the abandoned building works as the dialectical complement to her political manoeuvrings, with the wretched state of the construction site functioning as something of a dark mirror in which are reflected the protagonist's opportunism and political

success. ‘There must be something rotten at the very core of a social system which increases its wealth without diminishing its misery’, wrote Marx,[201] and indeed here the putrid waters by the side of the unfinished building works would seem to point to the rotten character of an Angolan society which facilitates a lavish way of life for the political elite at the same time as it creates a class of citizens effectively ‘trapped in poverty’.[202] The textual affinity of Kianda’s soft and painful chanting with the upsurge in illegal residence and urban ecology — which crucially takes place outside capital’s reproductive circuits — in this way launches a protest against the social effects of Angola’s transition to a ‘structurally adjusted’ market economy and counterposes the upward trajectory of Carmina in the *Comité Central* with an account of the lives of those excluded from the local acceleration of capitalist development.

However, the putrefaction of the abandoned building site is at the same time far more than a mere foil that serves to nuance the plotline of Carmina and her ideological conversion, for it is also the home of new species of aquatic plants, amphibians and other wildlife that constitute an emergent community in their own right, and the fact that this supposed ‘underside’ of neoliberalisation in Angola is to be considered just as characteristic of the process of economic restructuring as the rhetoric of market pluralism is indicated by the narrator at one point in the text where he equates the advent of multi-party democracy with the flora of Kianda’s settlement: ‘*Os partidos nasciam como as plantas na água virada de novo lagoa do Kinaxixi*’ [Parties were born like the plants in the turning water of the new lake of Kinaxixi] (p. 17). There then emanates from the rotting waters an almost mystical force that is only fully perceived by certain children, such as a young girl named Cassandra who feels sad that she is so attuned to the chant of Kianda while her friend Janico and the adults with whom she comes into contact are deprived of this ability. Just like her namesake

[201] Karl Marx, ‘Population, Crime and Pauperism’, in *Collected Works*, vol. 16 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), pp. 487-491 (p. 488).
[202] Inge Tvedten and Gilson Lázaro, ‘Urban poverty and inequality in Luanda, Angola’, *CMI Brief* 15 (2016), pp. 1-4 (p. 4).

in Greek mythology, the priestess of Apollo, Cassandra is thus doomed to pronounce prophecies that no one will believe, but her feelings of sadness then quickly give way to a quasi-spiritual attraction that suggests an organic connection between humans and nature capable of jumping the species barrier:

> *[O] cântico era cada vez mais forte e imperceptivelmente cada vez menos dolorido, se transformando aos poucos em canto de combate. Porquê só ela ouvia, nem mesmo Janico? Ficava triste, a marcar o ritmo, mas ao mesmo tempo se sentia atraída por aquela água escura. Como se alguma coisa a chamasse lá do fundo. E o coração apertava, segredava tristezas.*
>
> [The chant was getting stronger and more imperceptible, less painful, it was soon transforming into a war chant. Why could only she hear it, and not even Janico? She was sad to notice the rhythm, but at the same time she felt attracted by the dark water. As if something were calling for her there from the deep. And her heart tightened, whispering sadness] (p. 81).

The contradictory tenor of Kianda's moans — at once forceful and meek, combative yet sad — communicates something like the suppression of natural forces of which capitalist ecological regimes are made up, whereby the same natural environment that is exponentially devastated with the ongoing accumulation of capital is also treated as the bearer of natural resources without which this process of accumulation would be unthinkable. The fact that it is a site of abandonment, putrefaction and ruination which emits the force that calls out to Cassandra would then further seem to suggest that the concept of nature itself be rethought to encompass those zones consigned to the realm of the 'unproductive' by the technics of capital, but which are nevertheless just as vital and organic as those resources such as oil that

are more fully integrated into capitalist value production. As Raymond Williams once put it: 'We have mixed our labour with the earth, our forces with its forces too deeply to be able to draw back and separate either out', so that 'the slagheap is as real a product as the coal, just as the river stinking with sewage and detergent is as much our product as the reservoir'.[203] The function of the fluid narrative and typographical back-and-forth between the narration of Carmina's political exploits and the italicised episodes that deal with Kianda might then be read as an attempt to blur the distinction between 'humanity' and 'nature' on which the notion of productivity is founded by establishing a formal interplay between human activity and the extra-human resources from which it draws its lifeblood, incorporating all those natures marginalised by the inauguration of the neoliberal era in Angola. Moreover, the quality of agency with which Kianda is endowed in the text would also appear to register the capitalist world-ecology's own relational matrix of species and environment, in which resources like water feature as 'real historical actors'.[204]

Significantly, 'ecology' was one of Williams' keywords, and due to its Greek roots—which are shared by the Portuguese '*ecologia*'—it originally carried the sense of 'household' or 'habitat' before eventually gaining much broader social implications as 'the doctrine of the influence of physical surroundings on development' and the attendant associations with other species and life-systems.[205] This more expansive understanding of ecology goes some way to explaining the prominence of themes of accommodation and homelessness in the text, which are intimately bound up with its environmental anxieties. Philip Rothwell has singled out Pepetela as a writer with 'a remarkable skill at prescient critique', highlighting in particular the foresight with which Pepetela's identified the seeds of corruption in the MPLA in his

[203] Raymond Williams, 'Ideas of Nature', in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London and New York: Verso, 1980), pp. 67-85 (p. 83).
[204] Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (London and New York: Verso, 2015), p. 36.
[205] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1976] 2015), pp. 70-71.

1988 novel *Mayombe*, and indeed *O Desejo de Kianda* can be seen to demonstrate a similar sort of prescience with its themes of architectural collapse and homelessness.[206] For *O Desejo de Kianda*'s narrative matrix, which joins together the destruction of residential buildings, the growth of informal settlements and the adoption of a neoliberal agenda by the ruling party regime, can be seen to prophetically identify a tendency towards the dispossession and marginalisation of the Angolan population that would only fully emerge in the years directly succeeding the publication of Pepetela's novel. This tendency is most forcefully illustrated by the Boavista slum clearances of 2001, which exacerbated the already severe crisis of informal settlements in the country established by decades of civil war, as Tony Hodges explains:

> In these informal settlements, huge numbers of squatters, many of them *deslocados* or migrants from the rural areas, have no legal documents and thus no security of tenure. […] Not only has the government invested almost nothing in these areas, to provide social infrastructure or services, or to upgrade the conditions of those living there, but in 2001 it began to take action to remove shantytown dwellers by force from one large informal settlement in Luanda, to make way for property developers planning to build luxury housing. In July 2001, the provincial government of Luanda sent bulldozers, accompanied by armed police, into the neighbourhood of Boavista, next to the bay of Luanda, in the first stage of a campaign to evict more than 10,000 families and demolish their homes. No legal process was employed and no alternative housing was provided for the residents, who were transported 40 km from Luanda, to a site near the town of Viana, far from their jobs or other sources of livelihood, and accommodated in tents.[207]

[206] Phillip Rothwell, 'Rereading Pepetela's "O Desejo de Kianda" after 11 September 2001: Signs and Distractions', p. 196. As the title of the article suggests, he will go on to make the unliklely comparison between the trope of the collapsing buildings in Pepetela's novel and the attack on the World Trade Centre in 2001, a reading which is of less relevance to the interests of the present investigation.
[207] Tony Hodges, *Angola: Anatomy of an Oil State*, pp. 30-31.

As Mike Davis has shown, this contradictory conjuncture of state-backed impoverishment and the accumulation of wealth is far from specific to the Angolan context but is rather part of a broader phenomenon that can be found proliferating across a range of societies similarly subjected to the imperatives of neoliberal transition, such as in Lagos, Kolkata and Beijing.[208] To return to Williams, then, *O Desejo de Kianda*'s network of inter-species cohabitation, which joins the homeless and internally displaced to fish and urban vegetation, can be seen to indicate the depth of the novel's ecological sensibility, and the crescendo of Kianda's moans to function as a mouthpiece for those natures excluded from the local acceleration of capitalist development, be these the dispossessed, refugees or indeed the flora and fauna deemed unproductive or superfluous by capitalism's destructive regime of accumulation.

A character that demonstrates the ways in which these marginalised natures are endowed with a productive revolutionary force in *O Desejo de Kianda* is Honório, a friend of João who loses everything as a result of the destruction caused by Luanda syndrome, but whose loss is then translated into a form of growth and a source of solidarity as he becomes part of a revolutionary movement of the impoverished and dispossessed. Honório is one of the first victims of the falling buildings, and after his home is destroyed in the event, he is placed in the precarious financial position of having to buy materials such as bricks and cement in order to build himself and his wife a new home with the same salary he was receiving before the catastrophe. Driven to despair, Honório starts to do favours for those indebted to the company at which he works in accounting by reducing their debt for a small commission, but when the manager discovers his scheme of corruption, he fires Honório on the spot, not wanting to get involved in any scandals. When Honório later informs his wife Margarida of the day's events, she immediately demands a divorce and expresses her

[208] Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), pp. 101-103.

astonishment that he has ended up '*um corrupto como os outros*' [corrupted like the others], to which Honório protests without avail that his actions were far removed from the nepotistic corruption of the politicians — the implication being that, while the rich and wealthy are rewarded for their corrupt endeavours, the poor and dispossessed are punished for the same actions (pp. 89-90). With everything lost — '*Casa, emprego, mulhe*r' [house, job, woman] as he himself succinctly puts it — Honório joins a protest movement which seeks to hold the government to account for their inaction over the crisis caused by Luanda syndrome. João first hears about this movement on the radio, where it is announced that a group of completely naked protestors driven into poverty by the succession of falling buildings have taken to the streets to protest against the lack of support they have received from the authorities (p. 107). When João goes out to investigate, he discovers that Honório himself has become part of this grassroots social movement, who then goes on to explain to João the symbolism of the nudity:

> *— Estás admirado? É a nova moda do Kinaxixi. E está a pegar. Os desalojados do Kinaxixi protestam contra o governo que não faz nada por eles, lançando o nu como traje nacional, o único que está de acordo com o nível de vida do povo. Já nem de tanga se pode andar, a tanga é um luxo para burguês.*
>
> [— Are you impressed? It's the new fashion of Kinaxixi, and it's going to catch on. The displaced people of Kinaxixi are protesting against the government that does nothing for them, using nudity like a national costume, the only one that is in accordance with the standard of living of the people. You cannot go around in a loincloth any more, loincloths are a luxury for the bourgeois] (p. 109).

Honório then takes the symbolism one step further when he claims that there exists '*uma luta de classe nesta sociedade, entre os vestidos e os nus*' [a class war in this society, between the clothed and the nude], and João is taken aback by the radical implications of this new social movement, which seems to be attracting an ever larger number of people by tapping into a generalised feeling of discontent and frustration directed at the same class of corrupt politicians to which his wife Carmina belongs. The theme of nudity can, to this extent, be read in terms of the specifically representational dilemma which arrived with the emergence of a national bourgeoisie in newly independent African states: while under colonial occupation the enemy could be easily identified, dressed as he was in foreign uniforms and singled out by his use of the language of the coloniser, when the enemy has become one of your own, the problem of identification is an altogether more complicated one. The naked revolution in *O Desejo de Kianda* can be seen to provide a solution to this problem by literalising and externalising the fact of dispossession in the guise of a uniform of nudity.[209] But as Honório further explicates the method of organisation on which this movement is based — in a didactic register that is, it has to be said, somewhat discordant with the rest of the narrative — João finds that he himself has been caught up in the wave of revolutionary fervour and is subsequently torn between the two sides of the conflict, the dressed and the nude:

> *— É tudo informal, os mais activos, mais interessados, discutem e tomam decisões. Quem aparecer nas reuniões pode participar, são abertas a todos. Não queremos*

[209] This representational dilemma was not only social and political, but also a quite specifically literary one, as Fredric Jameson argued in his essay on national allegory: 'after the poisoned gift of independence, radical African writers like Ousmane, or like Ngugi in Kenya, find themselves […] bearing a passion for change and social regeneration which has not yet found its agents. I hope it is clear that this is also very much an aesthetic dilemma, a crisis of representation: it was not difficult to identify an adversary who spoke another language and wore the visible trappings of colonial occupation. When those are replaced by your own people, the connections to external controlling forces are much more difficult to represent'. See the reproduction of this essay, with a new response and commentary from Jameson himself, in Fredric Jameson, *Allegory and Ideology* (London and New York: Verso, 2019), p. 181.

aparelhos rígidos, isso acaba por tolher as inciativas, por oprimir os membros. Para esse tipo de prisões existem os partidos, e nós não queremos ser um Partido. Queremos dinamizar um movimento de revolta que obrigue o Estado a ignorar as ordens do FMI, que estão a empobrecer cada vez mais os cidadãos para benefício dos estrangeiros e de alguns corruptos. […] Aliás, já somos muitos a pensar que isso de partidos talvez esteja bem para a Europa, foi lá onde foram inventados, mas que aqui precisamos de outras formas mais nossas de organização […] É um verdadeiro movimento de massas, não aqueles que conheces do passado, que eram cozinhados num gabinete e se chamava depois as massas para o apoiarem. Este nasceu das massas e ninguém vai controlá-lo nem servir-se dele, nós todos não deixamos. Estamos a criar História, porque estamos a inventar nossas próprias vias. Chega de copiar fórmulas do estrangeiro, inventemos os nossos próprios métodos de luta.

[— It is all informal, the most active and interested argue and take decisions. Whoever turns up at the meetings can participate, they are open to all. We don't want rigid apparatuses, these end up impairing initiatives and oppressing the members. For this type of prison there are parties, and we don't want to be a Party. We want to dynamise a movement of revolt that obliges the State to ignore the orders of the IMF, that is impoverishing citizens more and more for the benefit of foreigners and the corrupt. Furthermore, we are already thinking that this matter of parties is maybe better for Europe, where they were invented, but that here we need other forms of organisation that are more suited to us. It is a true movement of the masses, not one of those from the past, that were cooked up in an office and were directed at the masses only in search of support. This one was born from the masses and no one is going to control it or put it in service of anything, we all won't let that happen. We are creating History, because we are inventing our own paths. Instead of copying the foreigner's formulas, we are inventing our own methods of fighting] (pp. 113-114).

João is quite right in identifying this new political programme with the anarchist tradition, which is itself built on a dialectical relation of 'the most colossal disorder, the most complete disorganization of society and, beyond this gigantic revolutionary change, the construction of a new, stable […] order based on freedom and solidarity'.[210] But what is most notable about the quote is that, by this point in the text, the plotline dealing with Carmina's political manoeuvrings has almost completely receded into the background, and so Pepetela's somewhat heavy-handed indictment of the Party system in Angola and of its rentier tendencies can thus be seen to preclude any mode of reading that might wish to establish a straightforward or 'one-to-one' allegorical connection between *O Desejo de Kianda* and the decline of the period of Marxism-Leninism in Angola. On the contrary, it appears that the novel should rather be read as a much more positive vision of new grammars of resistance emerging out of the ruins of an era in which governing in the name of the people meant only the latter's oppression.

It then falls to Kianda herself to enact the revolution to which Honório's neo-anarchist programme is signalling, as the source of Luanda syndrome is definitively revealed towards the end of the narrative when the city is engulfed by a tsunami which sweeps across the landscape of Luanda in a wave of liberation that reunites Kianda with the high seas off of Angola's Atlantic coastline:

> *[O] lamento de Kianda [...] queixava de ter vivido durante séculos em perfeita felicidade na sua lagoa, até que os homens resolveram aterrar a lagoa e puseram cimento e terra e alcatrão por cima, construíram o largo e os edifícios todos à volta. Kianda se sentia abafar, com todo aquele peso em cima, não conseguia nadar, e*

[210] Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice*, trans. Mary Klopper (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), p. 12.

> *finalmente se revoltou. E cantou, cantou, até que os prédios caíssem todos, um a um, devagarinho, era esse o desejo de Kianda.*
>
> [Kianda's lament complained of having lived in her lake for centuries in perfect happiness until the humans decided to fill it in with cement and earth and tarmac, building a square and buildings and everything around it. Kianda felt asphyxiated, with all that weight on top of her, she was unable to swim, and so finally she revolted. She sang, sang, until all the buildings fell down, one by one, this was the desire of Kianda] (p. 108).

There is an element of revenge here as Kianda rises up against a society that has deformed the local environment and endangered its ecosystems with an urbanisation process geared towards providing houses for private investors and the governmental elite, while the majority of the population are imprisoned in poverty. The implication here is that Kianda's uprising is somehow fulfilling the role laid out for it by the emancipatory programme of the naked revolution, which directly precedes the event of the tsunami in the narrative. From another perspective, however, the elaboration of this revolutionary programme can itself be seen to result from the desire of Kianda, since the epidemic of homelessness out of which the demands for social change and accountability have arisen was caused in the first place by the falling buildings of Luanda syndrome, which are now revealed as the work of the water-spirit. Still, what is left over from the finale of the novel is a remainder of ambiguity, for the grassroots social movement that has emerged out of the ruins of Luanda syndrome is also ultimately crushed by the climactic water-spirit tsunami. To this extent, while the naked revolution in which Honório participates can, on the one hand, be grouped alongside the revenge of the water-spirit as a return of the repressed of marginalised natures, it could also equally be argued that Kianda's desire is in fact diametrically opposed to the emergent neo-

anarchist revolution and its vision of futurity, insofar as Honório and the rest of the protesters are ultimately obliterated along with the same opportunistic politicians against whom they are fighting.

What kind of dystopia is Pepetela's novel, then? Does it offer an optimistic vision of an Angolan society transformed by the uprising of formerly repressed natural forces? Or is it a much more sceptical text that narrates the total decimation of the country by a force of social life that has thus far been taken for granted? Rather than resolving this dilemma one way or another, however, it might be pointed out that this tension is a constitutive feature of the genre of dystopia itself, which is meaningful only insofar as it is relationally opposed to the categories of utopia, anti-utopia and apocalypse. That *O Desejo de Kianda* can be read from different, and at first glance incompatible interpretive positions — as the utopian text that boldly imagines a step towards post-capitalist futurity, as an anti-utopian narrative that forecloses all hope of such societal reconstruction, or as a dystopian tale of a grassroots social movement emerging out of the catastrophic destruction of a Luanda in ruins — is surely symptomatic of a tension or contradiction that inheres in Angolan society itself, rather than a dilemma which might be settled one way or another through the taking of sides. Indeed, each of these tendencies exist side-by-side in Angolan social space in the form of a recalcitrant group of emergent protestors demanding an end to government corruption and state violence, and a repressive neoliberal regime that wants to play down these demands and consolidate its wealth. It is precisely this opposition between emancipatory politics and a paralysing sense of historical stasis that is taken up again in the dystopian universe of Ondjaki's 2012 novel *Os Transparentes*, but in an inversely homologous way.

