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# Lusophony or the Haunted Logic of Postempire

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## **Abstract**

Lusophony is a neo-colonial concept that only emerges once the Empire is irrevocably dissolved. Whereas Lusophony cannot escape its neo-colonial entanglements, Lusotopy, on the contrary, strives precisely not only to go beyond, but against them. This article reflects on the ways in which literature, film, or 'tuga' hip-hop music, strive to advance transnational forms of resistance to unending and ever renewed kinds of oppression. Focusing on Lusotopy one can hope to work towards constructing a different future that builds on all the riches and all the wounds, many not yet healed, of the intersections derived from Portuguese colonialism.

## **Keywords**

haunting; resistance; literature; cinema; 'Hip-Hop Tuga'

## **La lusophonie ou la logique hantée du post-empire**

## **Résumé**

La lusophonie est un concept néocolonial qui émergea seulement lors de la dissolution irréversible de l'Empire. Si la lusophonie ne peut pas échapper à ses complicités néocoloniales, la lusotopie en revanche non seulement tente de les dépasser mais de s'y opposer. Cet article aborde les manières par lesquelles la littérature, le cinéma ou le hip-hop « tuga » promeuvent des formes transnationales de résistance aux divers types d'oppression sans cesse renouvelés. À partir du concept de lusotopie, on peut espérer contribuer à la construction d'un futur fondé sur toutes les richesses et toutes

les blessures – certaines encore béantes – provoquées de manière intersectionnelle par le colonialisme portugais.

### **Mots-clefs**

spectre; résistance; littérature; cinema; “Hip-Hop tuga”

## **A lusofonia ou a lógica assombrada do pós-império**

### **Resumo**

A lusofonia é um conceito neocolonial que só emerge depois da irreversível dissolução do império. Se a lusofonia não pode escapar das suas cumplicidades neocoloniais, a lusotopia, ao inverso, tenta não só ultrapassá-las como opô-las. Este artigo reflete nos modos em como a literatura, o cinema ou o hip-hop ‘tuga’, tentam avançar formas transnacionais de resistência aos vários tipos de opressão continuamente renovados. A partir do conceito de Lusotopia é possível ter esperança de contribuir para a construção de um futuro com base em todas as riquezas e todas as feridas, muitas ainda em aberto, das intersecções ocasionadas pelo colonialismo português.

### **Palavras-chaves**

assombramento; resistência; literatura; cinema; “Hip-Hop Tuga”

*(...) Und dieser Feind hat zu siegen nicht aufgehört.*

Walter Benjamin

Frequently, Lusophony is described as a kind of dream; although more often than not it is also denounced as a nightmare. Eduardo Lourenço, easily the most distinguished of commentators on this topic, has himself, in his inimitable style, described the multiple paradoxical contradictions intrinsic to what he has termed a mirage (Lourenço 1999). At least since the 1990’s, especially after the 17th July 1996 official inauguration of the Community of Portuguese

Language Countries (CPLP), much has been written about it, its history, ambitions, failures, and possible futures (Cahen 2015). It is never too much to insist on the crucial distinction between Lusophony and Lusotopy. Whereas Lusophony cannot escape its neocolonial entanglements, Lusotopy, on the contrary, strives precisely not only to go beyond, but against them. As Michel Cahen and Irène Dos Santos point out in the Introduction, “The concept of lusotopy makes it possible, in the social sciences, to express realities outside neo-imperialist ideology”. Besides the obvious investment of the CPLP, Lusophony has also been debated by academics, artists, writers, politicians and there have been numerous published essays, as well as conferences dedicated to the topic. Polemics between those who see Lusophony as a wonderful force for bringing about a new kind of supra-national community and those, with whom I would side, that see it rather as either a form of delusion at best, or ultimately a thinly veiled neo-colonial instrument, have been going on at least since the extensive volume of *Lusotopie, « Lusotropicalisme. Idéologies coloniales et identités nationales dans les mondes lusophones »* (1997), followed by Alfredo Margarido who published his denunciation in *A Lusofonia e os Lusófonos. Novos Mitos Portugueses* in 2000. More recently, a number of detailed and varied essays have significantly enlarged the debate and, it would seem, have dealt with it, exposing many of the problems associated with the concept and the very term, while still recognizing the ambition of bringing the various literatures written in Portuguese in closer contact. Perhaps the most extensive collection of essays on the subject so far is the one assembled by Moisés de Lemos Martins, *Lusofonia e Interculturalidade. Promessa e Travessia* (Martins 2015). His introduction is very valuable to trace the development of the concept and various uses to which it has been put. Although fully aware of the common traps associated with the concept, Martins still maintains a very positive attitude to it. Here, I will simply note further the work of Paula Medeiros on “Lusofonia: Discursos e Representações” (2006) as a sort of model, inasmuch as it attempts a thorough, and as neutral as possible, discussion of the concept and its representations. But, not only has Lusophony by now become a sort of cottage industry of its own, there are still those whose desire for the dream of another form of transnational community as dangled by the idea of Lusophony is just too tempting. And so even when it would seem that nothing more could be added to the debate to make absolutely clear how problematic the notion of Lusophony is, a renewed attempt at exposing the many fallacies of Lusophony is still called for, as it probably will repeatedly keep being called for in the foreseeable future. As António Pinto Ribeiro aptly puts it in what is one of the most provocative, yet lucid, reflections on this subject: “Lusophony is the last trace