3.3. Messianic Failure

Of the various far-fetched and seemingly incongruous plotlines that drive the narrative development of Ondjaki's *Os Transparentes*, ranging from an imminent solar eclipse that the Angolan government decides to 'cancel', to a man debating whether to exhibit his abnormally large hernia on the circuit of international television talk shows, by far the most pivotal in terms of what might be called the novel's 'argument' is the transparency of its protagonist, Odonato.[211] Beginning with a rapid emaciation, a bout of melancholia and a phenomenon whereby his movements stop producing sound (p. 17), Odonato's physical condition deteriorates to such an extent over the course of the novel that his body becomes transparent and light accordingly starts to pass through him as if he were no longer a human being with a materially substantial physical form but rather '*uma peneira ambulante*' [a walking sieve] (p. 34). Alongside this bodily materialisation manifests a more strictly emotional crisis, cast in terms of a disillusionment with and dissociation from a surrounding environment that has become permeated with the logic of commodity exchange and a related anxiety over what is 'real' and what is 'false' (p. 72). The connection is then made between Odonato's transparency, his increasing psychological detachment and Angola's precarious social and political situation, as Odonato claims that he is suffering from a '*doença de mal-estar nacional*' [illness of national malaise] caused by the protracted conflicts and disputes of the post-colonial era (p. 179). In an extended monologue, Odonato elaborates on this connection in more explicit terms by tracing a causal link between his transparency and social inequality in Luanda:

> *um homem, para falar dele mesmo, fala das coisas do início ... como as infâncias e as brincadeiras, as escolas e as meninas, a presença dos tugas e as independências… e*

[211] Ondjaki, *Os Transparentes* (Lisbon: Caminho, 2012), pp. 362, 138-139. All further references will be given after quotations in the main body of the text.

> *depois, coisa de ainda há pouco tempo, veio a falta de emprego, e de tanto procurar e sempre a não encontrar trabalho… um homem para procurar para ficar em casa a pensar na vida e na família. no alimento da família. para evitar as despesas, come menos… um homem come menos para dar de comer aos filhos, como se fosse um passarinho… e aí me vieram as dores de estómago… e as dores de dentro, de uma pessoa ver que na crueldade dos dias, se não tem dinheiro, não tem como comer ou levar um filho ao hospital… e os dedos começaram a ficar transparentes… e as veias, e as mãos, os pés, os joelhos…*

> [a man, in order to speak about himself, speaks about beginnings… like childhood and children's games, school and girls, the presence of the Portuguese and the arrival of independence… and then, only a short time after, comes the unemployment, and after so much searching and never finding a job… a man stops searching to stay at home and think about his life and his family. about feeding his family. in order to cut costs, he eats less… a man eats less so that he can give more food to his children, as if he were a bird… and then the pains in the stomach start… and the pains inside, inside a person who sees that in the cruelty of daily life, if you don't have money, you can't eat or take your child to hospital… and your fingers start turning transparent… and your veins, your hands, your feet, your knees…] (p. 200).

By the end of the novel the protagonist's condition has become so extreme, and his emaciation so severe, that he has to be tethered to the ground to stop him floating away like a balloon (p. 354). His final appearance in the text is set against the dystopian backdrop of a Luanda in flames after a failed set of oil excavations launches the city into environmental catastrophe. Tied to the rooftop of his apartment block, overlooking the city in ruins, Odonato

decides to break through his tether and is carried away by a gust of wind into a Luandan sky turned red by the flames (p. 422).

Taking its cue from passages such as the one cited above (which is also reprinted on the blurb of the novel's original Portuguese edition), as well from Odonato's other, more categorical statements, such as his claim that '*nós somos transparentes porque somos pobres*' [we are transparent because we are poor] (p. 203), the overwhelming majority of the still remarkably thin body of scholarship on Ondjaki's novel has interpreted the motif of transparency as the prime vehicle for its social critique. Thus James Hussar, for instance, has described the character of Odonato as 'an archetype for Angola's poor' that indexes the gravest of the country's 'social and political problems',[212] and this sentiment is then echoed by a critic such as Nazir Ahmed Can who, in a brief review of the text, characterises the transparent protagonist similarly as '*o emblema de uma classe invisibilizada*' [the emblem for a class made invisible].[213] The paradox involved in the fact that it is an act of disappearing that functions to critically illuminate the experience of poverty and suffering in *Os Transparentes* is then briefly acknowledged by Carmina Lima Sabino in her identification of Odonato's transparency as '*um posicionamento eminente político*' [an eminently political position],[214] but finds what is perhaps its most extended treatment with Silvia Valencich Frota's suggestion that '*ao tornar-se transparente, Odonato parece personificar* […] *a expressão do povo, ou seja, torna-se transparente para dar visibilidade ao povo*' [by turning transparent, Odonato seems to personify the expression of the people, or rather, he turns transparent to give visibility to the people].[215] Anas Atakora, in what is in my view the most

[212] James Hussar, 'A Lie for a Lie: MPLA Media Control in Ondjaki's Luandan Novels', *Ellipsis* 11 (2013), pp. 247-266 (p. 258).
[213] Nazir Ahmed Can, 'Luanda, cascatas em chamas. *Os Transparentes*, de Ondjaki', *Ipotesi* 18.1, pp. 161-162 (p. 161).
[214] Carmina Lima Sabino, 'Da materialidade à imaterialidade: uma análise de *Os transparentes* de Ondjaki', *Revista Línguas & Letras* 17.36 (2016), pp. 27-36 (p. 35).
[215] Silvia Valencich Frota, '*Os transparentes:* identidades nacionais em exibição na Angola de Ondjaki', *Letras de Hoje* 51.4 (2016), pp. 543-554 (p. 552).

interesting exploration of fantastic form in Ondjaki's novel, approaches the motif of transparency in somewhat different terms by characterising it as '*une sorte de sublimation de la souffrance*' [a sort of sublimation of suffering] that is said to reveal itself '*à la fois comme lieu de révolte, d'enjeu social, de quête d'une utopie de transparence absolue*' [as at once a space of revolt, of social questions, and of the quest for a utopia of total transparency].[216] Nevertheless, and despite small shifts of emphasis, the critical reception of *Os Transparentes* is unanimous in its interpretation of Odonato's transparency as a thematic expression of material deprivation among Angola's underclass that functions to critique the trajectory of Angolan history and politics since the neoliberal turn of the early 1990s.

Yet if Odonato's monologue might in this way suggest a straightforwardly causal or symptomatic relationship between his condition of transparency and the experience of suffering, it does so by neglecting the moment of agency that must take place in the text before this magical event can begin to develop. For the flipside to Odonato's claim that he is transparent because he is poor is that it is enough merely to be poor in order to become transparent; however, if this were true, then one could expect the rest of the novel's characters from deprived social backgrounds to also be undergoing processes of dematerialisation, a situation that manifestly fails to materialise. Just as Jean-Paul Sartre famously pointed out that, while Paul Valéry is a petit-bourgeois intellectual, not every petit-bourgeois intellectual is Paul Valéry,[217] so might one highlight the fact that, in spite of Odonato's claims that his transparency is a symptom of poverty, not every poor person in *Os Transparentes* in the process of becoming transparent. In fact, Odonato's physical condition is initially met with terrified suspicion by his friends and relatives, who balk at the phenomenon of a man turning transparent as if even this were too incredible for a capital city

[216] Anas Atakora, 'Espaces urbains, corps humains: actualisations du fantastique dans *Les transparents* d'Ondjaki', *Voix plurielles* 15.1, pp. 82-93 (p. 88).
[217] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), p. 53.

nonetheless renowned for an affinity with 'crazy and fantastical episodes' which Ondjaki has elsewhere characterised as 'surrealistic'.[218] In one scene on the rooftop of the apartment block which houses the large part of the novel's motley cast of characters, for example, Odonato's friend JoãoDevagar is so dumbstruck by his first exposure to the protagonist's transparency that his only response to the magical event unfolding before him can be '*no mesmo instante, ver e julgar não ver*' [at the same time, to see and to think he does not see] (149). This ambivalent conjunction of bewilderment and disavowal then unveils Odonato's claim that transparency symptomatises the experience of poverty *tout court* to be a rhetorical falsification, for what is emphasised in the shock occasioned by the protagonist's condition is precisely its difference from those characters with whose socio-economic statuses it is supposed to be aligned. Indeed, while the impersonal third person register of the monologue quoted above would seem to suggest that the trajectory from independence to unemployment to dematerialisation is one to which all of Angola's most impoverished can relate, it is equally the case that none of the characters in the novel that belong to this latter category (and there are many) ever experiences physical changes of a sort comparable with the sheer improbability of Odoanto's transmogrification, and indeed the one other corporeal mutation of note — the gargantuan hernia or *mbumbi* of Edú (138-139) — is presented rather as a curiosity for modern science than as a magical occurrence with symbolic consequences for the fate of Angolan nationhood.

At a more fundamental level, though, *Os Transparentes* cannot deliver on its promise that transparency should serve as the condition of the oppressed because to narrate the total disappearance of Angola's surplus population would be to commit a tautology that draws attention to what is already visible: namely, that the most marginalised and impoverished in

[218] Quoted in Michael T. Martin and Marissa J. Moorman, 'Imagining Angola in Luanda with Ondjaki (Ndalu Almeida)', *Black Camera* 1.2 (2010), pp. 38-62 (p. 50).

Angola's urban city sprawl could begin to dematerialise without in the slightest affecting the lives of the rich and powerful. The symptomatic property that Odonato ascribes to his transparency must therefore fall short of its mark and be preserved as anomalous in order to act as symbolic. At the heart of Ondjaki's novel there lies a productive antinomy: on the one hand, the motif of transparency is said to function as an 'emblem for a class made invisible' (Can) and as a means of giving visibility to the materially impoverished (Frota); on the other, those that are materially impoverished cannot then also become transparent, and so are denied the very visibility they are at the same time supposed to have been granted. The attraction which the text exercises over the reader is suspended somewhere between these two poles, and the plural register of the novel's title can therefore be read as a recognition of the impossibility of its own attempt at signification. This antinomic relationship between the messianic register of Odonato's monologue and his ultimate failure to live up to the standard which he has set himself will be unpacked and explored in the pages that follow.

To give credence to Odonato's pretensions to embody the will of the people is, moreover, to accept unquestioningly his own self-symbolisation from the vantage point of an era in which symbolism of this sort has itself fallen into disrepute and outlived its social currency. His claims that '*um homem pode ser um povo, a sua imagem pode ser a do povo*' [a man can be the people, his image can be that of the people] and '*a cidade fala pelo meu corpo*' [the city speaks through my body] (pp. 283-284), for example, are couched in a vocabulary of vanguardism that calls to mind the Lukácsean image of the Party as an embodiment of the proletariat's 'general will', and thus cannot but conjure up unhappy memories of the tergiversation of Angola's own Marxist-Leninist vanguard, as well as now discarded communist tropes such as the '*Homem Novo*' or 'New Man'.[219] His bombastic

[219] The theory of the Party as an embodiment of the 'general will' of the proletariat is developed by Lukács in his *magnum opus History and Class Consciousness*, where he argues that the Communist Party 'is assigned the role of *bearer of the consciousness of the proletariat and the conscience of its historical mission*' (p. 41). For Lukács, the Party would thus bridge the gap between what he termed the 'empirical' consciousness of the

invocation of *o povo* is in this sense more a symptom of the '*doença do mal-estar nacional*' from which he claims to be suffering than his transparency is the condition of the suffering of *o povo*. Far more radical is the neo-anarchist programme outlined by Honório at the finale of *O Desejo de Kianda*, in which spontaneity and collectivism are opposed to any vestiges of authority, leadership or centralised command that might invoke the political rhetoric of a former era's revolutionary struggle. Taken together, Carmina and Odonato are thus recto and verso of the Janus face of Angolan nationhood: where the former personifies the machinations of the closet capitalists in the neoliberal turn towards free-market *nomenklatura*, the latter is a reminder, twenty years on from the Bicesse Accords, of the continued immiseration of those whom this transition purported to serve. But if Carmina is Faustian, Odonato is quixotic, touching in his discourse on the pitfalls of post-independence but ultimately cutting a ludicrous figure as the self-professed image of the people floating by a string like a party balloon, prompting simultaneous reactions of fascination and bemusement from those who come into contact with him. When Odonato's mother-in-law AvóKunjikise sees his transparency for the first time, however, she exclaims in Umbundu '*eu vi o futuro*' [I saw the future] (p. 35), thus introducing into the narrative a portentous register that would appear to corroborate the symbolic mandate with which Odoanto later ordains himself. Yet, as the novel progresses, the climax that this auguring seemed to promise is just as soon eclipsed as the narration of Odonato's condition is subordinated to the significance of a host of other tangential plotlines, such as the death of Odonato's son CienteDoGrã, the vigilante efforts of the journalist PauloPausado at exposing government corruption, and the failed oil excavations that send the whole of Luanda up in flames. Indeed, one might then wonder into what future it was that AvóKunjikise was afforded an insight, for the novel is

proletariat (i.e. the everyday experience of proletarian workers) and the 'imputed' consciousness of the proletariat, which is the standpoint of the proletarian class as the 'subject-object' of history (pp. 320-321). See Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin, 1971 [1923]).

constructed as a circular analepsis that begins with the same apocalyptic oil explosion that marks its dystopian climax, thus foreclosing in advance all hope of that deliverance which Odonato seemed to promise in his sombre disquisitions of the symbolic weight of his transparency. By the end of the text, he is thus more of a false prophet than an embodiment of the people's general will.

In this way, Odonato can be read as an inversion of the trope, popular in anti-colonial African literature, of the embattled male individual who acts as a bearer of revolutionary consciousness that guides the fate of the nation towards the victory of independence. The figure of the messianic protagonist is perhaps best associated with the early novels of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, where it appears as a symbol of fortitude and intransigent masculinity that brings about harmony and solidarity in an otherwise divided socio-political milieu, such as Waiyaki in *The River Between* (1965) with his 'strong, straight limbs' and 'strong emotional moods' that briefly unite the fractured Gikuyu community of the text, or more famously Kihika in *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) who, from an early age, 'had visions of himself, a saint, leading Kenyan people to freedom and power'.[220] In Angolan fiction, similar figures emerge in texts such as Pepetela's celebrated *Bildungsroman As aventuras de Ngunga* (1972), which narrates the coming of age of a young MPLA guerrilla in a way that mirrors the maturation of the independence movement itself, and in Luandino's episodic novel *A vida verdadeira de Domingos Xavier* (1974), the eponymous hero of which is a tractor driver imprisoned for his involvement in the liberation struggle who dies a martyr rather than reveal the identity of a white collaborator to the Portuguese colonists. In Phyllis Butler's reading, the revolutionary sacrifice embodied by Luandino's protagonist 'assumes representative stature in its treatment of the heroic resistance of a common man and his subsequent transformation into a symbol of

[220] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *The River Between* (London and New York: Penguin, 2002 [1965]), pp. 38, 62; *A Grain of Wheat* (London: Heinemann, 1967), p. 83.

the Angolan liberation struggle', and indeed the character of Domingos Xavier would come to be immortalised as just such a symbol of the anti-colonial struggle by Sarah Maldoror in her classic film *Sambizanga* (1972).[221] Yet if Odonato's self-designation as the image of the people implicitly invokes this heroic hall of fame, it does so in the manner of a photo negative that replicates in reverse the paths of these revolutionary protagonists with a markedly satirical spin, for in lieu of the volatile atmosphere of mounting anticipation and emancipatory fervour that characterises these earlier texts, *Os Transparentes* is rather defined by a pervasive sense of disillusionment with the now disintegrated post-independence nation-building project, even while it retains the trappings of the messianic symbolism alongside which the victory of independence had originally been ushered in. Odonato is in this sense the dialectical opposite of figures such as Waiyaki or Domingos Xavier, whose ruggedness, tenacity and erotic appeal appear inverted in Odonato's character in the form of a fragile and wasted physique and a wistful pessimism.

Yet just as the pessimistic overtones of the finale of *O Desejo de Kianda* are complicated by the suggestion that Kianda might in fact be fulfilling the emancipatory political programme of the naked revolution — a programme that is, nevertheless, obliterated in the wreckage caused by the climactic water-spirit tsunami — so too should the characterisation of Odonato as a mere passive inversion of the archetypal anti-colonial hero be supplemented by a recognition of the radical origins of his transparency, as well as the moment of agency that must take place in the narrative before his magical condition can begin to develop. Atakora is alone among the critics in discerning the importance of this moment of agency for the subsequent elaboration of the motif of transparency, drawing

[221] Phyllis Reisman Butler, 'Colonial Resistance and Contemporary Angolan Narrative: *A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier* and *Vidas Novas*', *Modern Fiction Studies* 35.1 (1989), pp. 47-54 (p. 50). In fact, while Maldoror's film is a screen adaptation of Luandino's novel, *Sambizanga* was actually released before *A vida verdadeira* due to the threat of colonial censorship which prevented Luandino from publishing the text until after the arrival of independence. Maldoror was only able to adapt *A vida verdadeira* for the screen because a clandestine copy was spirited out from Luanda to Paris where she began work on the film.

attention to the fact that the first signs of Odonato's dematerialisation are precipitated not simply by the poverty of his socio-economic situation — poverty, in any case, less severe than that of the young VendedorDeConchas, who must sell sea shells he finds on the shores of Luanda Bay to make ends meet (pp. 18-21) — but rather by a refusal to eat, drink, or look after himself that Atakora identifies as a '*grève de la faim*' [hunger strike].[222] From the novel's opening pages, Odonato is animated by an acute sense of the injustice of the lengths to which his family must go in order to provide enough food merely to survive. When Xilisbaba comes back one day with leftovers that the supermarket would otherwise have thrown away, for example, citing the maxim '*é pecado deitar fora comida boa*' [it is a sin to cast away food that is still good], Odonato accordingly quips back '*é pecado não haver comida para todos*' [it is a sin for there not to be enough food for everybody] (p. 25). The protagonist's subsequent renunciation of self-care and nutrition can then be read at once as a protest against this original sin of social inequality and the ground from which will emerge the fantastic character of the novel's motif of transparency. As Atakora explains:

> *En guise de révolte contre ce péché, Odonato se met en grève de la faim. Refusant de manger et de boire, le personnage créé par Ondjaki ne meurt pas après plus d'un mois de grève de la faim. C'est à partir de là que la construction de ce personnage devient fantastique. Le romancier y crée un mythe qui recycle le vieux motif de la métamorphose. Sous la plume d'Ondjaki, en effet, la métamorphose n'est plus kafkaïenne, son personnage ne se mue pas en un autre être vivant, mais il devient translucide.*

[222] Anas Atakora, 'Espaces urbains, corps humains', p. 87.

> [In the form of revolt against this sin, Odonato goes on hunger strike. Refusing to eat or drink, the character created by Ondjaki does not die after more than a month of hunger strike. It is in this way that the character becomes fantastic. The novelist has here created a myth that recycles the old motif of metamorphosis. Under the pen of Ondjaki, in effect, metamorphosis is no longer Kafkaesque, his character does not evolve into another living being, but he becomes translucent.][223]

This argument is in sharp opposition to those critics for whom the condition of transparency in *Os Transparentes* functions symptomatically as a symbol for the experience of poverty and oppression in post-independence Angola, for here the supernatural dimension of Odonato's condition is rather seen to stem from the radical force of the protagonist's own act of resistance, which emerges as a kind of *propagande par le fait* that performs Odonato's own dispossession by taking his situation of material impoverishment to its utmost extreme and refusing the already meagre amount of food on which his family must survive, transforming himself in the process by negating his own selfhood through an act of renunciation. If Atakora is to be believed, then the symbolic narrative presented in Odonato's monologue is not to be trusted and the protagonist himself should not be taken at his word.

What is at stake here is a distinction made by Jacques Lacan, in the still unpublished Seminar XV entitled *L'Acte Psychanalytique* (1967-1968), between '*l'acte*' and '*agir*' — that is, between 'the act' and mere 'action' — which has gone on to enjoy a certain popularity with the Slovenian school of psychoanalysis associated with figures such as Slavoj Žižek and Alenka Zupančič.[224] For both Žižek and Zupančič, there exists a fundamental

[223] Anas Atakora, 'Espaces urbains, corps humains', p. 87.
[224] See, for example, Alenka Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real: Kant, Lacan* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), pp. 106-121, *passim*; and Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London and New York: Verso, 2012), pp. 121-123, 209-210. For a useful critical examination of the variations

affinity between Lacan's thinking about the act and the deontological ethics of pure practical reason that form the basis of Kantian moral philosophy. According to Kant, when the rational subject is operating morally and adhering to what the categorical imperative deems to be the moral law, it must override or veto what he calls the subject's 'pathological' inclinations, those all-too-human impulses that, if left unchecked, would subordinate reason and determine the entire course of human action.[225] This capacity for one side of the rational subject to negate the other is then taken up by Lacan in the distinction between *l'acte* and *agir* in the opening sessions of Seminar XV. Here, Lacan argues that in performing an action [*agir*] the subject is engaged in a mode of conduct that is very much a part of the normal run of things, the flow of business as usual, and that through this action the subject therefore does not alter itself *qua* subject but merely serves to reproduce its own familiar character within a given reality. But sometimes, and without being fully aware of it, the subject will perform an action that is more than just an action, because once it is completed it shatters the very coordinates of the subject's reality and destroys its previous form of selfhood. After this '*passage à l'acte*' — not to be confused with the Freudian *Agieren* [acting out], as Lacan was at pains to point out in Seminar X[226] — the subject is effectively torn in two, into a before and an after, and in the process is transformed into a different sort of subject altogether. The common denominator with Kant is then this idea that there exists a part of subjectivity that has the

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of the concept of the 'act' in Žižek and Lacan, see Adrian Johnston, *Badiou, Žižek, and Political Transformations: The Cadence of Change* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), pp. 144-156.

[225] Kant makes the distinction between '*practical* interest in the action' and '*pathological* interest in the object of the action', which he qualifies as follows: 'The former indicates only dependence of the will upon principles of reason in themselves; the second, dependence upon principles of reason for the sake of inclination, namely where reason supplies only the practical rule as to how to remedy the need of inclination. In the first case the action interests me; in the second, the object of the action (insofar as it is agreeable to me)'. See Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1785]), p. 25.

[226] In Seminar X Lacan argues that what Freud called '*Agieren*' or 'acting out' is a response to anxiety that involves addressing a message to the big Other in a way that keeps the subject at the level of the symbolic, whereas the *passage à l'acte* is to be understood as an action that entails a flight from the symbolic into the real, thus challenging the fabric of the social bond itself. See Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire: Livre X: L'angoisse, 1962-1963* (Paris: Seuil, 2005), pp. 147-149.

power to radically negate itself, to override and destroy what was otherwise thought to be a constitutive part of its selfhood. In these terms, Lacan will go on to describe the psychoanalytic act proper as '*une tâche qui implique déjà en elle-même [une] destitution du sujet*' [a task that implies in itself a destitution of the subject], with the key phrase 'destitution of the subject' here being used to indicate precisely that radical loss of selfhood, the power of negation which forms a fundamental part of subjectivity.[227]

Odonato's hunger strike is just such an ethical act in the Kantian-Lacanian sense, a renunciation of human impulse that negates his own selfhood and transforms him in the process into a new, transparent human being. As Atakora had begun to suggest without fully developing, the fantastic character of the motif of transparency emerges from this radical act of resistance on Odonato's part and not from the mere fact of his material impoverishment, even while this situation of material impoverishment necessarily furnishes the ground from which emerges the act of Odonato's protest. In Žižek's words, properly ethical acts 'occur like "miracles" which interrupt the ordinary run of things', but precisely because they arise *ex machina* like moments of grace, they are also extremely difficult to imagine, 'and when they do occur, one often tends to invent a narrative that normalizes them'.[228] This is then the sense in which Odonato's monologue is to be understood, as an attempt to come to terms with the miraculous character of his ethical act and the magical condition of transparency to which it has given rise by containing it within a narrative that enables the unlikely event to be

[227] Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire: Livre XV: L'acte psychanalytique, 1967-1968*, unpublished, http://staferla.free.fr/S15/S15%20L%27ACTE.pdf, p. 46. Lacan's well-known characterisation of suicide as 'the only act that can succeed without misfiring' is then also to be understood in this sense as a negation of subjectivity. Moreover, Lacan's thinking on this subject is not without its precedents in remarks made by Alexandre Kojève in his introductory lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology* (which Lacan attended), where Kojève argues that 'it is by negating acts […] that Man realizes and manifests his freedom — that is, the humanity that distinguishes him from animals', and where he characterises suicide as 'to cease to act and — consequently — to live'. See Jacques Lacan, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, trans. Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson (London and New York: W.W. Norton and Company, [1974] 1990), p. 43; and Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1969 [1947]), p. 227, 54.

[228] Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, pp. 121-122.

communicated to those around to him. The form this narrative takes is a symbolic one that pretends to emblematise the social inequality against which Odonato's protest was directed, when it was in fact the ethical act's radical break with this social situation that gave rise to its supernatural consequences, and so the motif of transparency is then less a symptom of objective hardship than it is the form of the result of Odonato's *destitution du sujet*.

Yet insofar as the subject is always already mediated by the social reality in which it finds itself — 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence', Marx famously wrote, 'but their social existence that determines their consciousness'[229] — the dilemma raised by Odonato's transparency is the following one: was his condition somehow already there in the source, in the experience of poverty in the text, or is this suggestion simply to narrativise and thus normalise Odonato's transparency by reading it into the source itself? What is at stake here is ultimately a problem of origins that turns on the contradiction between the transformative effects of Odonato's hunger strike and his assertion that '*nós somos transparentes porque somos pobres*'. For while the claim that there exists a symptomatic relationship between the condition of transparency and socio-economic deprivation is contingent on the transformative force of the act of Odonato's hunger strike, this act itself would be meaningless without the symptomatic narrative which Odonato imposes on it. The properly dialectical solution to the dilemma would then be to suggest that Odonato perceives and states his act retroactively from the perspective of the present in the manner of the Freudian *Nachträglichkeit*, constituting the act's preconditions after the (f)act. But in this case, the very terms of the debate over whether the motif of transparency symptomatises the experience of poverty would be fundamentally altered, for this experience has itself been disturbed and rearranged by Odonato's own transparency. Incidentally, this

[229] Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (New York: International Publishers, 1970 [1859]), p. 21. Or, in a Lacanian key, 'language, with its structure, exists prior to each subject's entry into it at a certain moment in his mental development'. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, p. 413.

dilemma of how to make sense of what radically breaks with the ordinary run of things is also one that revolutions face in their attempts to build upon and make intelligible the emancipatory forces they have unleashed.[230] If they are not careful the narratives and images with which revolutions communicate their achievements to themselves can just as easily slide into calcification and impede the further realisation of their aims, which is also the predicament faced by Odonato as he tries to convince his friends and relatives to join him in his newfound and marvellous state of transparency. In conversation with Xilisbaba one day, he tells her '*não comer só me tem feito bem […] deixei de sentir dores no estômago, sinto me melhor, penso melhor, talvez vocês também pudessem experimentar*' [not eating has only done me well, I stopped feeling pains in my stomach, I feel better, I think better, maybe all of you should also try it] (p. 203). But this invitation is rendered impossible in the very moment of its articulation by the fact that another hunger strike *qua* ethical act would no longer appear as a radical rupture of the sort which engendered Odonato's condition of transparency, for what was most miraculous about the protagonist's physical condition is quickly subsumed into the symbolic universe of the text through his own attempts to vocalise it. This might then account for the fact that the none of the other characters in the novel from deprived social backgrounds ever undergoes an analogous process of dematerialisation, and explain why the motif of transparency that was so central in the early stages of the narrative recedes to become the backdrop against which a plurality of other tangential plotlines plays out. To the extent that the radical nature of Odonato's hunger strike cannot be communicated as such without this same radicality disappearing, the very success of the protagonist's monologue in presenting his transparency as a symptom of poverty and suffering is at the same time a mark

[230] As Žižek writes, 'a radical revolution does (what previously appeared as) the impossible and thereby creates its own precursors — this, perhaps, is the most succinct definition of what an authentic *act* is'. Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, p. 209.

of its failure, just as this failure is precisely what was successful about the act in the first place.

The circular antinomies of the motif of Odonato's transparency then find a powerful formal analogue in the analeptic composition of the novel as a whole, which begins with the same catastrophic scenes of an apocalyptic oil explosion that lend to its finale a note of ambiguity not dissimilar to that which marks the climax of Pepetela's novel *O Desejo de Kianda*. For unfolding in parallel to the motif of transparency, and by Odonato's description one of the root causes of his condition, is a scheme by a group of corrupt politicians and self-interested entrepreneurs to extract oil from underneath Luanda, in spite of the warnings that such an operation is likely to end in disaster. The excavations are headed by a group called CIPEL — '*comissão instaladora de petróleo encontrável em Luanda*' [Luandan oil installation committee] (p. 71) — whose members run from opportunistic capitalists to high-ranking government officials and the President himself (p. 238). Whereas there is much self-congratulatory talk on the part of the '*cipelinos*' as to the modernising implications of their oil discovery (p. 238), and much excitement from ordinary citizens looking to capitalise on the oil found on their property (pp. 381-383), the news that drilling for oil in Luanda comes with certain '*riscos incontornáveis*' [unavoidable risks] (p. 238) lends an ominous bent to the excavations. It emerges that a similar attempt at extracting oil in Luanda was made in the 1980s, but was cut short when an engineering study revealed that an issue with the position of the tectonic plates underneath the city would render any attempt at excavation extremely dangerous (p. 91). Presumably worried about the issues brought up by this study, the CIPEL group fly over an oil specialist from the United States who subsequently confirms the extent of the dangers involved in the excavations (pp. 237-238). Undeterred and blinded by the prospect of short-term profit, the group goes ahead with the operation and a '*curto-circuito*' [short-circuit] predictably sends the whole city into a '*gigantesca fogueira*' [gigantic bonfire]

(p. 273) — the apocalyptic scene that Odonato leaves behind as he untethers himself from the rooftop and is swept up by the wind high above the '*vapores de petróleo*' [petrol fumes] and '*línguas de fogo*' [tongues of fire] engulfing the city (p. 415).

Depicting a ruling Angolan kleptocracy that colludes with prominent entrepreneurs in order to exploit the country's natural resources, the CIPEL plotline is instructive inasmuch as it recapitulates the definitive characteristics of Angola's transition from Afro-Marxism — where kleptocratic capitalism became the de facto but never-mentioned modus operandi — to a neoliberal, nominally multi-party state in which this sort of corruption became, if not more explicit, at least more institutionalised. Indeed, the cronyism of the *cipelinos* evokes Hodges's argument that the adoption of a neoliberal political-economic agenda corresponds almost exactly with the rise of an elite group of families who joined the MPLA as 'closet capitalists' only to emerge as members of a new 'oil *nomenklatura*' that siphoned off the national oil revenue for their own private gain. One such 'closet capitalist' in Ondjaki's text is DomCristalino, a major entrepreneur and an ex-member of the Ministry of Industry who began privatising land and factories after the end of the period of *socialismo esquemático*. Cristalino's grand scheme is the privatisation of water, and he has gradually accumulated large areas of land and mountains rich in streams and rivers with the express intention of monopolising the country's water supply (p. 166). As Cristalino joins forces with government officials in their search for oil, a plan is hatched to install under Luanda a labyrinth of water and petrol pipes that would ensure the complete private control of both of the city's '*preciosos líquidos*' [precious liquids] (pp. 192-193). While the *cipelinos* toast whiskey and champagne to their new profitable ventures, however, the characters from more deprived social backgrounds struggle to find jobs and feed their families, and accounts of the opulent lifestyles of politicians and entrepreneurs accordingly appear side-by-side throughout the text with descriptions of poverty, unemployment and miserable living conditions, in a narratorial

juxtaposition which mimics the uneven and asymmetrical composition of Angolan society as a whole (pp. 187-203; 235-251). In the wider context of the novel, then, the CIPEL plotline is a powerful reminder of the extent to which the privatisation and deregulation of the Angolan economy has led above all to a concentration of the country's wealth in the hands of a few, at the direct expense of large sections of the population, and in this sense, it functions as both parody and paradigm of the structurally adjusted model of neoliberal capitalism that has been imposed upon (semi-)peripheral states since the early 1980s.

This transitional process in the Angolan context has, moreover, given rise to a set of socio-political contradictions that can be found across a range of societies making similar adjustments to their economic base, and that crucially go on to receive frank and explicit registration in *Os Transparentes*. After even the most cursory analysis of the text, one picks up on the incongruous persistence of Marxist-Leninist political rhetoric within a local environment structured around the interests global capital, as when the president is referred to as '*camarada*' [comrade] despite the fact that it is he who endorses the capitalist exploitation of the country's oil and water reserves (p. 238), or when the Angolan national anthem — with lyrics including such lines as '*Revolução, pelo Poder Popular!*' [Revolution, through the Power of the People!] and '*Pátria Unida, Liberdade/Um só povo, uma só Nação!* [A United Country, Freedom/One People, one Nation!] — is played at the funeral of Odonato's son, right after the death of the allegorical figure SenhoraIdeologia [literally, 'Mrs Ideology] and just as the CIPEL workers are tearing up the city for oil revenue that will only serve to deepen the already conspicuous divide between the wealth of the klepto-capitalists and the immiseration of the rest of the population (p. 364).

A more constitutive and structural social contradiction, however, and one that cuts through the whole of Ondjaiki's text, is what is often referred to as the 'resource curse', which Rob Nixon describes as 'hing[ing] on the paradox of plenty, whereby nation-states

blessed with abundant mineral wealth are too often concomitantly blighted'.[231] With mineral wealth comprising not only oil but a rich supply of diamonds, the plutocratic situation in Angola would appear to indicate a classic case of the resource curse, and indeed much of the recent sociological and economic literature has been devoted to verifying this fact.[232] However, in tracing the origins of social inequality back to a reified and fatalistic idea of the resource itself, the concept of the resource curse tends to mystify the structural and socio-ecological conditions that undergird the production of commodities in world-systemic peripheries. This is the sense in which Michael Watts alludes to a 'commodity determinism' within resource curse analyses, one that 'presumes a predation proneness' and neglects the determining force of 'both transnational oil companies (which typically work in joint ventures with the state) and the forms of capitalism that oil or enclave extraction engenders'.[233] The central social contradiction of Ondjaki's novel is then not so much the mere fact of such glaring poverty in the face of so much mineral and material wealth, but rather the world-system's axial division of labour that subjects the resource-rich peripheries to the worst forms of extractivism. The gravity of this social contradiction is palpable at the intersection of the rich and flowing oil supply that is visible to all members of the population ('*há mais petróleo que petroleiros*' [there is more oil than oil tankers] , jokes one of the novel's characters (p. 382)); the system-wide corruption that facilitates the blatant collusion between the government and corrupt entrepreneurs such as DomCristalino ('*somos globalmente corruptos*' [we are globally corrupt], in the words of o Esquerdista, the novel's ranting leftist revolutionary (p. 254)); and the many scenes of poverty and destitution that comprise the bulk of the novel, typified by but not reducible to the recurrent wanderings of an

[231] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 69.
[232] See, for example, Inge Amundsen, 'Drowning in Oil: Angola's Institutions and the "Resource Curse"', *Comparative Politics* 46.2 (2014), pp. 169-89.
[233] Michael Watts, 'Resource Curse? Governmentality, Oil and Power in the Niger Delta, Nigeria', *Geopolitics* 9.1 (2004), pp. 50-80 (p. 53).

elderly blind man and an orphan who sleep rough and must sell sea shells they find on the beach in order to make ends meet (pp. 18-21). Underlining the contradictory relationship between Angola's lucrative oil reserves and the absence of any substantial provision of social welfare or effective redistribution of wealth, *Os Transparentes* casts oil not as a 'natural' resource but as one that circulates through corrupt governmental structures at a world-systemic level, and the short-circuit in the oil excavations that sends the whole of the city of Luanda up in flames should accordingly be read as a fictional literalisation of the antagonistic character of global capitalism as a broken social system.

The oil explosion that marks the finale of *Os Transparentes* then apocalyptically projects the internal contradictions of global capital onto a future in which catastrophe engulfs us all. This distinctly unhopeful plotline is strictly contiguous with the antinomic ambiguity of Odonato's transparency, which carries the hope that he might lead the Angolan people into a future devoid of social inequality, but which is doomed to failure the very moment Odonato attempts to invite others to join him. In this way, there emerges from within Ondjaki's novel a constitutive tension which is inversely homologous to that which was seen to animate the narrative development of *O Desejo de Kianda*. In Pepetela's novel, the ambiguity of Kianda's desire leaves room for contrasting interpretations of both the hopeful and unhopeful variety, for while the climate disaster that marks the finale of the text is explicitly cast in terms of the liberation of formerly suppressed natural forces and the spiritual fulfilment of the mythic guardian of Luanda, the sheer destruction and violence caused by the pursuit of this desire puts paid to the grassroots political movement that had emerged in the shadow of its wreckage. That this tension is split along the lines of the utopia/anti-utopia opposition is evident from Jameson's description of the advent of utopia as a kind of 'end of history' inaugurated by some single catastrophic event, which in the present case is identifiable as the water-spirit tsunami that must sweep over Luanda in order for

Kianda to reach beyond her desire towards the depersonalised space of a utopia of nature. In Jameson's words, 'the mythic beginning of Utopian time' is a 'moment of revolutionary transition' in which '[a]ll of diachronic time is compressed into [a] single apocalyptic instant' (p. 187). Incidentally, the telescoping of history into a single but fleeting mystical instant, and its association with the chaos, destruction and the deterioration of nature, is precisely how Benjamin defines allegorical modes of expression in his *Trauerspiel* book, which he reads as spatialising the movement of world history through the figure of 'a petrified, primordial landscape',[234] thus underlining not only the allegorical structure of Pepetela's novel, but also that more fundamental affinity between utopia and allegory that Jameson acknowledges in *Archaeologies of the Future* (pp. 1-9). Yet whereas the water-spirit tsunami in this way straddles the antipodal opposition between anti-utopian destruction and utopian liberation, it is precisely this question of liberation or revolution that simultaneously endows the text with its dystopian sensibility. Indeed, the naked revolution in which Honório participates corresponds to the Utopian impulse which Moylan detects in his description of the critical dystopia:

> Although all dystopian texts offer a detailed and pessimistic presentation of the very worst of social alternatives, some affiliate with a utopian tendency as they maintain a horizon of hope (or at least invite readings that do), while others only appear to be dystopian allies of Utopia as they retain an anti-utopian disposition that forecloses all transformative possibility, and yet others negotiate a more strategically ambiguous position somewhere along the antinomic continuum (p. 147).

[234] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, pp. 165-166.