of an empire that no longer exists, and the last impediment for adult work on the multiple identities of the countries where Portuguese is spoken” (Ribeiro 2013; Ribeiro in this issue).

Far from just deploying bombastic rhetoric, if António Pinto Ribeiro’s analysis can be faulted, then for its brevity that forces a great deal of historical condensation as when he imagines a “history” for Lusophony that would stretch back to the nineteenth century’s “scramble for Africa”. Of course the whole trajectory of Portugal’s imperial and colonial enterprise would have to be brought in for reflection and not just that moment already marked by the loss of Brazil in 1822, and not only the muscle flexing of the key European powers that would find its blatant expression in the Berlin conference of 1884-85 and the British Ultimatum of 1890. As right as António Pinto Ribeiro is, when he views Lusophony as too vague a concept – and as a kitsch version of what could be good relations between the new nations and their erstwhile colonizer – I would prefer to keep Lusophony properly as a concept that only really emerges once the Empire is irrevocably dissolved.<sup>1</sup> Doing so does not remove any of its vagueness; nor does it make less a piece of kitsch of course. But it makes clearer just how neocolonial a concept it is and why it depends on that very vagueness so as to insidiously attempt to preserve old lines of privilege and domination. As the trace of lost empire Lusophony would be above all a form of phantasmatic absence even if not quite a sort of negative epistemology as António Pinto Ribeiro also claimed. For, although I fully agree with him that the focus on language, culture, and the seemingly unassailable pieties of a “shared history” from which slavery is always conveniently elided, often masks the economic reasons behind Lusophony and other neo-colonial instances of global capitalism, I do not see the two as always necessarily linked in a causal relation. Crediting Lusophony with epistemological force (negative or otherwise), might simply give it too much credit. At bottom, it is just another instance of false consciousness, as much as anything else ready-made for self-consumption in Portugal as it might aspire to still play a global role. To be perfectly clear: there is no unique Portuguese situation here. If anything, the snare of Lusophony is hardly distinguishable from its model, Francophony, except for its smaller scale and diminished influence. Or, as has been shown in the wake of the June 2016 referendum in the United Kingdom to separate that country from the EU in order to embrace a “Global Britain”, the hopes of building a future based on the ashes of empire and the Commonwealth are as just

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1 Michel Cahen notes that the pair of terms ‘Lusophone’ and ‘Lusophony’ were presumably first used by David Birmingham who derived them from their French cognates, in 1973, and widely taken over in Portugal after 1974.

as empty. As a recent *Guardian* headline expressed it, “Foreign Office policy of Global Britain is ‘superficial rebranding’” (Wintour 12 March 2018).

## 1 Imagination of the Centre

Defenders of Lusophony might object to such a simplified, even distorted, view that would only consider economic considerations and leave out what to some, would be its very essence, the Portuguese language and the Portuguese culture or the various cultures that would have evolved through contact with the Portuguese. So it might be instructive to suspend for a moment the view that foremost economic interests drive Lusophony and all other such neocolonial tools to ask what exactly might be at play here. From the various more level-headed studies of Lusophony I would like to refer briefly to a recent essay by Michel Cahen. In “‘Portugal Is in the Sky’: Conceptual Considerations on Communities, Lusitanity and Lusophony” Michel Cahen starts his argument with a bold but necessary claim predicated, as he notes, on his being a historian: “This contribution is that of a historian rather than a specialist of the literature on Lusophone culture. It therefore comes as no surprise that this piece starts by stating that such a culture does not exist” (Cahen 2013: 297). While freely recognizing the existence of several cultures that, using Portuguese to express themselves, might be labeled as Lusophone, Michel Cahen asks two crucial questions that expose a key fallacy in the claims made for Lusophony as a kind of forge for a new form of supranational community that would resist and present an alternative for the hegemony of English and the various dominant Anglophone cultures: “does the fact that they use Portuguese make these phenomena specifically Lusophone? Are the Portuguese Lusophone? Are the French Francophone?” (Cahen 2013: 297). Indeed the level of naïveté at best, or downright blind narcissism at worst, that would pretend to see the various cultures formed in the former Portuguese colonies as “sister” cultures while ignoring precisely all the differences that make them unique does not hold much scrutiny. Even if the term “Lusophone” might be used in certain circumstances as an expedient shorthand – and even so an explanation should never be left out – it should not hide that if anything binds those cultures together is foremost a shared history of oppression, domination and racism in which some were oppressed and others oppressors. Granted, reality is never just clean-cut and one would have to take further into consideration how jagged the lines of race, class and gender are.