This 'strategically ambiguous position' has been defined in this chapter, with reference to Jameson, in terms of the apocalypse, and corresponds more closely to the impending sense of doom created by the imminent oil explosion in *Os Transparentes* than it does to the climactic tsunami in *O Desejo de Kianda*. Moylan's reference to the maintenance of a horizon of hope, however, aptly describes the dystopian impulse of the revolutionary programme proposed by the naked protest movement in Pepetela's novel. While Honório's description of this movement identifies its *raison d'être* as a reaction against the foreclosure of hope enacted by the greed and opportunism of the Angolan ruling elite, which serves to consolidate the misery of the structurally impoverished, it is also a protest against the utopian politics of a former era's cycle of struggle, which is here synonymous with the dogma of Marxism-Leninism. Nevertheless, the protest movement is not devoid of its own utopian impulse, as it reaches towards a neo-anarchist form of utopia that may (or may not) converge with the blind, automatic force of the desire of Kianda.

Os Transparentes, on the other hand, encodes an inversely homologous set of generic tensions. An ambiguity akin to Kianda's desire lies at the heart of Ondjaki's novel in the form of Odonato's transparency, which crystallises two opposite and apparently incompatible political orientations: on the one hand, it can be read in emblematic terms as a critique of social inequality in neoliberal Angola and the form of the result of Odonato's radical act of resistance; on the other hand, and upon closer reflection, the emblematic quality of this transparency can be seen to rest on an antinomy that casts the protagonist's magical condition as a messianic failure that wears the trappings of prophecy even as it testifies to the failure of messianism as such. Whereas Kianda's desire was seen to emerge from the tension between the utopia and the anti-utopia, the ambiguity of Odonato's transparency corresponds to the distinction between the dystopian and the apocalyptic, insofar as it is neither hopeful nor unhopeful. Indeed, what is critical about Odonato's transparency is precisely what likens it to

the programme of the naked revolution in *O Desejo de Kianda*, since both plotlines are animated by a keen sense of the injustice of Angola's grossly disparate wealth divide as well as a desire to remedy this inequality and galvanise some measure of popular support. Unlike Honório and the rest of the naked protestors, though, whose future script for social liberation contains the seeds of a utopian impulse, Odonato's transparency contains within it an anti-critical disposition that casts such forms of revolt in terms of ineluctable failure, speaking to a disillusioned sense of historical paralysis, watching impotently on as a corrupt and venal Angolan ruling class leads the country into an apocalyptic abyss. This is the extent to which the anti-critical overtones of the motif of transparency overlap with the catastrophic event of the CIPEL oil explosion, which imagines a form of total destruction that clears the ground for the emergence of a properly utopian form, but which is reticent and sceptical about how this form might come about, or indeed what it might look like.

This dialectical oscillation between moods of radical revolt and a paralysing sense of historical failure is one that has an objectivity in the social process in neoliberal Angola, where an entrenchment of clientelist tendencies among the ruling elite has sat fraughtly alongside mounting demands for social justice and an end to government corruption. This contradiction between critical, emancipatory fervour and an encroaching feeling of historical stasis is thus a characteristic feature of civil society in Angola and not a mere formal or thematic property that might be counted among the catalogue of literary devices used by the writers of the country's dystopian turn. In this sense, the sorts of shifting relations between utopia and anti-utopia are, to borrow a term from Roberto Schwarz, 'objective forms': neither internal nor external to the literary text, but rather a particular mediating principle that

structures the movement of the social process in post-independence Angola in a way that provides the material upon which the literary form works.[235]

[235] Roberto Schwarz, 'Pressupostos, Salvo Engano, de "Dialética da Malandragem"', in *Que Horas São?* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1987), pp. 129-155.

4. Conclusion: Irrealism in the Balance

In an article published shortly before his death in 1990, the Angolan *homme de lettres* and cofounder of the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) Mário Pinto de Andrade places the history of anti-colonial nationalism in Portuguese-speaking Africa in comparative perspective by tracing out successive '*ordens do discurso*' [orders of discourse] that encompass the struggle for independence in all five of Portugal's African colonies from the late nineteenth century through to the liberation wars.[236] In a recognisably Foucauldian register, and with clear reference to Achille Mbembe's early work on the 'orders' of nationalist discourse in colonial Cameroon,[237] Andrade begins his history with the moment of proto-nationalist nativism inaugurated by the founding of pro-African associations in the colonial metropole Lisbon from 1912 to the 1920s, such as the Junta de Defesa dos Direitos de África (JDDA), the Partido Nacional Africano (PNA) and the Liga Africana (LA). Through publications such as *O Negro* and *A Voz d'África*, and with counterparts on the African continent including João dos Santos Albasini, this group of African intellectuals sought to promote the legal and political rights of colonised populations to self-determination and was defined by a '*duplo posicionamento*' [double positioning] that opposed them politically to the First Portuguese Republic, but also socio-culturally to the deprived Africans for whom they were fighting (p. 12). The contradictions of this preliminary phase of proto-nationalism arose out of the disparity between its actors' demands for the freedom of colonised Africans and their own self-identification as '*negros cultos, no molde occidental, sujeitos da nação portuguesa e legalistas*' [learned blacks, in the Western mould, subjects of

[236] Mário Pinto de Andrade, 'As Ordens do Discurso do "Clamor Africano": Continuidade e Ruptura na Ideologia do Nacionalismo Unitário', *Estudos Moçambicanos* 7 (1990), pp. 9-27. All further references are given after quotations in the main body of the text.
[237] Achille Mbembe, 'La palabre de l'independence: les ordres du discours nationaliste au Cameroun (1948-1958)', *Revue française de science politique* 3 (1985), pp. 459-487.

the Portuguese nation and legalists], producing a '*discurso de ruptura*' [discourse of rupture] that led to the gestation of anti-colonial nationalism proper in the post-World War II period (p. 17). With the social restructuring of autochthonous communities in Africa through urban proletarianisation and the inter-ethnic mixing fostered by forced labour and migrations, these post-war years saw an '*explosão organizacional*' [explosion of organisations] in Portugal's African colonies as new legal associations, churches and literary groups were formed, out of which emerged an embryonic intelligentsia composed more of subaltern and indigenous elements than were their proto-nationalist forebears (p. 18). Literary production was a fundamental part of this radical politicisation, predominantly taking the form of a '*poesia de ruptura*' [poetry of rupture] that promoted a process of '*conscientização*' [consciousness-raising] which Andrade associates with the work of Angolan poets such as Viriato da Cruz, Agostinho Neto and António Jacinto, and Mozambican poets such as José Craveirinha and Noémia de Sousa (pp. 20-21). For Andrade, the three defining characteristics of this poetry of rupture were '*a busca de identidade*' [the search for identity], *a procura de matrizes culturais africanas*' [the search for African cultural models], and '*a manifestação do real social*' [the expression of social reality], and its elaboration coincides with the creation of what Andrade identifies as a second '*ordem do discurso*' [order of discourse] that culminated in the militarisation of the anti-colonial struggle in the early 1960s and the victory of independence in the mid-1970s (pp. 21-22).

Elsewhere, Andrade was more specific in periodising the emergence of a literary culture from within this socio-historical conjuncture. In 1976, he suggested that '*a evolução da moderna poesia Africana de escrita portuguesa e crioula comporta três fases essenciais*' [the evolution of modern Portuguese- and crealoe-language poetry contains three essential

phases].[238] The first of these phases, he argues, runs from 1942-1953 and joins the calls of the francophone *négritude* writers to reject assimilation into the colonial metropolitan culture through the promulgation of black consciousness, which in Mozambique and Angola took the form of the promotion of *moçambicanidade* and *angolanidade* by figures such as José Craveirinha, Noémia de Sousa, Viriato da Cruz and Andrade himself. Indeed, the landmark publication of the booklet *Poesia Negra de Expressão Portuguesa*, edited by Andrade and Francisco José Terneiro in 1953, was modelled on Léopold Senghor's *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache d'expression française* (1948) and did much to publicise the work of poets like Sousa outside of Portuguese-speaking Africa, where it was received with 'subversive excitement' as 'the first stirrings of a new voice from the outposts of empire'.[239] But Andrade's second phase, which he dates between 1953-1960, marks a desire to move beyond the homophony with the francophone writers and into to the moment of '*particularização*' [particularisation] which is defined both by an '*alargamento e ultrapassagem da négritude*' [extension and supersession of *négritude*] and a more profound recognition of the specific characteristics of the poets' respective national situations.[240] The mutual imbrication of literature and the political structures of the various national movements that develops during this second phase then leads into another, third phase (1960-1975), in which literature is enlisted in the more immediate demands of the anti-colonial struggle and

[238] Mário Pinto de Andrade, 'Prefácio', in *Antologia Temática de Poesia Africana*, vol. 1, Mário Pinto de Andrade, ed. (Praia: Instituto Caboverdiano do Livro, [1976], 1980), p. 7.
[239] Stefan Helgesson, *Transnationalism in Southern African Literature*, p. 61. The *caderno* [notebook] format of the booklet is, moreover, modelled on Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939), and indeed in the preface to the booklet Andrade and Terneiro list Sousa's work as a Portuguese-language example of negritudist writing, to which is added the work of the booklet's Angolan contributor António Jacinto. Césaire's *Cahier* was, furthermore, a work that Andrade had the utmost respect for, describing it in the preface to the second volume of *Antologia Temática de Poesia Africana* as '*o canto mais profundo que um poeta nascido na noite colonial jamais produziu*' [the most profound song that a poet born in the colonial night has ever produced]. See Mário Pinto de Andrade and Francisco José Terneiro, eds., *Poesia Negra de Expressão Portuguesa* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1953), p. 3; and Mário Pinto de Andrade, 'Prefácio', in *Antologia Temática de Poesia Africana*, vol. 2, Mário Pinto de Andrade, ed., (Lisbon: Livro Sá da Costa Editora, 1979), p. 4.
[240] Mário Pinto de Andrade, 'Prefácio', in *Antologia Temática de Poesia Africana*, vol. 1, p. 9.

the nationalist party's campaign for independence. To this extent, the national literatures of Portuguese-speaking Africa were born out of the discourse of rupture that followed World War II and climaxed with the second order of discourse produced by the armed struggle for independence in the 1960s and 1970s.

In the years following independence, a new set of problems beset Portuguese-speaking African writers as the successes of the various anti-colonial nationalist parties began to harden over into increasingly dogmatic ideological positions that stifled the full range of artistic expression by forcing literature into an oppositional stance and imposing upon it the narrow aesthetic strictures of Zhdanovite socialist realism, which writers were forced to grapple with and contest. If the intellectuals of Andrade's first order of discourse ran up against the contradictions inherent in their educational and material distance from the deprived class of Africans in whose name they were fighting, and if these contradictions were then subsequently resolved by the next generation of writer-intellectuals, who moved beyond the anti-assimilationist perspective of the *negritudistes* and into a more particularist commitment to anti-colonial politics that prepared the ground for the enlistment of literature in the ideological battle against the Portuguese colonisers, then the literary figures of the post-independence era were confronted with a rather different set of aesthetic problems. Rather than carve out a literary style that would serve to further the nationalist cause and spur on the campaign for independence, writers were now faced with the problems attendant on the *victory* of this anti-colonial struggle, not its enlargement and maturation. Among these problems one can list the seeds of clientelism and kleptocratic corruption that began to rear their ugly head beneath the surface of Marxist-Leninist rhetorics of modernisation and equality, as well as the tightened ideological demands that the party *politburo* now exerted upon its writers and intellectuals, who became disillusioned with the trajectory of the post-

independence nation-building projects in a way that forced them to seek out new modes of artistic expression.

During the first decade of independence, therefore, a new, self-critical literature begins to emerge in Mozambique and Angola that breaks with the party line for the first time in a more or less implicit way, retaining the stylistic confidence and nationalist orientation of the previous literary generation yet at the same time voiding itself of any utopian overtones that might be mistaken for an endorsement of the failures and injustices that these writers could see unfolding before them. In Angola, the earliest published example of such self-critical national literature is Pepetela's novel *Mayombe* (1980), which confronted issues of tribalism and dogmatism within the MPLA in a searing narrative that, in Philip Rothwell's words, 'undermines the assumption that the replacement for colonialism would automatically be grounded in the concepts behind the egalitarian shibboleths of the liberation movement'.[241] The furore that surrounded the publication of Mia Couto's short story collection *Vozes Anoitecidas* in 1986 provoked a similar sense of rupture in its refusal to adhere to the aesthetic agenda of the Frelimo leadership and offer uncritical support of a nation-building project that had run up against economic obstacles that would prove to be unsurpassable, as was shown in chapter two. Yet while the periodisations proposed in the introductions of the two previous chapters of this thesis recapitulate the process by which the post-independence literatures of Portuguese-speaking southern Africa arrived at this perspective of scepticism, disillusionment and critique, what remain to be clarified in a more general way are the formal or generic characteristics that distinguish this period of literary production from its predecessors. If, as this thesis has consistently maintained, the social conditions to which the spectral and dystopian turns respond must be grasped outside the bounding limits of the post-

[241] Philip Rothwell, 'Unmasking Structures: The Dynamics of Power in Pepetela's *Mayombe*', *Luso-Brazilian Review* 39.1 (2002), pp. 121-128 (pp. 122-123).

independence nation-state to encompass a more expansive, world-systemic horizon of global and regional economic forces, then, one might ask, what is it that binds the two cultural phenomena together? If the post-independence literatures of Mozambique and Angola are understood as cultural responses to the same economic process — the neoliberalisation of southern Africa — then, surely, there should be formal and generic trends that the two national traditions have in common?

As a response to these questions, this concluding chapter will argue that the spectral and dystopian turns in the literature of Portuguese-speaking southern Africa, while possessing specific characteristics that cannot be understood outside particular reference to their respective national situations, nonetheless share a common ethos in their reaction against the conventions of realist aesthetics. Whether it be the ghostly and spectral narrative techniques of the late-1980s Mozambican writers, or the far-fetched and supernatural plotlines of the novels of Pepetela and Ondjaki, what distinguishes the post-independence literature of Mozambique and Angola from previous periods of literary production is its deployment of non-realist aesthetic techniques as a means of challenging and critiquing the trajectory of the waning Marxist-Leninist state and the emergence of new, neoliberal forms of postcolonial governance. Of course, no discussion of non-realist aesthetics in the context of African literature could avoid confronting the somewhat thorny problematic of so-called 'magical realism' — a category which never fails to elicit heated reactions, from the passionately advocative to the stubbornly dismissive, even now, when its currency in the research agendas of postcolonial and world-literary studies seems to be on the decline. Accordingly, this concluding chapter does not seek to avoid the topic but rather broach it with caution and a periodising thrust, defining magical realism as a literary reaction to entrenched political orthodoxies across the postcolonial world. In this way, I am able to argue that the turn towards the fantastic and the supernatural in the post-independence literature of

Portuguese-speaking southern Africa bears an elective affinity to similar experiences in 1960s Latin America, as well as with the post-independence situations in other African states, and thus to situate the literatures of Mozambique and Angola in a global perspective that suggests multiple angles of comparison and areas for future research. This double movement of closure — in the sense of drawing the spectral and dystopian turns together into a single aesthetic framework — and open-ended invitation — in the sense of pointing towards future angles of research and comparison — is a concluding act that maintains a fidelity with this thesis' world-systems approach to world literature, insofar as it neither stops short at specifying the national characteristics of Angolan and Mozambican texts, nor allows these texts to get lost in global comparative methodologies that care little for their local specificities, but rather one that both surpasses and includes more locally determined, national realities by emphasising the capitalist world-system's character as the practical matrix within which all cultural production must take shape.

Still, the category of magical realism has undergone such intense commodification in the world-literary marketplace, and has it has come to designate a wide range of apparently incommensurate texts from a diversity of cultural and linguistic contexts, in a way that would appear to forfeit any emphasis on social or aesthetic critique. Whereas the genre's origins in 1960s Latin America had been tied to a shared rejection among writers and intellectuals of entrenched political orthodoxies in radical parties across the continent, the way in which the concept is currently applied no longer carries with it its original critical implications. For this reason, I will turn to the concept of 'critical irrealism', which is a key feature of the WReC's theorisation of 'world-literature', and which promises to bypass some of the pitfalls of magical realism by emphasising the socially critical function of breaks with, or subversions of, the conventions of literary realism. For the WReC, irrealist aesthetics are the 'determinate formal registers of (semi-)peripherality in the world-literary system, discernible wherever

literary works are composed that mediate the lived experience of capitalism's bewildering creative destruction (or destructive creation)'.[242] As such, the category of critical irrealism functions as a comparative optic that enables texts from throughout the world-system to be read alongside each other by placing the emphasis on fantastic or supernatural aesthetic forms without thereby forgoing the perspective of social critique. In my re-reading of the concept, I will place the emphasis on the relationship between non-realist modes of signification and unresolvable political or social contradictions in order to read the spectral and dystopian turns in Angolan and Mozambican fiction as irrealist resolutions of the contradictions emerging from the transition to neoliberalism in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa. However, as a category with its conceptual foundations rooted in the tradition of western European literary realism and modernism, is the relevance of critical irrealism for African literatures such as those dealt with in this thesis not inherently limited? Might not the persistence of oral traditions and non-European epistemologies in Angolan and Mozambican texts render irrealism obsolete as an analytical category for literature produced under non-European social conditions? In response to these questions, I also acknowledge the potential limitations of the concept of critical irrealism, but ultimately argue that the valences of the term outweigh its deficiencies and therefore suggest comparison with similar irrealist texts throughout the world-system in a way that complements the discussion of 'magical realism' offered below.

4.1. Novelists' International

Thus far, this thesis has argued that the aesthetics of spectrality and dystopia have functioned as a way for Mozambican and Angolan writers to respond to the process of neoliberalisation in southern Africa. Where the fictional distortion of the line between life and death was seen

[242] Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development*, p 51.

to register the disintegration of the Marxist-Leninist state and the intensification of authoritarian tendencies within the Frelimo leadership in late 1980s Mozambique, so was the dialectical oscillation between hope and despair in the dystopian fictions of Pepetela and Ondjaki seen to encode the coexistence of political disillusionment with radical acts of resistance in neoliberal Angola. Yet another key claim of this thesis has been that the social realities to which these fictions respond must not be understood as hermetically sealed within the bounding limits of the pluri-ethnic nation-state, but that they rather transcend the local dynamics of national transition to broach a world-systemic horizon of global neoliberal restructuring. To this extent, one might wonder how the aesthetic registers of spectrality and dystopia as articulated in Mozambican and Angolan literature tie in with related developments in the literary spheres of regions subjected to analogous processes of transition across the postcolonial world. Might the fictional devices used by Mozambican and Angolan writers to mediate their experience of the waning of socialist politics and the modalities of neoliberal transition not bear a resemblance to similar phenomena in, say, 1960s Latin America, or the decline of socialist realism in the Portuguese literary tradition? What are the literary impasses to which the spectral and dystopian turns constitute an artistic response, and how do they correspond with related experiences across the world-system?

In an attempt to situate the postcolonial literatures of Portuguese-speaking southern African within context of this global and comparative perspective, I want to turn to the concept of magical realism, which has a long and complicated history in the fields of literary and postcolonial studies whose disputes and disagreements I shall only skirt the edges of here for fear of opening up a Pandora's box that would side-track the interests of the present investigation to the point of no return. Rather than attempt to summarise the intellectual

history of the concept of magical realism,[243] I shall therefore focus specifically on the genre's relationship to the history of radical politics from a materialist perspective that periodises the emergence of magical realism as a reaction to entrenched political orthodoxies in 1960s Latin America. My interest in magical realism is thus strictly confined to the relationship between non-realist modes of signification and the combined and uneven development of global capitalism.