Michel Cahen’s second question, on whether the Portuguese also are Lusophone, might appear as a simple jest, yet it points out to the fact that what

is held as a key factor for integration can actually be an essentially divisive one placing a wedge between people based on simple – and often racist – dichotomies between (former) metropolis and (former) colony. The way in which Michel Cahen then follows up that question with the very similar one concerning whether the French might be Francophone is instructive inasmuch as for a long time the division between what was considered French literature and Francophone writing seemed unassailable. That such rigidity seems to have been somewhat less formative in the Portuguese case, judging by the shelves at bookstores or syllabi in University courses (outside Portugal at least) should not blind us for even a moment. Literary history, with few exceptions, is still predominantly organized along strict national lines. If the question in Portugal might have been less pronounced than in France (and that is by no means certain), then only because of the links Lusophony maintains to that other shibboleth of what one is tempted to call out as the Portuguese ideology: Lusotropicalism. As much as it is important to keep the two distinct, it also must be noted how close Lusophony does come to Lusotropicalism, its racialized (and racist) structure and its claim at excepcionality, all of which not only hark back to colonial times but also still inform much of the present.

Without any interest in polemicizing I still would like to be clear on some key points of contention. To start with, the very terms Lusophony, and Lusophone, are an unfortunate derivative of the French and as such, not only vague but above all more indicative of Portugal's own subalternity, its semi-peripheral position, to follow on Immanuel Wallerstein's World-Systems Theory and the seminal use made of it by Boaventura de Sousa Santos in his essay "Between Prospero and Caliban" from 2002. Freely, some of the assumptions that study made have been properly questioned further, but its impact and its opening up of a properly postcolonial line of questioning of national identity have still not been fully absorbed by the general public. As already mentioned, the term Lusophone can be used as a kind of shorthand, provided its problematic nature is noted. A case in point would be when wanting to refer to the cinematic productions stemming from the various countries where Portuguese is an official language. On the one hand it would appear that Lusophone would be even more amiss in this context as other languages besides Portuguese are also used in those films. Yet, using the term has the advantage of calling attention for a kind of cinema that often is transnational already in terms of casting, location, financing, production and distribution. And which also still shares, among its constituent parts, a given invisibility, both in terms of critical reception and study, as well as with reference to public familiarity. Also, its excessive focus on Portuguese as a language is more telling of Portugal's anxiety towards other,

stronger, colonizing nations such as Great Britain and France. That in itself is already questionable but what is more problematic, more pervasive, and, perhaps more ignored, is how the use made of Portuguese to defend the centrality of Lusophony often is a simple one-sided, and doomed, assumption that Portugal would still be the center of Lusophony. Obviously, this imagination of the center is complex and would necessitate an entire study to do anything more than merely scratch at it. But the very notion of heritage would need to be examined and challenged. With regard to the unparalleled language games and virtuosity Mia Couto has deployed for most of his writing, it is obvious that even in the terms of Lusophony – that is, under the belief that a supranational community based on shared cultural markers and, above all, language exists – influence and legacy must be seen as multi-faceted, and, above all, multi-directional (to use Michael Rothberg's apt term) processes. As long as one remains attached to the delusional idea that Portugal would have given the other nations the gift of language, there is no real possibility to imagine, and work on, a different, hopefully more equal, future. Only when one fully assumes that cultural – and linguistic – influence is never a one-way street can one hope to start working towards that, still largely utopian, future so often promised by the paragons of Lusophony.

## **2 Transnationality**

If we are serious about building on the legacy of Portugal's imperial and colonial enterprises, then a first step should be to reflect on, and think through, just what that legacy is, and be prepared to accept that, more often than not, it is a negative inheritance. Clearly, this must be understood as a European question and not just a Portuguese one:

The negative inheritances of Europe are many and take the form of loss, cruelty, abjection, the economies of murder, ruination and haunting. One possible function of cultural memory studies in conjunction with post-colonial studies might be to work against such forces that would encase European identity in mythical ethnic, theological and teleological constructs and point out the way to a multiplicity of European identities that would remain in flux and hospitable to cultural transfers.

Medeiros 2012: 60

For the purpose of understanding Lusophony, of course, that larger context, though not ignored, can remain on the background. Cultural memory, like any other abstraction invoked to justify collective identities, and often enough impose policies is never natural, transparent or innocent. Consider for instance, that even for as versatile a thinker as Eduardo Lourenço, who is fully aware that the notion of Lusophony has significantly different meanings in the different countries it would supposedly bring together, Lusophony is still inextricably attached to a canon subsumed under the same hallowed names of Portuguese letters: “Fernão Lopes, Gil Vicente, Bernardim, Pêro Vaz de Caminha, Camões”, to which we could freely add that of Fernando Pessoa (Lourenço 1999: 174). Obviously contemporary artists engage, as always, with tradition. And any canon can be deconstructed. But to insist on just reaching, unquestioningly, to the canon is to transform it into a set of museum pieces locked in the past. At present I would like to make a few suggestions in the hope of sketching some lines of flight.

First of all, some brief considerations, in need of further development elsewhere, on literature. Since literature has often been used as the privileged means to carry on the perceived cornerstones of any given culture and nation, it cannot be entirely left out of these considerations. At the same time, precisely because it has been so instrumental, and instrumentalized, to construct certain views of the nation, literature necessitates a more detailed consideration if it is to retain its importance in the light of newer media. So, and this must be clear, no setting aside of literature is meant. Even if the number of readers in the population remains disproportionally small, literature’s ability to move and engage people, its capacity to mobilize and resist oppression, and to endure throughout the ages and beyond fashions make it a preferred line of flight. Nonetheless, any discussion of literature must take into account the present and the profound changes – some for better, many for worst – our society is undergoing as we have entered the twenty-first century. Canonical works will remain key to anyone with any sensibility; but not just the canon of tradition and not in splendid isolation. 1974, for all the flaws one may want to see in the processes leading to and evolving from the Carnation Revolution, is an important caesura in the History of Portugal and of the territories then still colonies but soon to become independent nations. As such, works published after date, many of them by African writers, and also including all of Brazilian literature, are of great relevance to understand Lusophony.

This should be obvious especially as Lusophony is, to a great extent, a concept that takes wings only after the irrevocable end of empire. Then, there is the question of how best to approach literature from the perspective of Lusophony. It should be also clear that the still normative model of the nation-state to



map literary works is not only ideological compromised but also short sighted. And so is the apparently more expansive and inclusive traditional comparative literature methodology. Strictly understood, such methodology would require that works to be analyzed would be written in different languages, or otherwise stem from different cultures. However, especially relevant for the notion of Lusophony, is the comparative study of the various literatures written in Portuguese as championed by Benjamin Abadala Júnior for almost two decades in works such as *De voos e ilhas: Literatura e comunitarismos* (2013). Such comparisons may yield significant amounts of information and fresh insights into the works studied. However, why stop at the linguistic border between Portuguese and other languages. Ana Margarida Fonseca in a recent article (2013) makes the excellent suggestion to expand the study of Lusophony so as to embrace what she terms *Literatura-Mundo*. A welcome suggestion, which, in my perspective, has one intrinsic flaw. The World Literature concept operative in Fonseca's argument (and the Portuguese term itself is problematic inasmuch as it does not quite reflect the English or German, and leans heavily on the French, which, however, has a different connotation altogether) can be termed rather traditional and as such not only largely Western centric but also predicated on the traditional canon. Inasmuch as such a canon hardly includes any work written in Portuguese, Fonseca's proposal would work towards expanding it and, in the process, gain added visibility to works written in Portuguese that might be deemed sufficiently worthy of inclusion. In my perspective – but this is what needs further development – it would be more logical to work with a concept of World-Literature that would actually be more suitable to the historical conditions of the Lusophone sphere. From the various notions of World Literature currently circulating, the one theorized by the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) in the 2015 collective book *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (2015) would be a better fit. Drawing as it does on the work of Immanuel Wallerstein, among others, and the notions of centre, periphery and semi-periphery,<sup>2</sup> the WReC provides a more suitable model to understand the semi-peripheral role

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2 The first chapter, on “World-Literature in the Context of Combined and Uneven Development” provides a detailed positioning of the WReC's perspectives on the current debate regarding the growing field of “World Literature”. Here a brief but basic point to understand this positioning: “We propose, in these terms, to define ‘world literature’ as *the literature of the world-system* – of the modern capitalist world-system, that is. That, baldly, is our hypothesis, stated in the form of a *lex parsimoniae*. Perhaps, therefore, we should begin to speak of ‘world-literature’ with a hyphen, derived from that of ‘world-system’. The protocol commits us to arguing for a *single* world-literary system, rather than for world-literary systems” (WReC 2015: 8).

played by Portugal and Portuguese literature. Furthermore, such an approach would resist the pull of the national and emphasize the need for transnational works to reflect transnational issues.