Typically used to designate a prose style in which what is fantastic or magical is described as mundane and unremarkable, or in which the humdrum and quotidian itself takes on the appearance of the marvellous and incredible, the concept of magical realism is still frequently used by academics, publishers and magazine reviewers to group together, in a supposedly unproblematic way, the literary production of authors as diverse as Haruki Marukami, Toni Morrison, Isabel Allende, Günter Grass and Mia Couto. Yet while the far-flung trajectory of magical realism, from its first use by Franz Roh to describe the painterly style of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* [new objectivity] in Weimar Germany to its now quasi-automatic associations with Latin American and west African writing, might thus seem to lend the concept all the trappings of a 'universal' genre, it is precisely this glib applicability of the concept that raises questions as to its practical utility. As the WReC have argued, magical realism has undergone such intense commodification within the publicity channels and publishing apparatuses of the world-literary marketplace that its roots in radical political movements in 1960s Latin America have been near totally stripped away, and that it now signifies little more than 'a facile aesthetics in which globalism, hybridity and connectivity are idealised and celebrated'.[244] It is precisely the genre's initial association with radical politics that I am interested in recuperating here, for it bears an elective affinity with the

[243] For a recent and authoritative overview, see the introduction to Christopher Warnes and Kim Anderson Sassinger, eds., *Magical Realism and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[244] Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development*, p. 80.

experience of socialist decline and disillusionment in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa, to the extent that the concept can thus be used as a periodising device with which to chart the shift away from realist aesthetics in the literature of post-independence Mozambique and Angola, of which the spectral and dystopian turns are the paradigmatic examples.

In the first place, it might be noted that Gabriel García Márquez —the most celebrated magical realist writer— had a longstanding interest in Angolan politics, best evidenced by his article 1977 'Operation Carlota' on the arrival of Cuban troops during the Angolan civil war.[245] The following year, García Márquez would travel to Angola to witness the situation first hand and, in a somewhat idealised account shared in the context of an interview with the Colombian journalist Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, later claimed that his encounter with Angolan culture during this trip flooded him with memories of his own childhood experiences in the hemispheric Caribbean:

> *Mis abuelos eran descendientes de gallegos, y muchas de las cosas sobrenaturales que me contaban provenían de Galicia. Pero creo que ese gusto por lo sobrenatural propio de los gallegos es también una herencia africana. La costa caribe de Colombia, donde yo nací, es con el Brasil la región de América Latina donde se siente más la influencia de África. En ese sentido, el viaje que hice por Angola en 1978 es una de las experiencias más fascinantes que he tenido. Yo creo que partió mi vida por la mitad. Yo esperaba encontrarme en un mundo extraño, y desde el momento en que puse los pies allí, desde el momento mismo en que olí el aire, me encontré de pronto en el mundo de mi infancia. Sí, me encontré toda mi infancia, costumbres y cosas que ya había olvidado. Volví a tener, incluso, las pesadillas que tenía en la niñez.*

[245] This article appeared in numerous newspapers and publications throughout the world at the time, but the touchstone version in Britain remains that printed in *New Left Review* in 1977. See Gabriel García Márquez, 'Operation Carlota', *New Left Review* 101/102 (1977).

> [My grandparents were descendants of Galicians, and much of the supernatural things they told me came from Galicia. But I think that this taste for the supernatural proper to the Galicians is also an African inheritance. The Caribbean coast of Colombia, where I was born, is with Brazil the Latin American region where the influence of Africa is most felt. In this sense, the journey I made to Angola in 1978 is one of the most fascinating experiences I have had. I think that it cut my life in half. I hoped to find myself in a strange world, and from the moment my feet touched the ground there, from the very moment in which I smelled the air, I found myself once again in the world of my childhood. Yes, I found all of my childhood, customs and things that I had forgotten. I even started having nightmares that I used to have as a child.][246]

In tracing the supernatural quality of daily life in the Caribbean and Brazil back to a common heritage in southern Africa, García Márquez's comments establish the sort of connection between magical realism and the spiritualism and folk beliefs of African epistemologies that scholars such as Harry Garuba and Ato Quayson have posited under the heading of 'animist materialism',[247] but which is also discernible in early magical realist texts such as Alejo Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo* [The kingdom of this world] (1949), the narrative of which recounts precisely the role played by magical cosmologies in a succession of slave rebellions throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Elleke Boehmer has argued, this shared history of colonisation is as good a rubric as any through which to compare the magical realisms of South American literature with their counterparts in Africa, South Asia and the diaspora, insofar as all of postcolonial writing is necessarily defined by its 'view from

[246] Gabriel García Márquez, *El olor de la guayaba: Conversaciones con Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1996), p. 43.
[247] Harry Garuba, 'Explorations in Animist Materialism: Notes on Reading/Writing African Literature, Culture, and Society', *Public Culture* 15.2 (2003), pp. 261-285 (see e.g. pp. 271-272); Ato Quayson, 'Magical Realsim and Orality', in *The Cambridge Companion to the African Novel*, F. Abiola Irele, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp 159-176.

the fringe of dominant European cultures and an interest in the syncretism produced by colonization' — a marginality which then predisposes it to 'combine the supernatural with local legend and imagery derived from colonialist cultures'.[248] This marriage of animistic beliefs that contest the divide between the animate and the inanimate with a negotiation of the continuing legacies of imperialism and colonisation is then the substance of Brenda Cooper's own definition of magical realism, in her canonical work on the subject, as a product of 'that perilous and fragile embrace between the superstitious beliefs and the ironic distance' which characterised so much West African writing of the *fin de millénaire*.[249] Cooper's description thus returns to the homology just posited by García Márquez in the recollection of his trip to Angola, whose feelings of solidarity emerge from exactly that shared heritage of African ancestry instituted by the violence of colonial expansion. Indeed, despite the uprooting and resettlement of cultures enacted by the traffic of human cargo across the middle passage, the feeling described by García Márquez is, perhaps surprisingly, one in direct opposition to the sort of estrangement and displacement implied by the Freudian *Unheimlich*, and it is thus significant that Freud himself defined the uncanny not only by way of its antonymy with the homeliness of the *heimlich*, but also as against that less immediately proximate adjective *heimisch*, which means precisely 'native'.[250]

Nevertheless, syncretism is in itself by no means critical, and this epistemological definition of magical realism in terms of colonial acculturation does little to capture the political horizon that singles the genre out as a useful tool with which to theorise the turn towards the fantastic and the supernatural in Mozambican and Angolan fiction. As Ella

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[248] Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 235.
[249] Brenda Cooper, *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third* Eye (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 34.
[250] Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works* (London: Vintage, 2001), pp. 217-256 (p. 219).

Shohat and Robert Stam have argued, '[a] celebration of syncretism and hybridity per se, if not articulated with questions of historical hegemonies, risks sanctifying the *fait accompli* of colonial violence', since what is occluded in appeals to undifferentiated notions of cultural mixing is precisely the sheer diversity of the modalities which concepts like syncretism and hybridity can come to stand for, an inexhaustive list of which would have to include 'colonial imposition, obligatory assimilation, political cooptation, cultural mimicry, and so forth'.[251] The means by which catch-all concepts like hybridity can be seen to do violence to the very difference they pretend to signify is indeed a marker of the way in which the liberal pluralism of multiculturalist positions so often tips over into a form of the same homogeneity against which it defines itself. Moreover, if magical realism is to be understood solely in terms of the non-realist outlooks of African epistemologies and their legacies in ex-colonies and the diaspora, then why do the sorts of fantastic and supernatural features which the genre is supposed to signify erupt within the post-independence era in Mozambique and Angola in a way that breaks with previous generations of writers in the countries, who stuck more closely to an aesthetics of realism? (It being the case that non-realist epistemologies had been dominant in these societies for several millennia, even if then systematically suppressed after the colonial encounter.) Fredric Jameson's definition of magical realism in terms of combined and uneven development, whereby modes of production serve as an organising category that understands the genre's surrealist elements as an index for 'the coexistence of precapitalist with nascent capitalist or technological features' promises a more materialist perspective,[252] and Jennifer Wenzel's proposal of a 'petro-magic-realism' suggestively ties fictional depictions of marvellous events in regions subjected to capitalist extractivism to the

[251] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 43.
[252] Fredric Jameson, 'On Magical Realism in Film', *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1986), pp. 301-325 (p. 311).

phantasmagoric aspects of petroleum economies,[253] but these alternative conceptions are still unclear on the question of world-literary periodisation. To this extent, a more historicist perspective seems desirable, one that ties the concept of magical realism to objective historical conditions that can be used to shed light on similar developments in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa.

In *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*, Michael Denning proposes precisely this sort of periodising perspective as he argues that magical realism be understood in terms of a larger shift within the aesthetic style of the 'novelists' international' of the mid-twentieth century — that global community of writers and intellectuals which emerged under the sign of 'proletarian literature', 'neorealism', 'progressive', 'engaged' or 'committed' writing, grouping together such writers as Maxim Gorky, Gabriel García Márquez, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Richard Wright and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and describable as something like 'the first self-conscious attempt to create a world literature'.[254] Against the backdrop of this wider socialist literary culture, the eruption of magical realism in the work of Latin American authors of the 1950s and 60s such as Miguel Ángel Asturias, José Maria Arguedas and Juan Rulfo,[255] not to mention the Boom novelists themselves, for whom García Márquez and Carlos Fuentes stand as representative, can be defined as the second stage of the proletarian avant-garde which emerged out of the worldwide political upheavals of 1917-1921 in the form of initiatives like the *Clarté* international writers' association founded by Henri Barbusse, the Proletkult movement in revolutionary Russia, and the Baku conference of 1920.[256] In South America, this first-stage proletarian literary movement is best associated with novels such as the Mexican author Mariano Azuela's *Los de abajo* [the underdogs]

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[253] Jennifer Wenzel, 'Petro-magic-realism: toward a political ecology of Nigerian literature', *Postcolonial Studies* 9.4 (2006), pp. 449-464.
[254] Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (London and New York: Verso, 2004), p. 51-53.
[255] These are the magical authors cited by the WReC as paradigmatic. See Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development*, pp. 79-80.
[256] Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*, p. 57.

(1915), whose harsh themes of wanton cruelty bespeak a notable lack of utopian fervour and an ambivalent yet ultimately bourgeois 'censoring of desire' which reflects the middle classes' own wavering position in the Mexican revolution.[257] But the 'ideal-type' realism of narratives such as Azuela's, itself by no means as clearcut as its stereotypical 'socialist realist' reading would seem to suggest, also coexisted with currents of surrealism and *vanguardia* movements across the Latin American continent that would together ultimately erupt as a 'return of the repressed of history' in the magical realist fiction of the middle of the century. The dissolution of realism that played out during this period can then be seen to evoke analogous crises of confidence in the epistemological credibility of the emancipatory rhetorics being disseminated by the continent's various revolutionary parties. As the WReC have argued, the literary turn towards the fantastic and the supernatural in Latin American fiction of the 1950s and 60s serves a social function precisely in its artistic expression of 'the scepticism of intellectuals towards their distorted state formations and their sense that earlier revolutionary aspiration had been betrayed or incorporated'.[258] In Mexico, a text such as Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* (1955) can thus be read as both a break with the ideal-type realism of the earlier Mexican revolutionary novel and a challenge to emergent corruption in the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), while at the same time establishing a genealogy between magical realism and the radical critique of capitalist society that was articulated in the surrealism of the first-stage proletarian avant-garde. In the WReC's words,

> By the 1940s and the 1950s, Mexican intellectuals' sense of the betrayal of the Revolution by the PRI, which had consolidated itself as an authoritarian state in collusion with predatory US capital interests even as it fanned a constant smokescreen of revolutionary rhetoric, had reached a peak. Given the state's cooption

[257] Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*, p. 70.
[258] Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development*, pp. 79-80.

> of radical rhetorics, the realist forms of representation previously associated with the expression of revolutionary politics could not help but be tarnished, and what had formerly seemed radical now came to seem accommodationist.[259]

This is then the sense in which Denning locates the artistic purchase of magical realism for national traditions at first glance far removed from its Latin American origins in 'an unleashing of desire and utopia' which foreshadowed the liberation ideologies of the New Left and spoke to political predicaments in situations as diverse as revolutionary Egypt (e.g. Naguib Mahfouz) or postfascist Spain (e.g. Juan Goytisolo).[260] The Portuguese writers José Saramago is another case in point, whose novel *Levantado do Chão* (1980) straddles the crisis of representation breached by the overthrow of Salazarism in Portugal whereby familiar neo-realist vocabularies of social critique had become tempered by the abortion of the popular revolution, meanwhile the need for narratives of resistance had only intensified with the calcification of liberalising tendencies within the social democratic Portuguese state — an ambivalence then codified into the narrative form of *Levantado do Chão* and summed up by Saramago's own description of the novel as '*o último romance do neo-realismo, fora já do tempo do neo-realismo*' [the last neo-realist novel outside the period of neo-realism].[261] Significantly, it was to magical realism which Saramago turned in an attempt to resolve this representational dilemma, and the text can thus be read, following Mark Sabine, as a corruption of now standardised neo-realist tropes by an 'arch, self-parodic and fantastical treatment' which inverts the narrative of García Márquez's *Cien Años de Soledad* (1967) in order to challenge the entrenched orthodoxies of the Partido Comunista Português (PCP).[262]

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[259] Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development*, p. 80.
[260] Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*, p. 70.
[261] Quoted in Carlos Reis, *Diálogos com José Saramago* (Lisbon: Caminho, 1998), p. 118.
[262] Mark Sabine, *José Saramago: History, Utopia and the Necessity of Error* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2016), pp. 29-70.

If magical realism is indeed to be used as a periodising device with which to clarify the artistic impasses to which the spectral and dystopian turns in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa are understood to respond, it must then be in the light of a similar shift in consciousness in Mozambican and Angolan fiction whereby the more asperous realist narratives of the independence struggle and the immediate post-independence years gave way to forays into the fantastic and the supernatural whose allegiance to the party line was less easy to discern, but whose distance from the ossified realist conventions was for this reason the source of new forms of scepticism, agitation and critique. In the first place, it should be noted that the post-independence literatures of Portuguese-speaking southern Africa, with their initially explicit alignment with the programme of socialist realism proposed by Andrei Zhdanov at the 1934 Soviet Writers' Congress, stood very much in solidarity with the novelists' international mapped out by Denning, even while the status of the novel-form itself in Mozambique remained in a more or less incipient state during the era of Marxism-Leninism.[263] The world-literariness of an organisation such as the Associação de Escritores Moçambicanos (AEMO), as well as its links to a global community of left-minded writers and intellectuals, for example, can be gauged from the booklet commemorating the association's 25th anniversary, which includes past comments of support from figures such as Jorge Amado, Gabriel García Márquez, Júlio Cortázar and Anatolly Sofranov.[264] Furthermore, Michel Laban's classic two volume collection of interviews with Angolan writers includes numerous references to the influence of Latin American authors on the formation of Angolan literature,[265] and this influence has then extended to second-generation

[263] The dominance of the short story as the literary *lingua franca* for Mozambican authors of the immediate post-independence years can no doubt be explained by the intensification of armed conflict as a result of South African destabilisation, which, while equally present in Angola, was arguably more detrimental for literary production in Mozambique.
[264] Associação de Escritores Moçambicanos (AEMO), *Memorial: 25 anos pela literatura moçambicana* (Maputo: Associação de Escritores Moçambicanos, 2007), pp. 30-31.
[265] Michel Laban (ed.), *Angola: Encontro com escritores*, 2 vols. (Porto: Fundação Eng. António de Almeida, 2002).

writers such as Ondjaki himself who, in an interview with Stephen Henighan, once confessed his fascination with '*o universo todo da América Latina*' [the whole Latin American universe].[266]

But the early literature of the independence struggle was ultimately less concerned with cross-cultural dialogues in literary form than it was with overthrowing colonialism and instituting majority rule, and this more restricted focus of commitment then accounts for the rigid socialist realism of the *poesia de combate* that characterised the period's literary production, typified by the early poetry of Angola's first president, Agostinho Neto. While Neto acknowledged, in a 1979 speech to the Associação de Escritores Angolanos (UEA), that the legacy of socialist realism had 'proved to be detrimental',[267] as Chidi Amuta has argued, his poetry nonetheless 'aspired to immerse itself fully in the plight of the oppressed'.[268] In this way, Neto was able to highlight the insufferable impositions of colonial rule, but also produce 'a strong sense of realism […] which is able to capture the subtle nuances of life among the common folk while relating this to the relations of dominance and subordination which define the colonial equation'.[269] José Luandino Vieira's short story collection *Luuanda* (1964), written under incarceration between 1961-1962 at the notorious Tarrafal prison camp in Cabo Verde, takes up this realist impulse by fusing Portuguese prose narrative with the musicality of the Kimbundu-speech of the *musseques* [shanty towns] in an attempt to galvanise a national consciousness for the victory of the liberation struggle. Yet while the text's linguistic innovations drew from the modernist experimentalism of Brazilian author João Guimarães Rosa, its literary aspirations were ultimately realist, as Luandino himself

[266] Stephen Henighan, 'Uma entrevista com Ondjaki', *Hispanic Research Journal* 7.4 (2006), pp. 365-371 (p. 370.
[267] See Agostinho Neto, *On Literature and National Culture*, trans. Russell G. Hamilton (Luanda: Associação de Escritores Angolanos, 1979), p. 26.
[268] Chidi Amuta, *Theory of African Literature: Implications for Practical Criticism* (London: Zed Books, 2017), p. 186.
[269] Chidi Amuta, *Theory of African Literatur*e, p. 186.

confirmed in one interview with Margarida Calafate Ribeiro where he described his hybrid lexicon as 'an almost involuntary impulse' designed to make his characters 'real, truer, more representative',[270] leading Patrick Chabal to identify in Luandino's work 'an exceedingly close relationship between context and text, that is between the world in which his characters live and the language in which the stories are written'.[271] However, Luandino's practice of documentary realism, which sought to expose the injustices of Portuguese colonialism through the powerful evocation of everyday events, from the story of a stolen parrot ('*Estória do Ladrão e do Papagaio*') to a dispute over the rightful owner of an egg ('*Estória da Galinha e do Ovo*'), no longer became possible for a post-independence era in which the earlier deprivations of colonial rule had begun to reappear in the form of rampant corruption and the concentration of wealth, and for proof that these older realist paradigms had outlived their social function with the passing of the *Revolução dos Cravos*, one need only recall that Luandino — that most distinguished of Angolan realists — practically ceased publishing altogether in the wake of independence, and that he himself attributed this silence to a 'disillusionment with the path taken by Angola in the post-independence era'.[272]

In Mozambique, an analogous trajectory is discernible in the move away from the critical or socialist realist position that was initially adopted in the face of colonial oppression, but which became untenable alongside contemporary developments in the country's economic and political spheres. A text such as Orlando Mendes' novel *Portagem* (1966), for example, was heavily influenced by the neo-realist paradigm, and belonged to a generation of writers which, in the words of João Paulo Borges Coelho, 'would anxiously wait at the door of the Minerva bookshop for the arrival of the latest books by Jorge Amado

[270] Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, '"E Agora José, Luandino Vieira?" An Interview with José Luandino Vieira', *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies*, 15/16 (2016), pp. 27-36 (p. 30).
[271] Patrick Chabal, 'Aspects of Angolan Literature: Luandino Vieira and Agostinho Neto', *African Languages and Cultures* 8.1 (1995), pp. 19-42 (p. 22).
[272] Fernando Arenas, *Lusophone Africa*, p. 163.

or the Portuguese neo-realistic writers'.[273] Peter J. Maurits has demonstrated how Mendes' novel, which he cites as a prototype of the 'Mozambican ghost story', was nonetheless modelled on the neo-realists' technique of staging the conflict between oppressors and the oppressed (narrated from the perspective of the latter) in a way that established literary production as 'an agent of social intervention'.[274] In the run up to independence, this realist approach to literature was codified by the Frelimo party apparatus as the only 'true' form of socialist art according to the Soviet dogma of socialist realism, which sought to claim a similar status for realist aesthetics as that which Lenin claimed for the theory of Marx. In Lenin's words, 'Marx's theory is omnipotent because it is true'.[275] At a 1970 UNESCO conference in Dar es Salaam, Frelimo *politburo* members Armando Guebuza and Sérgio Vieira delivered a paper entitled 'The Influence of Colonialism on the Artist, his Milieu and his Public in Developing Countries' in which they made the party's position on realism in art and literature programmatically clear:

> The art of the popular democracy must be an instrument of criticism and self-criticism. As an instrument of combat and education of the great masses, art must adopt socialist realism as its creative method — the only true representation of reality. To reflect upon reality with veracity; to reflect reality, with veracity.[276]

However, it was developments within Frelimo's own party structure, such as the distance that emerged between their ideological rhetoric during the civil war and the lived experience of everyday Mozambicans, that necessitated a move away from the stringent realism that

[273] João Paulo Borges Coelho, 'Writing in a Changing World', p. 25.
[274] Peter J. Maurits, 'The Mozambican Ghost Story', p. 181.
[275] V.I. Lenin, 'The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism', *Collected Works*, vol. 19, trans. Andrew Rothstein (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), p. 23.
[276] This conference paper was later printed as Armando Guebuza and Sérgio Vieira, 'The Growth of a New Culture', *Mozambique Revolution* 49 (1971), pp. 10-11.