Besides literature all other arts should be considered and among these perhaps film and popular music might have a greater potential audience. Film, in particular, serves as an almost ideal platform to question the notion of Lusophony and to show its intrinsic flaws, starting by the fact that some of what would-be “Lusophone” films do not use Portuguese at all. Take Flora Gomes’ *Nha Fala* (2002) as this musical comedy focuses especially on “[my] voice” but is spoken in Creole and French, not Portuguese. And yet if the term “Lusophone” is to have any use at all, then it applies only too well to a co-production drawing on France, Luxembourg and Portugal, whose director is from Guinea-Bissau and was filmed (for reasons of security) in Cape Verde. The fact that it focuses on the question of migration from the former Portuguese colonies to Europe, in this case France, and on issues of class, race, and representation, make it a clear political intervention that cannot be ignored by any consideration of whatever Lusophony aims to be. Yet, even though it is not the most difficult of the “Lusophone” films to obtain, its circulation is limited, even though its musical format would appeal to a greater audience, and its inclusion in discussions of Lusophony, as far as I know, is nonexistent. This is not exclusive to this film at all. Indeed, a systematic treatment of film in relation to Lusophony is still to be made, although some recent studies that focus on issues such as transnationalism and global cinema start moving towards such a reflection. Curiously, though in a symptomatic way is the almost complete absence of film from the very extensive collection of essays put together by Moisés de Lemos Martins (2015). Besides an essay on the genre of the Brazilian *fotonovela* by Maria Imacolata Vassalo de Lopes the closest discussion of Lusophone cinema is the fascinating essay by Margarida Ledo Andión: “Entre-Fronteiras: O cinema como lugar xeo-político” (2015: 75-88). The essay revolves around a brief film *Galícia*, which is credited with being the first Galician film and was lost since 1936 until some reels were found “in a Russian Archive” (2015: 76). This essay raises a whole series of questions that cannot be addressed here, such as the relation of *Galícia* to Lusophony, but does not ever address any other films or discuss the concept of Lusophony. Perhaps this should not be a surprise given the difficulty of crossing disciplinary borders. Within film studies proper, even if only recently, attention to the intricate issues posed by “Lusophone” films, in and of themselves but also towards an understanding of the notion of Lusophony has been pioneered by Carolin Overhoff Ferreira. In one of her most accessible articles, “Ambivalent Transnationality: Luso-African Co-Productions After Independence (1988-2010)”, published in a

special issue of the *Journal of African Cinemas* dedicated to Lusophone Cinema in 2012, Ferreira provides a wealth of information on the subject and also a brief analysis of sixteen films that foreground questions of colonial and post-colonial relations, hybridity, and transnationalism. While Ferreira seemingly maintains as neutral as possible an approach to the question of Lusophony, at times her argument seems to provide a direct indictment for what would be nothing less than attempts at cultural dominance and a whitewashing of the past. In part, such a view can be said to be based on the fact that the films in question are all co-productions with heavy Portuguese involvement in the production, especially in the case of Cape Verde where it can sometimes reach one hundred per cent. Ferreira's extensive research is crucial to gain a view of material conditions of Lusophone film beyond the merely ideological. Yet, sometimes it almost seems as if a kind of essentialism would still persist in making a distinction between African directors such as Flora Gomes, who would be capable of understanding, and relating, the complexities of their African societies, and Portuguese, or European ones, who would miss them. This might be an overstatement and I certainly would agree with Ferreira in suspecting elements of neocolonialism in situations that, in my perspective, are overdetermined by capital as it were. Or it could just be that the need for brevity and condensation at times does not allow for more detailed reflections – after all, one senses that Ferreira's article also has to address an audience who not only might never have seen the films discussed nor have any idea of the ideological twists and turns of Lusophony. So, if there is much work to be done still so as to fully understand how Lusophone film navigates Lusophony, Ferreira's work provides a crucial starting point.

Transnationality and hybridity are key elements in Lusophone film. Ferreira is clearly right in being cautious and note the proximity of these, in the Lusophone context, to the notion of Lusotropicalism. Also, drawing on the work of Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, Ferreira cautions against the temptation to see transnationality as just another form of internationalism. Ferreira cites Higbee and Lim (2010: 10) on the vacuity of assuming that having international casts or production teams automatically would render a given film as transnational. In the case of many Lusophone films those elements of internationalization are very evident, due in great part to financial constraints; but also because of the ability to draw from the pool of resources offered by a "Lusophone" space. Clearly, strategic partnerships are also made involving other countries, mostly drawn from within the space of the European Union, and it would not ever be just on such a level that one could see the films as transnational. Questions of national and cultural history and identity are key in many of those films so that it might even seem as any hints at a transnational

understanding might be off the mark. Yet, I would argue, even in films appearing to be chiefly focused on national identity, actually the position they take is, by necessity, transnational. As I have had the opportunity to argue, in a different context, Lusophone films “are forceful, ghostly and haunting, illustrations of what Glissant and Chamoiseau refer to as the general production of disaster out of the concept of the nation-state. As such there is no romanticization of the national in any of those films” (Medeiros 2011:130).

This can be seen in many instances and, instead of drawing an imaginary line separating (mainly) Portuguese productions from (mainly) other Lusophone films, I would want to insist on the way in which to a great extent these films, just as they work out the fissures between Portugal and Africa on the one hand, or the enormous difficulties of linking to the past on the other, also, and very importantly, work against would-be normative notions of national identity. Indeed, in a film such as Margarida Cardoso’s 2004 *A Costa dos Murmúrios*, based on the eponymous novel by Lídia Jorge, the multiple ways in which it exposes the impossibility of thinking Portugal in any way that would not necessarily involve Africa are inescapable. We watch the unraveling of the memories of Eva Lopo when, known as Evita, she had gone to Mozambique to marry her school sweetheart serving as a soldier in what seem to be the last moments of the colonial war. And as we do it becomes impossible not to understand the intensity with which such violence has indelibly marked an entire nation. It is not just a question of memory or of the trauma of the colonial wars or the loss of empire. Rather, what is at stake is the realization that without confronting those specters and thinking through Portugal’s past without the delusional ideological lenses of a supposed exceptionality and a sort of Portuguese manifest destiny, there is no possibility for imagining the future. At this point it might seem as if precisely the concept of Lusophony, at least in its more utopian variant, might be invoked as providing precisely the sort of supranational imaginary sought after. Yet nothing could be more delusional. For instance, if one considers two other films, *Terra Sonâmbula* (Sleepwalking Land), directed by Teresa Prata (2007), based on the eponymous novel by Mia Couto, and the documentary directed by Richard Pakleppa, *Angola: saudades de quem te ama* (2005), it becomes obvious how useless a mythical Lusophony is to understand how Lusophone films function transnationally. Instead, the concept of Lusotopy, understood as referring to a geopolitical and cultural space and as such always marked, not only by the history of Portuguese colonialism, but also, and crucially, by the various resistances to it and all the political and discursive strategies invented and deployed to create an alternate, and less oppressive, reality offers new possibilities for interpretation. All three

films have enormous differences and yet, not at all paradoxically, it could be said that those very differences are also what brings them together. For one, all three films deal with the haunting legacies of war, be it the colonial war in the case of the first or the civil wars that engulfed both Mozambique and Angola after independence.

The ghosts may be different but not their virulence. And, just as Margarida Cardoso, drawing on Lídia Jorge, problematizes the notions of History and memory by contrasting and deconstructing them, so Teresa Prata and Richard Pakleppa, in their own way, stage this by reflecting on historical events through the refracting lens of personal letters. Briefly comparing basic synopses of the two immediately can point to some crucial similarities. Jay Weissberg, reviewing the film for *Variety*, says this about *Sleepwalking Land*:

The unquantifiable toll of Mozambique's long civil war suffuses 'sleepwalking Land,' an emotionally affecting tale-within-a-tale helmed and scripted by Brazilian-born Teresa Prata. Originating with the wanderings of a young boy and an older man before spinning into a story that adds layers of resonance, this long-gestating pic works as a parable for a society struggling to cope with its evisceration.

Weissberg 2007

The description announcing Richard Pakleppa's documentary (2005) for the 2015 Festival *Rotas e Rituais* held at the São Jorge Cinema in Lisbon soberly notes:

Richard Pakleppa takes his camera onto the streets of Angola and gather stories of all sectors of society, discovering how the country has evolved since the end of the civil war. A group of street children, a teacher, a priest, a fishmonger, a model and a rapper talk about the war and the changes that resulted from it. These are dramatic stories of post-war, in a country which, while struggling to restart it faces new problems.

Pakleppa 2015

Those "new" problems, forcefully represented in the scene showing a beautiful young woman posing for a fashion shoot in front of the ruined wreck of a cargo ship named after Karl Marx, are nothing more than the grip of neo-colonial, neo-liberal global capitalist forces that have engulfed Angola. One could say that the negative inheritance of Portuguese colonialism is still at base, at work here. But then only as one of many forces and it might do well to remember

that, as transnational as this film is, in this case the production is a joint venture between Mozambique and South Africa. To invoke Lusophony in such a context would miss the mark by far.