Frelimo defined as the only 'true' means of aesthetic critique. In this sense, it was precisely departures from and subversions of the realist paradigm that became, paradoxically, the most efficient way of challenging the failures of the Marxist-Leninist nation-building project, failures that the party were trying to mystify — that is, non-realist aesthetic forms became more 'real' than realism itself. In Maurits' genealogy of the Mozambican ghost story, he highlights Couto's short story '*A história dos aparecidos*' as a paradigmatic example of this departure from realism, in which the neo-realist perspective of earlier Mozambican fiction is 'fused together' with the form of the modern ghost story, but he also points out that key points of reference for this 'brea[k] with the realist tradition' were undeniably 'Latin American writers such as João Guimarães Rosa and Gabriel García Márquez'.[277] A look at other writers from the 1980s in Mozambique who would contribute texts to the spectral turn confirm this observation, such as the work of Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa which, as Nataniel Ngomane has argued, achieved '*uma renovação de extrema importância a nível estético*' [a renovation of the utmost importance at the aesthetic level] by breaking with the realism of earlier writers such as Luís Bernardo Honwana and João Dias.[278] Like Couto, major influences on this aesthetic innovation were the magical realist writers of Latin America, as Gilberto Matusse recognises when he draws a parallel between Khosa's use of fantastic hyperbole and the fiction of García Márquez.[279] For Matusse, indeed, the homology between Mozambican literature and the Latin American writers is not a derivative but one rather predicated upon the shared '*rejeição do racionalismo, da abstração intelectualista, da tentação científica*' [rejection of rationalism, of intellectualist abstraction, of scientific

[277] Peter J. Maurtits, 'The Mozambican Ghost Story', pp. 183-184.
[278] Nataniel Ngomane, 'Transculturação e representatividade linguística em Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa: um "comparatismo da solidariedade"', *Oficina do CES* 344, http://www.ces.uc.pt/publicacoes/oficina/index.php?id=2696 (pp. 11-12).
[279] Gilberto Matusse, 'A Construção da Imagem de Moçambicanidade em José Craveirinha, Mia Couto e Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa', Master's thesis, 1993, Universidade Nova de Lisbon, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, p. 150.

temptation] — a rejection that leads, precisely, to '*a criação de universos fantásticos*' [the creation of fantastic universes].[280] Drawing from Ngomane, Anna Eerika Pöysä sums up the relationship between Mozambican literature and magical realism aptly:

> the possibility of finding similar aspects, such as magical realism, in Mozambique and in Latin America, is not a result of simple influences from the latter to the first, but instead it is related to the similar phases that the countries have gone through. In terms of literature, in both locations there was a phase in which literature was directly in the service of politics and revolution, but after that there was a search for new aesthetics and especially, a new language.[281]

Thus, it is in the shared experience of political disillusionment, of the calcification of existing vocabularies of artistic critique, out of which emerges the homology between the literature of Portuguese-speaking southern Africa and the magical realism of Latin American fiction: not from a derivative process of literary 'influence', therefore, but rather out of 'the *dialectics of core and periphery* that underpin all cultural production in the modern era'.[282]

In the Angolan context, similarly, nor were the early attempts at demystifying the shortcomings of a still somewhat radical MPLA — to be found in a realist register in texts like Manuel Rui's *Sim, Camarada!* (1977) or Pepetela's *Mayombe* (1979) — themselves viable modes of critique in a post-independence situation whose inequalities were being purposefully mystified by a revolutionary rhetoric designed to conceal its own inefficacy. At this point in Angolan literature, as in Mozambique, new narratives of resistance therefore begin to emerge which break with the standardised realist conventions by staging a

[280] Gilberto Matusse, 'A Construção da Imagem de Moçambicanidade', p. 141.
[281] Anna Eerika Pöysä, 'Decolonisation in Mozambican Literature', PhD thesis, 2014, Universidade de Coimbra, Faculdade de Economia, p. 122.
[282] Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development*, p. 51, emphasis original.

heightened sensibility to the fantastic, the oneiric, the supernatural and the absurd, much like the eruption of magical realist fiction in mid-century Latin America or Saramago's response to the superannuation of neo-realist tropes in post-Salazarist Portugal. This shift is discernible in embryonic form in Boaventura Cardoso's *Maio, mês de Maria* [May, month of Maria] (1977), which communicates a sense of disillusionment with the beginnings of the socialist project through a marriage of the historical real with a logic of the imaginary. As Benjamin Abdala Jr. has argued, Cardoso's novel marked an attempt to seek out new forms of aesthetic critique with which to challenge the 'unspeakable facts' of post-independence Angolan life that would lead him to construct a dialogue '*não apenas com a série da literatura angolana, em que desponta Luandino Vieira, mas também com aquelas provenientes de um olhar atlântico do escritor: o realismo mágico ou fantástico dos escritores hispano-americanos e também brasileiros*' [not only with the series of Angolan literature, in which Luandino Vieira stands out, but also with that originating from the writer's Atlantic gaze: the magical or fantastic realism of the Hispanic American and Brazilian writers].[283] Again, it is Latin America that emerges as a key point of reference, underlining the commonality in the political experiences of the two regions. This departure from documentary or *exposé* realism can also be pinpointed within the careers of individual authors themselves, so that Rui's move towards the critical-absurd with the pig protagonist of his *Quem me dera ser onda* [If only I were a wave] (1982) can simultaneously be read as a recognition of the fact that the conditions in which the critique of his earlier work was staged had been overhauled by the progression of the post-independence era in such a way as to alter the form of critique itself, while Pepetela's own embrace of a more familiar magical realism in *O Desejo de Kianda* suggests a similar realisation that the corruption rife at the Marxist-Leninist vanguard might

[283] Benjamin Abdala Jr., 'Códigos e habitus culturais: a dinâmica do diverso', in Rita Chaves, Tânia Macedo and Inocência Mata (eds.), *Boaventura Cardoso, a escrita em processo* (Luanda: União de Escritores Angolanos, 2005), p. 227.

necessitate a parallel deviation from that mode of literary realism alongside which the now crestfallen phase of anti-colonial revolution was dramatically brought to fruition. In the fiction of João Melo — and most remarkably in his 2004 short story collection *The Serial Killer* — this sea change takes the similar form of a desacralisation of the state's most central ideological tenets through a carnivalesque celebration of taboo that overloads the realist paradigm with a raft of satiric excesses, leading Inocência Mata to characterise Melo's work in terms of a properly Bakhtinian exercise in '*realismo grotesco*' [grotesque realism] (a context in which Uanhenga Xitu's early Mestre Tamoda books [1974, 1977] would surely also have to be cited).[284] The means by which the dystopian turn in recent Angolan fiction, as well as the spectral turn in 1980s Mozambique, admixes the fantastic and the socially critical can then be seen to inherit the fictional projects of their literary predecessors, while also incorporating influences from the Latin American Boom writers. To this extent, the category of magical realism can be used — with some major caveats — as a classificatory device with which to periodise this shift away from older forms of 'ideal-type' realism in a way that suggests comparison with the genre's mobilisation by writers in analogous yet historically specific national traditions across the postcolonial world.

4.2. Multilingual Locals

However, the problem is that magical realism has itself become as calcified and formulaic as the conventional literary realism to which it first emerged in opposition, and the same critical impulse that animated its original rejection of entrenched orthodoxies within radical political movements in Latin America and beyond has become a version of the same complacency

[284] Inocência Mata, *Laços de Memória & Outros Ensaios Sobre Literatura Angolana* (Luanda: União dos Escritores Angolanos, 2006), pp. 149, 152.

which it set out to criticise. Indeed, this is the gist of Jameson's warning as to the pendulum-swing of aesthetic critique, where 'in one situation a modernist stance may be progressive (for a time), while in another it is rather the realist impulse which will be politically (and culturally) indispensable', precisely because '[w]hat is progressive may very well harden into its opposite as the situation evolves, and the balance may well shift in the other way'.[285] In the case of magical realism, its consolidation as what Denning describes as 'the aesthetic of globalisation' can certainly be cast in terms of the sort of dialectical reversal to which Jameson alludes, since the genre's contemporary incarnation in the work of cosmopolitan author figures such as Salman Rushdie and Haruki Marukami is 'often as empty and contrived a signifier as the modernism and socialist realism it supplanted'.[286] The WReC, for their part, write that:

> The intense commodification of Latin American magical realism in the world-literary market […] (similar — and linked — to the commodification of the form of 'South Asian magical realism' exemplified by Salman Rushdie) has led to a stripping away of its original radical politics and the emergence of reactionary forms consonant with the tastes of metropolitan cultural elites. Texts of this latter kind demonstrate no conscious or critical registration of social unevenness but tend rather to a facile aesthetics in which globalism, hybridity and connectivity are idealised and celebrated.[287]

Faced with the problem of the progressive commodification of magical realism and its co-option by the publishing industry to signify texts whose criticality is no longer as self-evident

[285] Fredric Jameson, 'Antinomies of the Realism-Modernism Debate', *Modern Language Quarterly* 73.3 (2012), pp. 475-485 (pp. 483-484).
[286] Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*, p. 50.
[287] Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development*, p. 80.

as it might have been in the genre's heyday in 1960s Latin America, critics such as Christopher Warnes have sought to make a conceptual distinction between those 'irreverent' magical realist texts that seek to retain a critical orientation and those 'faithful' texts that, by contrast, cede all claims to aesthetic critique. Whereas irreverent magical realist writing 'treats discourse as discourse', faithful modes 'frequently translate [this discourse] into being', the implication being that 'faith-based approaches utilise the magical to expand and enrich already-existing conceptions of the real', while '[irreverent] magical realism deliberately elevates the non-real to the status of the real in order to cast the epistemological status of both in doubt'.[288] By calling into question the epistemological status of reality, irreverent magical realism thus challenges and critiques the social conditions, power relations and structural forces that define it, so that, in the case of *Os Transparentes*, for example, the magical occurrence of Odonato's transparency might be described as 'elevated to the status of the real' in a way that irreverently calls into question the situation of poverty and structural inequality that had driven the protagonist to hunger strike. However, as Warnes is forced to concede during his reading of Ben Okri, the binary division of magical realism into irreverence (critique) and faith (anti-critique), is, in practice, 'never as clear cut as this', since 'faith and irreverence are never far from one another'.[289] Furthermore, to opt for this conceptual division of magical realism into abstract theoretical categories or ideal-types is to forego the historicising thrust of the previous section's attempt to periodise the sudden outburst of spectral and dystopian aesthetics in Mozambican and Angolan literature. To this extent, an alternative category would seem desirable, one that can account for the break with socialist realism enacted by the spectral and dystopian turns, while at the same time

[288] Christopher Warnes, *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel: Between Faith and Irreverence* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 14.
[289] Christopher Warnes, *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel*, p. 138.

maintaining the emphasis on the historical process of political disillusionment and economic transition that prepared the ground for this moment of aesthetic rupture.

'Critical irrealism' — a key category for the WReC's theory of 'world-literature' — promises to bypass some of these conceptual shortcomings by providing a framework through which to read combinations of realist and non-realist elements in (semi-)peripheral literature as critical registrations of the combined unevenness of the capitalist world-system. However, if critical irrealism is indeed to be used as a comparative optic through which to group together the spectral and dystopian turns in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa as attempts to resolve in the aesthetic realm the contradictions emerging from the transition to neoliberal capitalism, it will first be necessary to recognise some potential limitations of the concept. For, as a category with its conceptual foundations rooted in the tradition of western European literary realism and modernism, is the relevance of critical irrealism for African literary texts such as those studied in this thesis not inherently limited? Might not the persistence of oral traditions and non-European epistemologies within such texts render irrealism obsolete as an analytical category for literature produced under non-European social conditions?

Critical irrealism was originally coined by French-Brazilian cultural critic Michael Löwy, who first used the term to denote non-realist works of art that enact powerful critiques of the social order. It is based on Löwy's re-reading of the theory of critical realism as developed by Georg Lukács, and while Lukács' model remains important for contemporary discussions of realism and literary form,[290] for Löwy it is nonetheless exclusive and rigid

[290] For a discussion of the lasting importance of Lukács' conception of realism see Fredric Jameson, 'Reflections in Conclusion', in *Aesthetics and Politics*, Rodney Livingstone, Perry Anderson and Francis Mulhern, eds. (London and New York: Verso, 2007 [1977]), pp. 196-213, where he argues that Lukácsian realism is significant in the context of late capitalism seeing as it has the potential to enact 'a violent renewal of perception in a world in which experience has solidified into a mass of habits and automatisms' (p. 213). For a discussion of the extent to which Lukács' work on realism – which is often reduced to a mere tool in the political struggles of the 1930s – represents a response to a constellation of philosophical and political problems obtaining at the time he wrote his texts, see Galin Tihanov, 'Form and truth: reconsidering Lukács's theory of

seeing as it is defined by what Lukács narrowly considers as a 'truthful reflection of reality', and speciously counterposed by what he claims to be its antithesis: '"modernist" anti-realism'.[291] The flimsiness of Lukács' distinction between realism and anti-realism is most telling in his readings of E.T.A. Hoffman and Franz Kafka, authors whose fictional worlds do not fit into either of his categories owing to their 'spectral nature' and 'ghostly ambience' that mix the real and the 'anti-real' together.[292] Löwy picks up on this moment of hesitance in Lukács and argues that what he calls the real and the 'anti-real' is a fundamental feature of what he calls 'irrealism'.[293] Through his own readings of Hoffman and Kafka, Löwy proposes that this combination of realistic detail with the fantastic and the supernatural should in turn be understood as an index for the acceleration of capitalist industrialisation and the feelings of disenchantment arising therefrom. Good examples of irrealist texts are therefore utopian, dystopian, oneiric and fairytale narratives, seeing as these often describe social reality in minute detail while throwing into relief its hegemonic structures through the creation of what Löwy calls 'another imaginary world, either idealised or terrifying, one opposed to the gray prosaic, disenchanted reality of modern, meaning capitalist, society' (p. 196). As an example, Löwy takes Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1931). He argues that the text is irrealist for its depiction of a world infused with a logic of the imaginary, and because its detailed descriptions are 'production of the imagination that do not have any accurate or simplistic correspondent in reality' (p. 204). Löwy also deems the text to be critical in the sense that it enacts a 'Romantic protest against the mechanization of life', confronting reality with 'the

realism', *Essays in Poetics* 25, pp. 1–10. For a challenge to the commonly held assumption that Lukács was engaged in a normative, epistemologically inflexible 'realist project', see Peter Uwe Hohendahl, 'The theory of the novel and the concept of realism in Lukács and Adorno', in *Georg Lukács Reconsidered: Critical Essays in Politics, Philosophy and Aesthetics*, Michael J. Thompson, ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 75–98 (esp. pp. 90–92).

[291] Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1963), pp. 17, 23.

[292] Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, p. 52.

[293] Michael Löwy, 'The Current of Critical Irrealism', p. 195. All further references are given after quotations in the main body of the text.

possible results of its worst tendencies' (p. 204). Not all irrealist works of art are critical, however. As Löwy points out, fairy tales, for instance, can be quite conformist and often conceal conservative ethical and social values within their irrealist aesthetics (p. 196). Criticality is not therefore an automatic quality of irrealism but rather emerges out of the text's willed social engagement, from being, in Lukács' words, 'deeply rooted in the social conditions of [its] time'.[294]

Where the WReC diverge from Löwy, and where their argument becomes simultaneously less restrictive and more problematic, is in their suggestion that the conventions of irrealist aesthetics serve as 'the determinate formal registers of (semi-)peripherality in the world-literary system' (p. 51). Although the WReC go some way to rethinking Löwy's stubbornly Eurocentric conception of the irrealist tradition, they nonetheless argue that the formal characteristics of irrealism are those routinely associated with 'Euro-American modernism' — 'anti-linear plot lines, meta-narratorial devices, un-rounded characters, unreliable narrators, contradictory points of view, and so on' (p. 51) — and their claim that 'something of an elective affinity exists between the general situation(s) of peripherality and irrealist aesthetics' thus broaches the theoretical tendency to explain the world's literary production through the aesthetic vocabulary of its dominant classes. In his efforts to map out a future Marxist criticism of African literature over three decades ago, Omafume F. Onoge warned of just this universalising tendency in analyses of literary form, complaining where the critic does not go beyond 'the itemization of technique' and 'the tracing of Euro-American parallels'.[295] For even if one concedes Jameson's characterisation of modernism as the form the superstructure takes in reaction to the economic developments

[294] Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, p. 13.
[295] Omafume F. Onoge, 'Towards a Marxist Sociology of African Literature', in G.M. Gugelberger, ed. *Marxism and African Literature* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1985), pp. 50-63 (p. 61).

brought about by the modernisation process,[296] to categorise the cultural production of non-European social formations as modernist, included when preceded by the qualifier 'peripheral',[297] surely runs the risk of downplaying those aspects of these social formations that are epistemologically antithetical to the conceptual underpinnings of modernist discourse. Bearing on the African continent in particular, a provisional list of these aspects might include: local languages and the social worlds therein encoded; the centrality of orature to media of self- and social expression; the pre-capitalist histories of these regions and their continuities within present-day social exchange; the foundational role of ethnic divisions and inter-ethnic segregation to the formation of nation-states.