Another possible line of flight, popular music has a larger audience, potentially at least, than even film. Never innocent, its enormous potential for engaging with, and expressing, the views of youth must be understood in a constant antagonistic relation with the constraints imposed by global capitalism. Like film, or for that matter, literature as well, popular music is suffused by a multitude of influences, only some of which within the sphere of Lusophony. The interaction between popular music, Lusophony, imperial and colonial imaginaries and concrete experiences is very complex. In spite, of some excellent preliminary studies there is still much that needs to be explored. A documentary such as *Lusofonia, a (R)Evolução* produced as part of the Red Bull Academy in 2006 provides a good point of entry to try to explore the diversity of elements pertaining to the musical movements circulating between Africa, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, and Cape Verde and how they are never either unidirectional nor limited to a Lusophone space as other global influences also assume great relevance. Writing in *Norient: Network for Local and Global Sounds and Media Culture*, Barbara Alge in 2015 notes how the documentary presents discourses of Atlantic routes and roots in Lusophone popular music. At times, it might seem as if Lisbon would hold a central, or pivotal role in such transnational movements. Whatever truth there might be in that it is a limited one, dependent as it is on the conditions imposed by imperial migrations and the fact that Africa, in general, with perhaps the partial exception of South Africa, still remains more invisible on the world stage so that if an Angolan urban form such as *kuduro*<sup>3</sup> gets picked up in Lisbon, as it did, then its chances of breaking into other parts of the world, as it also did, naturally increase. Lisbon's role here though, is not so much as a centre but rather as a semi-periphery in the sense given to it by Immanuel Wallerstein.

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<sup>3</sup> *Kuduro* is primarily an urban street dance originating around 1980 in Luanda. Extremely versatile and highly demanding it has become an important form of expression and reflection on the starkest of social problems while remaining extremely appealing and direct. It has been receiving wide critical attention, out of which I would single out two studies: one more general, by Marissa Moorman, on "Anatomy of Kuduro: Articulating the Angolan Body Politic after the War" (2014) and the other, more specific, by Stefanie Alisch and Nadine Siegert, on "Grooving on Broken: Dancing War Trauma in Angolan Kuduro" (2013).

### 3 Bicho do Mato

As it facilitates the contact and exchange between centre and periphery, Lisbon naturally seems to figure prominently and has more of a chance of developing its own versions of the cultural forms that traverse through it. Should one be interested in Lusophony as a nexus of possibilities for the future, an interest in such cultural forms as *kuduro* and Portuguese hip hop or *rap tuga* (from “tuga” a slang term for Portuguese) would seem more than obvious. Yet, even in discussions of Lusophony more open to various forms of new media, such as the large volume of essays on Lusophony and interculturality already mentioned, there seems to be no space for such music forms. As with film, it is more within the area of cultural studies or ethnomusicology that one finds proper attention given to these new musical forms and their importance as transnational cultural expressions. The only study so far to have appeared in Portugal, *Ritmo & Poesia. Os caminhos do Rap* by António Concorde Contador and Emanuel Lemos Ferreira (1997), might be limited but provides much information to help understand the beginnings of hip hop in Portugal and the transition from essentially North American models using English lyrics to an expression of specific Portuguese experiences. These, as could not but be, besides orienting themselves to a variety of influences from Africa and Brazil, also tend to focus on concrete social issues such as racism. As Fernando Arenas notes, ‘since the 1990s, there has been a boom of young Portuguese artists of African descent recording hip-hop, soul, reggae, jazz-inflected, funk, African-fusion music, or electronica, sung in Portuguese and variants of Cape Verdean Kriolu’ (Arenas 2015: 359). The designation of “Portuguese” is apt but not always accurate. In some cases, though living for most of their lives in Portugal, the artists might not have citizenship, or more significantly, might feel that being in Portugal, or being Portuguese, is simply a fait-divers and they might as well be in other cities. Obviously, that too is not that simple. However, what interests me is the, sometimes very open, refusal of the category of the national in favour of the transnational or, at least, an international, more cosmopolitan, way of looking at identity. Arenas continues:

Many Luso-African hip-hop artists have documented and denounced the lives of marginalized Afro-descendant youths in Portugal, in addition to expressing hopes for a better life in a more tolerant and accepting society, while identifying with and appropriating the globalized aesthetics, language, sounds, and countercultural ideology of African American inner city youth.

Arenas 2015: 359-360

More pertinent than the derivations from “African American inner city youth” are the connections between the various parts of Africa and Lisbon, and Brazil. *Kuduro*, for instance, though originating in the streets of Luanda, manages to reach a significantly larger audience when filtered through Lisbon and this kind of circulation and diffusion would be key for adepts of Lusophony to explore further. Jayna Brown, in a comparative study on “Global Pop Music and Utopian Impulse” makes crucial observations on *kuduro*, its different forms and the wide gap in experience between the streets of Luanda and the club scene and studio in Lisbon. As she notes, war was all pervasive in Angola and that cannot be ignored or erased: “Watching the videos from the Luandan suburbs, the first thing to notice is the number of dancers who are amputees, scores of young men and women, boys and girls who have lost their limbs” (Brown 2010: 141). No matter how harsh the conditions of life in the Lisbon peripheral zones might be, it still is worlds apart. Given the development of hip hop in Portugal and elsewhere in the last two decades, and the variety of forces it confronts, any attempt at a neat categorization will be no more than a crude simplification. Yet I am willing to risk that in order to focus, very briefly, on what I think would be crucial for an understanding of Lusophony as a potentially utopian project rather than just a mere reflection of the haunted logic of Postempire, which, in my view, is how it largely functions (or not). The differences between music produced in Africa and the version of it issuing from Lisbon and its suburbs is not what interests me even though those differences are certainly important. Rather, the dividing line I would like to draw would be between the kind of music, no matter by whom, which serves primarily to feed the commercial interests of the assorted studios and mainstream labels, and the music with a strong social critique function. Or, in the terms of a leading contemporary performer, MC Valete, the difference is between “rap sujo ou de combate” (dirty or fighting rap) and “rap piroso” (for which the term *kitsch* does not even begin to adequately serve as a translation; see Abreu 2017).

The very beginning of hip hop in Portugal in the mid-nineties, though made by several young artists, is due, in great part to one, General D, who had a large impact and visibility then, before basically disappearing completely from the musical scene to which he would only return, in part, in 2014. Vítor Belanciano, one of the better known music critics in Portugal interviewed him in London, where he resides, at the beginning of 2014 and in brief lines sketched out how important he had been not only for the start of hip hop in Portugal but also for the way he remained an important influence to the present (Belanciano 2014). What is more striking about General D is the way in which he confronted the



cherished Portuguese myths surrounding issues such as race and oppression clearly and directly without any subterfuge or dissimulation. As Belanciano notes, when the singer – Sérgio Matsinhe, born in Mozambique in 1971, emigrated to the south margin of Lisbon aged two – became the face of hip hop in Portugal neither was he prepared for what would follow nor was Portugal ready for him and his social and political discourse (Belanciano 2014). Yet, as critical as General D was of Portugal – the refrain of one of his songs, “*Portukkal é um erro*” (Portukkal is a mistake) leaves no room for doubts – his engagement with the flawed reality of Portuguese society though built on alienation and critical acumen was anything but alien.

The question is whether, in the ensuing twenty years, Portuguese society has become more ready for such a message. The type of critical perspective conveyed by General D has found other interpreters. MC Valete (Keidge Torres Lima), in particular, can be seen as a leading exponent of a rap that is unabashedly on the left and linked to a tradition that is both Lusophone and global with specific references to Angola as much as to world conflicts, as well as a whole host of cultural and political heroes from Marx and Trotsky to Saramago and Mia Couto. Inequality is what such hip hop denounces be it in racial, class, or even gender terms – as can be seen in his collaboration with female artists such as Capicua and especially W-Magic. In “Bicho do Mato” a song by W-Magic with Valete, her use of the refrain, “*Não sou a princesa, sou o bicho do mato*” (“I am not the princess, I am the wild beast”) is doubly subversive: on the one hand it puts forward a forceful criticism of both patriarchal and racial structures of oppression; and on the other hand, in its ironic reference to the popular Brazilian fotonovela, with the eponymous title, it is an ironic, and defiant, resistance to the ideological insidiousness with which the media work to sustain the hoariest of stereotypes. Sometimes, as in “Fim da Ditadura” (2006) the references are multiple and simultaneous as Valete draws together both the Portuguese and Brazilian dictatorships and the more recent assertions of US imperialism, while borrowing some of the distinctive rhythm and cadence of Chico Buarque’s “Fado Tropical” (1973) in a very clear example of the type of fusion Lusophony would like to claim. Or consider some of the lyrics in “Rap consciente” the one song used to announce his come back after an extended period away from the music scene:

*Como se a cultura tivesse sido subornada,  
Estamos sem voz há muito tempo, nação desgovernada (...)  
Manos em Angola perseguidos por ativismo  
Geração Snapchat ancorada no narcisismo*

As if culture had been bribed  
For a long time we have not had a voice, rogue nation (...)  
Brothers in Angola persecuted for activism  
Snapchat generation tied to narcissism

Such lyrics are welcome as an antidote to some of the most rancid forms of nostalgia for a lost imperial greatness that never was, whose ghosts never cease to always return to haunt us. I am guardedly optimistic about the possibilities for a future change of Lusophony away and beyond being a mere expression of the haunted logic of postempire. Focusing on Lusotopy one can hope to work towards constructing a different future, a future that builds on all the riches and all the wounds, many not yet healed, of the intersections derived from Portuguese colonialism. But until then it is helpful to keep reminding ourselves of Walter Benjamin's sixth thesis on the concept of History from 1940: "Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious" (Benjamin 1968: 255).

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