To suggest an oversight of these structural disjunctures in the category of critical irrealism is emphatically not to appeal to essentialist notions of cultural authenticity, nor is it to deny the existence of capitalism as a social totality from which there is no simple escape. It is, rather, to posit an imbalance between the literary production of ex-colonies and -dependencies and the conceptual lineage of critical irrealism. Certainly, the claim that there exist pre-capitalist lifeworlds somehow frozen in time that could be integrated into literary texts away from or alongside their status as commodity objects is disingenuous to the extent that it overlooks the ways in which the production, consumption and circulation of literature has been intimately and irrevocable tied to the logic of the world market. As Nicholas Brown has argued, 'the forms imposed by global capitalism frame the interpretive possibilities available for any concrete cultural contents, even those of putatively ancient origin'.[298] Yet while historical capitalism thus implies a certain 'baseline of universality' in the analysis of world literature, it does not, therefore, dictate modernism as its universal form of artistic expression. An important insight in this respect is Timothy Brennan's recent assertion that

[296] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, p. 310.
[297] See Benita Parry, 'Aspects of Peripheral Modernisms', *Ariel* 40.1 (2009), pp. 37-55.
[298] Nicholas Brown, *Utopian Generations*, p. 7.

the move to expand modernist aesthetics as an analytical optic to (semi-)peripheral parts of the world works to occlude the 'civic' understanding of this tradition, 'not as a mode, style, or critical stance, but as an authorized list of writers etched over five decades into professorial syllabi and the mental repertoires of magazine reviewers'.[299] Brennan then adds that this expansionary logic ignores 'the persistent attack on the modernist aesthetic in peripheral literatures themselves', and that any recuperation of the modernism 'would have to reckon with the self-conscious rejection of the modernist aesthetic on political grounds by writers in colonial formations'.[300] This dissonance between, on the one hand, the hegemonic status of modernism as a Euro-American aesthetic idiom and, on the other, the locally specific properties of the social formations to which it is applied, would then seem to throw into question the WReC's attempt to equate irrealist aesthetics — by all accounts a sort of modernism by proxy — with the cultural production of the (semi-)peripheries.

Incidentally, this line of critique echoes the charge of Eurocentrism levelled against the Wallersteinian brand of world-systems analysis on which the WReC rely throughout their monograph. The most distinguished of these critiques was made by Wallerstein's one-time collaborator Andre Gunder Frank, who suggested an incapacity of Wallerstein's world-system's perspective to satisfactorily account for economic developments *before* the rise of the European capitalist world-economy circa 1750. In Frank's words,

> Wallerstein's 'world-system' perspective, theory, and analysis not only does not encompass most of the world before 1750 […] but he also claims explicitly that most of the world, including all of Eurasia east of the Mediterranean and of Eastern

[299] Timothy Brennan, 'Against Modernism', in Sharae Deckard and Rashmi Varma, eds., *Marxism, Postcolonial Theory, and the Future of Critique: Critical Engagements with Benita Parry* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 21-36 (p. 23).
[300] Timothy Brennan, 'Against Modernism', p. 27.

> Europe, had played no significant part in the making and early history of his 'modern world-system.[301]

For Frank, then, Wallersteinian world-systems analysis is trapped by the terms of its own argument. By taking capitalist development in fifteenth-century Europe as the start date for his modern world-system, Wallerstein immediately rules out and underestimates the role that non-European social systems played in the development and consolidation of world social relations, and at the same time overlooks the importance of cultural-economic exchange *between* these social systems. With regard to Wallerstein's omission of Asia, Russia and the Ottomans from his account of the rise of the modern world-system, for example, Frank asks the burning question: 'So was this "other" eighty percent of humanity?'[302] Indeed, a similar critique was made by Janet Abu-Lughod in her magisterial study *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (1989), where she took Wallerstein to task for his 'distressingly imprecise' definition of the modern world-system that tendentially overlooks the many world-economies that predated and enabled the rise of European capitalist expansion.[303] Had there not existed these numerous pre-existent world-economies, she writes, 'when Europe gradually "reached out", it would have grasped empty space rather than riches'.[304] Wallerstein's 'failure to begin the story early enough', Abu-Lughod concludes, 'has resulted in a truncated and distorted causal explanation for the rise of the west'.[305] As Timothy Brennan has noted, these sorts of critique of world-systems analysis

[301] Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (University of California Press, 1998), p. 45.
[302] Andre Gunder Frank, 'Immanuel and me with-out hyphen', *Journal of World-Systems Research* 6.2 (2000), pp. 216-231 (p. 45).
[303] Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 38, 11.
[304] Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, p. 12.
[305] Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, p. 20.

have major implications for the recent 'sociological turn' in world-literary studies that have hitherto been inadequately acknowledged, and it is in this sense that they are taken up here.[306]

If Wallerstein was accused of 'stretching old theory' in his attempt to explain world historical developments through European capitalist expansion, then a similar case could be made against the WReC's categorisation of literary innovation as stylistically modernist or 'irrealist' in character. Indeed, a group of scholars at SOAS, University of London have recently made precisely this case. Complaining of a propensity within world-literary studies 'to imprison non-Western literatures in categories, timelines and explanations that do not fit', Karima Laachir, Sara Marzagora and Francesca Orsini contend that the use of universal categories and macro-models such as world-systems analysis has the adverse effect of obstructing the proper analysis of large parts of the world's literary output.[307] Laachir et al. argue that such universalist approaches imply a notion of 'literature' that is 'predicated upon a putative universal consensus over form and taste', and run into problems where they misprize the importance of 'orature as well as literature that follows other aesthetic canons and systems of meaning'.[308] In her own independent work, Marzagora has reiterated this point, arguing that 'excluding orature from [African] literary studies proper has a strong class bias, as it automatically relegates those who did not have the learn how to read and write to somewhere in the sphere of the not-yet-literary', and that the corollary to this approach is thus the suggestion that oral literature is valuable only in anthropological terms, rather than in any artistic or aesthetic sense.[309] The weight of this exclusion is particularly felt in the context of Angolan literature, for example, where the use of oral traditions 'dates from the beginnings

[306] Timothy Brennan, 'Against Modernism', p. 27.
[307] Karima Laachir, Sara Marzagora and Francesca Orsini, 'Multilingual Locals and Significant Geographies: For a Ground-up and Located Approach to World Literature', *Modern Languages Open*, 19.1 (2018), pp. 1-8 (pp. 1-2).
[308] Karima Laachir, Sara Marzagora and Francesca Orsini, 'Multilingual Locals and Significant Geographies', p. 2.
[309] Sara Marzagora, 'African-Language Literatures and the "Transnational Turn" in Euro-American Humanities', *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 27.1 (2015), pp. 40-55 (p. 45).

of literary activity', and where the mixing of oral and written styles has become constitutive of all prose fiction genres.[310] Indeed, given the high rates of illiteracy in many African countries, to ignore the persistence of the non-literary spheres upon the continent's cultural production is to 'employ the Western notion of literature as the normative standard of literary activity across the planet',[311] and thereby to potentially diminish the possibilities for a full and nuanced understanding of literature produced in locations where the non-literary is a vital part of social exchange. This potential oversight in the category of critical irrealism is, incidentally, aptly summed up by a proverb of the Ovimbundu of Angola: '*Eteke liocilunga oku iya lomue wivaluka oku lia*' [in the larger affairs the minor are forgotten].

These sorts of resistive local specificities or structural disjunctures are present in each of the literary texts considered in this thesis. The '*saudades de ser ninguém*' [longing to be no one] expressed by Aníbal in '*A história dos aparecidos*', for example, were seen to possess an existential affinity with species of animal life that is common among many of Mozambique's ethnic groupings, such as that of the Tawara of Tete province. To this extent, the homonymity of the word '*mvula*', which can signify either spirit medium or the rain, was seen to set up a homology between water and spectrality that is also central to Couto's short story. In a similar vein, Suleiman Cassamo's fiction is deeply influenced by the Ronga linguistic tradition, and the epigraph to '*O regresso do morto*' is, indeed, cast in a hybrid form of Portuguese shaped or 'corrupted' by local languages and dialects: '*Aos magaíça, va mafelandlelene*'. The ways in which the catechrestic, often surreal prose style of Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa is engaged in complex cultural dialogues with several of Mozambique's manifold local belief-systems has, moreover, been the subject of numerous critical studies,[312] while the

[310] Uanhenga Xitu, Ruy Duarte de Carvalho and Henrique Guerra, 'The Use of Oral Traditions in Literature of Portuguese Expression', in Donald Burness, ed., *Critical Perspective on Lusophone Literature from Africa* (Three Continents Press, 1981), pp. 45-48 (p. 46); Ana Mafalda Leite, 'Angola', p. 140.
[311] Sara Marzagora, 'African-Language Literatures', p. 52.
[312] See, for example, the list of contents in the essay collection *Emerging Perspectives on Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa*, edited by Niyi Afolabi.

centrality of Kimbundu spirit mythology to the narrative of *O Desejo de Kianda* has already been pointed out. In *Os Transparentes*, the determining influence of extra-literary forms of symbolic exchange is also a key feature of the narrative, as evidenced by the character of Odoanto's mother-in-law, AvóKunjikise, who cannot speak Portuguese and whose speech in the text is therefore transcribed in italics to signify that she is using Umbundu, the most commonly spoken Bantu language in Angola. Towards the end of the novel, after the funeral of her grandson, AvóKunjikise announces that she will sing a lament about an old woman whose husband has gone to war and not returned:

> é a canção de uma mulher mais velha… o marido partiu para a guerra… já foi para a guerra muitas vezes, foram muitas guerras… ela chora agora a morte do marido…
>
> [*it is the song of an old woman… her husband went to war… he has been to war many times, there have been many wars… she is crying over the death of her husband…*] (p. 368).

What is involved in passages such as this is thus a complex hermeneutic act whereby the reader is asked to *imagine* what Umbundu sounds like. As AvóKunjikise's lament proceeds, the reader learns that the widowed old woman of the song was able to dance for the first time only after the death of her husband, out of sheer sadness (p. 369). An appreciation that it is a shared belief among many African oral cultures that 'there is no beginning and no end but only the succession of events which connect the living to the ancestors and those not yet born',[313] would begin to explain the lament's mix of sadness and happiness, of rhythm and despair, and also its textual implications for AvóKunjikise's recently deceased grandson.

[313] Patrick Chabal, 'Aspects of Angolan Literature', p. 26.

Would this sort of explanation be out of reach to an approach rooted a 'critical irrealist' approach, with its Euro-American theoretical heritage? Might these sorts of local specificities go missing in the global and aerial model of peripheral irrealism that the WReC put forward? Might critical irrealist analyses tends towards 'reducing' passages such as the one cited above, with its complex mixture of local and colonial languages, to a discordance of narrative registers that uses modernist experiments in form to register the dizzying changes to experience attendant on combined and uneven development, and thereby overlook the culturally specific heritage of Ovimbundu in the 'multilingual local' of Angolan society?

And yet, nor can one fault the WReC for not signalling towards these potential drawbacks. Indeed, it seems that the WReC would not argue that the incorporation of orature, non-Western epistemologies and other 'local materials' into (semi-)peripheral literatures could be 'reduced' to a form of modernist experimentation. Rather, the collective would seek to emphasise that such modes of incorporation are an essential feature of cultural production from (post)colonies, by virtue of the structural function of their integration into the modern world-system. In this sense, irrealist aesthetics as defined by the WReC is an attempt to account for the fact that oral and folkloric materials tend to appear more frequently in (semi-)peripheral literatures precisely because of the fact that unofficial or non-literary cultural materials are predisposed to take on a particular salience in these regions where statist institutions are so often distrusted, above all for ideological reasons. In this sense, the WReC speak of the 'resort to other (at times informal) institutions of local knowledge production' that are 'frequently those displaced by the arrival of external agencies', and which are often 'associated with backcountry or agrarian lifeworlds' (p. 76). In Juan Rulfo's novel *Pedro Páramo* (1955), for example, the collective identify a 'dissolution of realist conventions' that amounts to 'a Mexican gothic irrealism couched in a fragmentary structure drawing on Amerindian mythology and orality' (p. 80, n. 29). In arguing that there exist homologies in

the tendencies of (semi-)peripheral literatures to draw on or incorporate these fabulist, folkloric or non-literary forms of expression, the WReC do not argue that each instance of this incorporation will of necessity look the same, nor do they suggest that they could all be brought under the monolithic rubric of a 'Euro-American modernism', since the locatedness and specificity of the different local situations in which these expressions emerge will be mediated in different ways by the creative activity of the authors in question. The more general point here, then, seems to be that of the structural relationship between locally determinate or 'concrete' social conditions and the abstractions of global capitalism's universalisation of the value-form. Indeed, this is the sense in which the figure of combined and uneven development is taken up by the WReC, as a means of explaining the ways in which what appears to be historically contingent local aspects in a particular text are in fact not exterior to, but rather a function of the development of the modern capitalist world-system. Thus the WReC speak of peripherality not as 'a "condition" marked by lack of development or by mere geographical remoteness from a given "core" or "centre"', but instead as 'the modality of a specific *inclusion* within a system', so that 'a given formation is "peripheral" […] not because it is "outside" or "on the edges" of a system, but, on the contrary, because it has been incorporated within that system precisely as "peripheral"' (p. 124). It is just this process of peripheral incorporation to which the texts of the spectral and dystopian turns have been understood to respond in this thesis — that is, the reintegration of Portuguese-speaking southern Africa into the neoliberal world-system.

4.3. Critical Irrealism

Indeed, for the WReC, world-literary texts are those that 'bear testimony — in their own distinct ways, and in both their form and their content — to the "shock of the new", the

massive rupture effected at the levels of space-time continuum, lifeworld, experience and human sensorium by capitalist modernisation' (p. 50). Drawing from Löwy's definition of irrealism, the WReC argue that literary works produced in the (semi-)peripheries of the world-system are more likely to display combinations of apparently incongruous aesthetic features due to their heightened exposure to 'capitalism's bewildering creative destruction (or destructive creation)' (p. 51), and that this combination then corresponds to precisely the sort of admixing of the real and the non-real that Löwy captures in his term 'irrealism'. To this extent, the WReC claim that there exists 'an elective affinity between the general situation(s) of peripherality and irrealist aesthetics' (p. 68). Through a series of close readings of texts produced at various (semi-)peripheral locations throughout the world-system (Sudan, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Iceland, Scotland, South Africa), as well as at different points in time (1969, 2005, 1991, 1922, 1948, 1984, 2006), the WReC proceed to flesh out a theory of world-literature defined, not in canonical terms as the best works ever written, nor in intellectualist terms as a kind of 'summit conference of great writers', still less in an ahistoricist way as texts that circulate beyond their culture of origin through translation, but rather more specifically as 'the literary registration of modernity under the sign of combined and uneven development' (p. 17).

This thesis' readings of the spectral and dystopian turns in Portuguese-speaking southern African literature correspond to the WReC's definition of world-literature in both of the senses outlined above. On the one hand, the marked upturn in the production of spectral and dystopian texts in Mozambique and Angola represents a pair of locally specific responses to the reintegration of southern Africa into the capitalist world-system: that is, to the 'shock of the new' that came with the collapse of the Marxist-Leninist state and the attendant transition to neoliberal models of political economy whose links with multinational finance have subjected the region to the imperatives of capital accumulation on a world scale. Some

of the most conspicuous consequences of this transition have been an increase in social inequality, a rise in corrupt and clientelist forms of postcolonial governance, and, in the case of Angola at least, an upsurge in protest movements. However, if the spectral and dystopian turns can in this way be seen to 'bear testimony' to the creatively destructive logic of global capitalism, they also do so through sets of aesthetic conventions that directly correspond with the way in which the WReC have theorised critical irrealism. In a definition that bears directly on this conclusion's periodisation of magical realism as a response to entrenched political orthodoxies across the postcolonial world, the WReC write that irrealist innovations will tendentially emerge in situations where 'the assumed facticity of conventional realist accounts cannot be relied upon since institutions that produce it are either weakly present or too ideologically compromised' (p. 77). Thus, the spectral and dystopian texts dealt with in this thesis can be understood as irrealist forms of literary representation that react against the ossification of socialist realist dogma during the Marxist-Leninist years in Mozambique and Angola, demystifying the ideological obfuscations of their respective ruling party apparatuses. Where Frelimo persisted in its efforts to galvanise public support in the face of the ongoing devastation wreaked by the civil war in Mozambique by doubling down on its demands for ideological unilateralism, the MPLA are now keen to publicly denounce kleptocratic corruption and appeal to residual socialist categories such as '*o povo*', even while continuing to work in joint ventures with multinational oil companies. Whether it be Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa's spectral registration of the ontological uncertainty precipitated by the lasting psychological effects of the experience of collective trauma during the civil war period, or Pepetela's ambivalent staging of the conflict between an insurgent protest movement and the concentration of wealth among the governmental elite in *O Desejo de Kianda*, the texts of this thesis' primary corpus are all attempts at coming to terms with these social developments in aesthetic form, and they do so in each case by breaking with those

conventions of realist representation that were championed during the era of Marxism-Leninism. In the case of Mozambique, this is achieved through fictions that spectrally distort the line between life and death; in that of Angola, through dystopian projections of a near-future Luanda in ruins. It is thus significant that the WReC should define irrealism as disposed to emerge in situations of social disintegration and economic transition: 'When pre-existing social unities are violently destroyed, the relative stability […] required by realist representation of the "ideal type" disappears with it' (p. 72). For this reason, the collective speak of 'the apparent proliferation of irrealist narrative and catechresis at particular moments of systemic crisis' (p. 66). This is precisely how the spectral and dystopian turns have been presented in this thesis, as locally specific cultural phenomena that seek to register the transition from Marxist-Leninist planned economy to free market, neoliberal capitalism in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa, and as peripheral literatures that bear witness to the epochal crisis of the capitalist world-system.

However, while this account makes explicit *why* irrealism emerges in world-systemic (semi-)peripheries where systemic crisis is felt most acutely, and where the conventions of literary realism have hardened over or become stagnant, it is less forthcoming about *what* irrealism looks like. Although Löwy's presentation gives concrete examples of irrealist texts and the oscillating dynamics of their aesthetics, which typically inhabit what he calls 'a border territory, between reality and "irreality"' (p. 196), his examples are taken exclusively from the European literature of the long nineteenth century and as such leave unanswered the question of the concept's applicability to regions of the world where radically different social conditions obtain. In order to address this potential shortcoming, I want to present critical irrealism as an attempt to symbolically resolve in the aesthetic realm social contradictions arising from the capitalist modernisation of societies. Indeed, this is the gist of the WReC's understanding of the relationship between irrealism and combined and uneven development,

and a look at the approach of these critics to the problem of social contradiction will allow me to provide a concluding and recapitulatory reading of the spectral and dystopian texts dealt with in this thesis as aesthetic responses to the contradictions of the neoliberal turn in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa.

While Löwy recognises his indebtedness to Lukács's work and even goes so far as to suggest that critical irrealism be understood as 'complimentary to critical realism' (p. 205), a conceptual antecedent that goes unacknowledged is Claude Lévi-Strauss' work on myth and the artistic production of indigenous populations. In his work on the Caduveo Indians of southern Brazil, Lévi-Strauss undertakes a reading of Caduveo facial decorations as formal attempts at resolving the contradictions inherent in the hierarchical, unequal and undissimulated power structures of Caduveo society. While the neighbouring communities of the Guana and Bororo divided their societies into moieties in order to mitigate structural inequality, the Caduveo lacked the social institutions that would achieve this symbolic resolution. '[S]ince they were unable to conceptualize or to live this solution directly', writes Lévi-Strauss, the Caduveo 'began to dream it, to project it into the imaginary'.[314] He goes on to argue that the facial decorations of the Caduveo, which depict 'a complicated situation based upon two contradictory forms of duality' resulting in a formal compromise, should subsequently be read as 'the fantasy production of a society seeking passionately to give symbolic expression to the institutions it might have had in reality, had not interest and superstition stood in the way'.[315] In describing a process by which the actual contradictions of a social reality founded on unequal exchange feed into and find new license in the aesthetic realm, Lévi-Strauss calls to mind Löwy's conception of irrealism, where 'the idealized images of a different, nonexistent reality' are seen to be imbued with the potential of

[314] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John Russell (New York: Atheneum, 1971), p. 180.
[315] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, p. 180.

'critically illuminat[ing]' actually existing social reality (pp. 196, 205). For both of these theorists, cultural texts are intimately bound up with social structures that condition their production, which they transcend only to comment on more critically. Indeed, to this extent, recall the quote from Adorno cited at the beginning of this thesis: 'There is no content, no formal category of the literary work that does not, however transformed and however unawarely, derive from the empirical reality from which it has escaped'.[316]

It was Fredric Jameson who famously abstracted Lévi-Strauss's interpretation into the language of capitalism, and who most fully developed the implications of the latter's work for Marxist readings of literary production. Jameson argued that, insofar as Lévi-Strauss details the means by which the Caduveo Indians project the contradictions of their still relatively simple form of social organisation into the realm of myth and the imagination and there achieve a purely formal resolution, his work bears directly on the artistic registration of more contemporary forms of social contradiction, namely, those made ubiquitous by the universalising force of global capital. If the tendency to 'project decorative or mythic resolutions of issues they are unable to articulate conceptually […] is the case for pre-capitalist or even pre-political societies', writes Jameson, 'then how much more must it be true for the citizen of the modern *Gesellschaft*'.[317] After suggesting that the social dynamics of 'our now global village necessarily infuse all of cultural production, Jameson then posits that 'the will to read literary or cultural texts as symbolic acts must necessarily grasp them as resolutions of determinate contradictions; and it is clear that the notion of contradiction is central to any Marxist cultural analysis'.[318] The programme for the critic who intends to unmask the socially symbolic character of cultural artefacts then presents itself as a commitment towards upholding a fine-tuned sensitivity to the ways in which unresolvable

[316] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Commitment', p. 89.
[317] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 65.
[318] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, pp. 65-66.

political and social contradictions find imaginary or formal resolutions in the aesthetic act, along with a keen awareness of the relationship between these contradictions and the capitalist mode of production. By 'resolve', however, what is not meant is an explanatory or reductive attempt to make these contradictions somehow 'make sense'. Rather, Jameson's use of 'resolution' should be understood in a more dialectical way, as a means of accommodating social contradictions in aesthetic form. Indeed, this is the sort of resolution envisioned by Marx in the form of the commodity, which acts in the manner of an ellipse by providing 'a form of motion within which […] contradiction is both realized and resolved'.[319] It might then help to think of irrealism itself as an elliptical form of motion, as a mode of representation which, in Löwy's words, entails both 'the superficial form of a flight from reality' and 'a powerful implicit negative critique' (p. 196), split between the two poles of aesthetic autonomy and aesthetic engagement, and providing an aesthetic form within which contradictions have 'room to move'.[320]

In light of Jameson's arguments, it is possible to characterise irrealist aesthetics as theorised by Löwy as an attempt to symbolically resolve in the imaginary realm the contradictions emerging from the 'industrial/capitalist mechanization of life' (p. 202). In Hoffman's irrealist tale 'The Automaton' (1814), for example, Löwy finds a 'fantastic atmosphere of supernatural forces' shot through with a 'confusion between the living bodies and the soulless mechanical artifacts' (pp. 202, 204). Likewise, Huxley's imaginary future world is riddled with 'fears [over] the industrial chain-production of human beings' (p. 204). Calling to mind the mechanical nightmare imagined by Marx in the *Grundrisse*, where the machine 'possesses skill and strength in place of the worker' and labour is reduced to 'a conscious organ […] a mere living accessory',[321] these irrealist narratives latch onto some of

[319] Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 198.
[320] Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 198.
[321] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London and New York: Penguin, 1993), p. 693.

the most fundamental contradictions of capitalist society. For Löwy, irrealism as it is figured in both Huxley and Hoffman is an attempt to come to terms with these contradictions at the level of aesthetics. What Lukács described as the 'spectral nature' of Hoffman's fiction, and the irrealist dystopia depicted in Huxley's novel, are thus for Löwy more than so-called 'anti-realism'. According to Löwy's line of argument, the irrealist quality of these narratives bespeaks a critical and aesthetic awareness of social contradictions which, during the period spanning the creative activity of the two authors — what Eric Hobsbawm famously termed 'the long nineteenth century' — became the determinate features of an advanced capitalist world-system.

In the WReC's work, irrealism is then understood in a similar way as a means of encoding the contradictions born out of combined and uneven development. In abstract terms, Trotsky's 'law of uneven and combined development' is concerned with the complex temporalities that arise in societies as a result of capitalist modernisation. This means that eve as capitalising influences spread throughout cultures and societies, pre-existing forces, be they earlier economic conditions, social relations, cultural practices, or psychic dispositions, continue to live on within and alongside the trajectory of capitalist development. The result of this process is a chronological problematisation in which the notion of linear progress is rethought as 'an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms'.[322] In view of this description, it is possible to characterise combined and uneven development as a sort of contradiction in space and time. The WReC, for example, described the lived experience of combined and uneven development as 'time travel within the same space' (p. 17), citing as demonstrative Jameson's surreal and incongruous formulation of 'handicrafts alongside the

[322] Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman (London and New York: Penguin, 2017 [1932]).

great cartels, peasant fields with Krupp factories or the Ford plant in the distance'.[323] The texts that the WReC select for analysis are then seen to formally register these inconsistencies or logical incongruities at the level of their irrealist aesthetics. Accordingly, in the Sudanese author Tayeb Salih's novel *Season of Migration to the North* (1969), the WReC find an irrealist staging of 'a proximity of discordant discourse and unrelated narrative registers' that corresponds to the dizzying effects of combined and uneven development, and where the text juxtaposes 'the traditional Arab oral story-telling mode of *hakawati* with that of consecrated literary modernism', they similarly read 'a signal registration of a (semi-)peripheral social space' (pp. 95, 52). While the contradictory developments of combined unevenness are here refracted in Salih's irrealist aesthetic, it is in the WReC's reading of phantasmatic metaphorics and spectral or supernatural tropes in fictions such as Russian author Victor Pelevin's *The Sacred Book of the Werewolf* (2008) that is to be found a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between irrealist aesthetics and social contradiction. The specific contradictions flagged up by Pelevin's work have to do with the post-Soviet transition to neoliberal capitalism in Europe's semi-periphery, and with the rise of an authoritarian Russian petrostate. Recalling Marx's description of capital's 'werewolf hunger', the WReC zero in on supernatural tropes such as lycanthropy and vampirism and there find a protest against 'the violent impact of petroleum extraction and reorganisation of socio-ecological relations' attendant on neoliberalism (p. 98). Faced with the contradictions inherent in this transitional process, Pelevin's werewolves act as symbolic resolutions: facilitating the emergent social contradictions and setting them against one another, giving them 'room to move' in a single aesthetic device.

[323] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke Univeristy Press, 1995), p. 307.

To conclude, then, it is possible to present the spectral and dystopian turns in Portuguese-language southern African fiction as irrealist attempts to symbolically resolve the contradictions emerging from the regional transition to neoliberal capitalism. In the Mozambican fiction of the late 1980s, these contradictions are 'hosted' by the figure of the ghost and the various spectral narrative strategies that serve to distort the line between life and death. Thus, in Mia Couto's short story '*A história dos aparecidos*', the ontological uncertainty of two flood refugees who return from a natural disaster in which they were thought to have died works to comment upon the social antagonisms that rose to the surface as the Marxist-Leninist project lay in a state of disintegration, while the transition to neoliberal capitalism remained to be completed. This liminal historical moment — in which the collective euphoria that had accompanied the victory of independence and the early attempts at socialist nation-building entered into a period of terminal decline, yet the formal adoption of a 'structurally adjusted' model of political economy was still waiting just around the corner — is then codified into the text at the level of narrative through two ghostly protagonists that can be read as at once dead and alive. That the story broke with the dominant realist paradigm in Mozambique is evident from the furore caused by the terms of its reception, with the text sparking a heated debate in the literary establishment of the time over the status and function of art in the Marxist-Leninist Republic, since its aesthetic experimentalism — heavily influenced by Latin American writers such as García Márquez — was considered to veer too far from the Zhdavonite socialist realism that Frelimo had mandated as dogma. Within the irrealist device of the two ghostly flood refugees, Couto was able to telescope some of the most fundamental contradictions of this period in Mozambican history: the contradiction between an increasingly bureaucratic, centralised state apparatus and the demands for basic social welfare coming from those deprived citizens in whose name the state was supposed to be ruling; the contradiction between the persistence of a Marxist-

Leninist rhetoric of peace and equality (recall one of the final lines of the story: '*A luta continua!*') and growing social inequality; and, ultimately, the contradiction between cores and peripheries attendant on the international division of wealth which condemns Mozambique to appeal to global financial powers and foreign donor aid in order to provide its population with the means of subsistence.

This same motif of ontological uncertainty is used by Suleiman Cassamo in his short story '*O regresso do morto*' as a way of negotiating the residual influence of cross-border migrant labour and the obstructing influence it had on the progression of the Marxist-Leninist nation-building project. The regional system of mining capital established during the colonial era had left Mozambique with a national infrastructure incapable of achieving the ambitions of industrialised production that Frelimo had set itself. In this way, the history of underdevelopment in Mozambique returns as a haunting presence, a powerful reminder of the contradictions embedded within the project of socialist modernisation and its ideals of independence, autonomy, equality and justice — ideals which were, in various ways, beset by the restrictions imposed by objective historical conditions such as the legacy of migrant labour with which Cassamo's text is preoccupied. As in '*A história dos aparecidos*', it is the ambivalent ontological state of the young protagonist Moisés that functions to host these contradictions: the fact that he can be read as both alive or dead takes up the uncertainty of the period into aesthetic form and establishes it as the structuring principle of the text.

Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa's short story '*Orgia dos loucos*' then rehearses the spectral narrative strategies found in the texts of Couto and Cassamo with the different aim of aesthetically processing the psychological effects of collective trauma caused by the ongoing civil war. The contradictions between the two sides of the military in-fighting — between regionalism and modernisation, communism and anti-communism, socialist unity and global capital — are fictionally resolved by Khosa in the figure of Maposse, who can be read as

either the ghost of the victim of a Renamo massacre or a traumatised survivor desperately trying to organise his post-traumatic psyche and come to terms with the loss of his wife and son. Maposse is thus both dead and alive, victim and survivor, traumatised subject and haunting spectre. By virtue of the undecidability of Maposse's ontological status, the text subverts the sort of rigidified narratives by which the civil war was communicated to the Mozambican population, either through Frelimo's ideological portrayal of the conflict in terms of the invasion of a nebulously defined group of '*bandidos armados*' [armed bandits], or through the sort of crude anti-communism that came to be associated with Renamo's political rhetoric. As each of these three stories turns around the problem of a central anamorphosis — one which leaves the ontological status of their protagonists definitively undecided, depending on the interpretive position of the reader to make the decision one way or the other — they are also able to launch a much broader comment on the culture of uncertainty that prevailed in 1980s Mozambique. These fictions are irrealist, certainly: they break with the aesthetic conventions of socialist realism by staging a constitutive uncertainty in the very fabric of their texts. In this way, they are consistent with what Löwy calls a 'logic of the imaginary', and not with any attempt to 'represent reality as it really is' (p. 204). The paradox is of course that it is precisely *because* these texts are not concerned to represent reality realistically, blurring the line between and life and death itself, that they are able to launch such a socially engaged aesthetic critique. In a way that corresponds with the definition of critical irrealism offered above, the texts of the spectral turn in Mozambican literature thus 'host' the social contradictions of their time through the use of the non-realist figure of the ghost or spectre.

In Angola, a similar case can be made for the proliferation of dystopian images of social disintegration and ecological catastrophe in post-1990s Angolan literature, which emerge as irrealist attempts to come to terms with social contradictions emanating from a

later phase of capitalist development in the neoliberalisation of southern Africa. Pepetela's novel *O Desejo de Kianda*, for example, is centred around the fantastic motif of a series of events in which the buildings of Luanda's Kinaxixi district begin to spontaneously crumble and collapse without any evident cause. The self-destructing buildings, which are dubbed as 'Luanda syndrome' by the international press, are then revealed to be the work of the Kimbundu water-spirit Kianda, who is avenging the terraforming violence of neoliberalisation in the Kinaxixi district by progressively demolishing the remaining apartment blocks in an act of extra-human protest. This incorporation of folkloric and oral elements into Pepetela's novel is consistent with the WReC's definition of irrealism, as it makes resort to non-realist local cultural resources such as magical belief-systems in order to launch a critique of the forces of capitalist modernisation. In the WReC's words:

> 'Tradition' here comes into existence not as the lingering forms of the past but as the coeval other of 'modernity'. It is better to understand the phenomenon *politically*: since neither the state nor the statist institutions of knowledge production are trusted, other institutions must be summoned, and these tend to be repositories of non-normative or numinous forms of folkloric knowledge, located in alternative cultural archives, often those depending on oral story-telling practices, embodied in performance and the use of dialect (pp. 76-77).

Thus, in *O Desejo de Kianda*, the plotline dealing with Kianda counterposes the logic of commodity fetishism and opportunism that underpins Carmina's trajectory from radical militant to corrupt politician. Pepetela's appeal to Kianda as an extra-literary, traditional element in the local cultural ecology of Luanda is then the source of the novel's social critique of the neoliberal turn in post-independence Angola, as the water-spirit overpowers the totalising thrust of global capital with a return of the repressed of marginalised natures,

submerging the city in a tsunami that reunites her with the high seas off of the Atlantic coastline. The text is, in this way, 'critical irrealist', however, in a manner that is consistent with the presentation above, the irrealist narrative device of the revenge of the water-spirit also serves to 'host' a set of contradictions that have an objectivity in the social process in neoliberal Angola. The wreckage caused by the demolition of residential apartment blocks gives rise to an emergent protest movement of those dispossessed by Luanda syndrome, who are angry at the refusal of the state to rebuild their fallen and houses and address the damage caused, seeking justice for those made homeless and protection for those rendered vulnerable. From one perspective, therefore, it seems as if part of Kianda's revolutionary impulse is to spur on a new political movement that could overthrow the incumbent neoliberal regime and establish in its place a more democratic state structure that, as the character of Honório informs the reader, would be much closer to neo-anarchism than the centralised and bureaucratic system that had characterised the Marxist-Leninist era. However, just as this political movement is getting under way, the text closes with a climactic water-spirit tsunami that obliterates not only the corrupt politicians who had first sanctioned the redevelopment of Kinaxixi Square, but also those naked protesters who had organised a form of popular resistance that might replace the existing power structure with a neo-anarchist model more attuned to the folkloric wisdom and marginalised natures that the transition to capitalism had functioned to repress. A contradiction therefore emerges between the utopian impulse embedded within the grassroots social movement and the blind force of Kianda's desire: does *O Desejo de Kianda* optimistically imagine a new society emerging out of the wreckage of a Luanda in ruins, or does it suggest that any future attempts at reconstructing society in the interests of the marginalised and oppressed will be doomed from the outset, subject to the same destructive forces that threaten the existing neoliberal regime? Crucially, it is the undecidable, irrealist narrative device of the Kimbundu water-spirit that functions to host this

social contradiction, one that is itself inscribed in Angolan society in the form of a recalcitrant group of protestors demanding an end to state censorship and government corruption, and a repressive neoliberal regime that wants to consolidate its wealth.

This contradiction is also at the heart of Ondjaki's 2012 novel *Os Transparentes*, which stages a conflict between a messianic desire for freedom from suffering and oppression, and an encroaching sense that such a desire is hopeless if not downright impossible. While departures from and subversions of the conventions of literary realism are, for Löwy and the WReC, signal characteristics of critical irrealism, these critics also emphasise that irrealist texts will often appear as 'impure' or hybrid combinations that embed realist tendencies within their aesthetic operations (Löwy, p. 195), if not as 'homages' to realism as such (WReC, p. 83). To this extent, the maximalist form of Ondjaki's novel, which includes a matrix of overlapping and tangential plotlines that makes it hard to locate the driving force of the narrative in any one of the novel's cacophony of voices, can be read as an irrealist homage to conventional literary realism. With its omniscient narrator, quotidian themes, abrupt and periodic shifts between viewpoints or perspectives, and its wide and motley cast of characters, *Os Transparentes* cannot solely be characterised as a 'non-realist' text, or as simply enacting a wholesale rupture with the realist paradigm. Rather, *Os Transparentes* retains and preserves elements of literary realism, even while it imbues them with aspects of the fantastic and the supernatural. To this extent, the intra-family dramas and detailed descriptions of everyday tasks and events can be read as reproducing aspects of the realist narrative structure of the Brazilian *telenovelas* that, as Frota has noted, '*faz[em] parte da rotina de muitas casas*' [form part of the routine of many homes] in the text.[324] Indeed, as one French reviewer observed, the novel '*fait voir un théâtre de la société angolaise, ou plutôt, comme on témoigne la multiplicité des personnages, il parodie le modèle narratif de*

[324] Silvia Valencich Frota, '*Os Transparentes*', p. 546.

la série télévisée' [makes a theatre of Angolan society, or rather, as can be seen from the multiplicity of characters, parodies the narrative model of the television series].[325] Nevertheless, it is from the text's most obvious departure from realist aesthetics that its socially critical perspective on Angolan society emerges. According to Odonato, his magical condition of transparency is a symptom of the poverty and suffering of the Angolan people, and to this extent critics of the novel have read the character emblematically as representing growing social inequality in neoliberal Angola. However, if the irrealist motif of transparency might in this way appear, in a more or less straightforward way, as a critique of the political trajectory of the post-independence era in Angola, it is equally beset by an antinomic logic that lends to Odonato's self-description a parodic or satirical air. To the extent that the messianic overtones of Odonato's monologue are imbued with a sense of paralysis or failure, a contradiction emerges analogous to that which animates the narrative of *O Desejo de Kianda*. Is there hope for social change in contemporary Angola, as is suggested by Odonato's radical act of protest, or are all attempts at political militancy doomed from the outset, mere caricatures of a former era's cycle of revolutionary struggle? This social contradiction is far from specific to Ondjaki's and Pepetela's novels, however, but is rather an objective part of politics and society and Angola, and has emerged in recent years as a conflict between the entrenchment of MPLA hegemony and a consolidation of rentier tendencies in the kleptocratic state, and the emergence of new cycle of protest movements, inspired by the successes of the Arab Spring. The real social contradiction — an 'objective form' in the Schwarzian sense — is hosted or symbolically resolved in these two dystopian texts through the use of an irrealist aesthetic device.

What this recapitulatory overview is designed to drive home are the key claims presented at the beginning of this thesis: that there exists an elective affinity between the

[325] Alix Florian, 'Ondjaki. *Les Transparents*', *Afrique Contemporaine* 256.4 (2015), pp. 141-143 (p. 142).

upturn in irrealist modes of signification in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa and the cyclical rhythms of the capitalist world-system, and that the spectral and dystopian turns in Mozambique and Angola directly correspond to the shifting local/global relations born out of the fraught passage between two phases of long-wave capitalist accumulation.

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