

Literature and Economy in Portuguese-speaking Southern Africa

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Thomas Waller,

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Abstract: In "Literature and Economy in Portuguese-speaking Southern Africa", Thomas Waller offers a comparative reading of literary responses to neoliberalization in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa. Reading the proliferation of spectral effects in the Mozambican literature of the late 1980s alongside dystopian depictions of societal collapse in contemporary Angolan fiction, he suggests that writers in the two states have used distinctive aesthetic idioms to register the reintegration of southern Africa into the neoliberal world-system. In the fiction of Mozambican writers Aldino Muianga and Aníbal Aleluia, he shows how the legacy of colonial underdevelopment and its role in the transition to neoliberalism in Mozambique is figured at the level of form through spectral and broadly gothic aesthetic strategies that intimate the rise in class tensions attendant on the establishment of a new national bourgeoisie. In Angola, similarly, he reads speculative novels by Pepetela and José Eduardo Agualusa as literary responses to the ecological fallout of the heightening of capitalist extractivism that has accompanied the transition from Afro-Marxism to free market capitalism in post-independence Angola. In this way, Waller shows the extent to which literary production in Mozambique and Angola has been used in an attempt to register and critique the trajectory of neoliberal politics in southern Africa and its systemic relation with the restructuring of political economic parameters across the globe.

Thomas WALLER

Literature and Economy in Portuguese-speaking Southern Africa

The Southern African World-system

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 the forces of global political economy. 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 caused by the Great Depression of 1873-97, 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, and that was only definitively decided in 1945 after two catastrophic world wars (3).¹ Symptomatic of this transitional conjuncture, in which the relative decline in British power was combined with generalized world-economic stagnation, was the so-called "scramble for Africa" of 1885, which represented a pre-emptive attempt at economic enclosure that pitted colonial European powers against each other in the race to secure access to Africa's labor and resources, in hubristic contempt of the interests of indigenous inhabitants. The area of what is now called southern Africa was singled out in this inter-imperialist competition for its large reserves of carbon and mineral wealth (coal, gold, oil, diamond, copper) and for the size of the existing white-settler population. Beginning with this periodizing event, Wallerstein and Vieira tell the history of the region via successive Kondratieff cycles, which are long-wave economic units composed of alternating phases of expansion (the "A-phase") and stagnation (the "B-phase") that span a 45-60-year period. In the context of southern Africa, Wallerstein and Vieira propose the following periodization: "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).²

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 labor-recruitment structure (Wallerstein and Vieira 7). The ensuing inter-war B-phase, however, saw a radical revision of the region's political economy. With the world-economy again struck by cyclical stagnation, the two Portuguese colonies of the region—Angola and Mozambique—began to weaken ties with South Africa and colonial Rhodesia in order to protect their own economic interests, while a world agricultural depression forced South Africa to draw inwards and reduce its migrant-labor recruitment from other regional states in an attempt 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 successively achieved in spite of mounting calls for independence from black nationalist movements within the region, and globally in the form of initiatives such as the Bandung Conference and the Group of 77 (10). As the United States consolidated its position as the post-WWII world-systemic hegemonic power, the three settler-dominated zones of southern Africa 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, 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 anti-colonial movements in Angola and Mozambique in 1974-75 transformed the political economy of the region once more, dovetailing with the commencement of the Kondratieff B-phase that signaled the start of a period of global economic stagnation in which neoliberalism became ascendant.

¹ Although usage differs depending on context, "southern Africa" is generally thought to designate the nine "frontline states" that signed the originary declaration of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) in 1980 (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe), Namibia, the island nations (Comoros, Madagascar, and Mauritius), the overseas territories (Ascension, Saint Helena, and Tristan da Cunha, Réunion, and the Scattered Islands in the Indian Ocean), and South Africa itself. Occasionally Seychelles and the Democratic Republic of Congo are included in this list. Wallerstein and Vieira's periodization argues that the concept of "southern Africa" emerged out of the world-economic downturn of 1873-97 and as such, does not engage with the much more complex pre-colonial history of this area.

² For a clear overview of the Kondratieff cycle, see Wallerstein (1984).

After independence was achieved in 1975 for Angola and Mozambique, Marxist-Leninist regimes were established in each of these states, seeking to remedy the legacies of underdevelopment inherited from their semi-peripheral colonizers. The challenges faced by these newly independent states included wide scale illiteracy, a culturally segregated population, and a dearth of production infrastructure. However, in the face of a brutal destabilisation campaign launched by apartheid South Africa, rising international pressure from the IMF, World Bank, and the United States, and recalcitrant intra-ethnic tensions within the two states themselves, the Marxist-Leninist nation-building projects in Angola and Mozambique ran up against a set of insurmountable obstacles that would result in their ultimate demise, and which set the stage for the transition to neoliberal models of political economy in the final decades of twentieth century. During the late 1980s, accordingly, the Frelimo government in Mozambique grew increasingly more authoritarian, demanded ideological unilateralism from its cultural producers, and continued their tyrannical social-cleansing project of "reeducation" (Hall and Young 47-48). As the party stipulated economic policies of privatization and deregulation that sharply contrasted with their initial focus on rural collectivisation and the nationalization of industry, it paved the way for structural adjustment proper in the following decade (Hanlon, 113-22). In Angola, similarly, a group of "closet capitalists" conspired within the ranks of the ruling party, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), to manipulate residual administrative mechanisms as a means of deregulating the country's economy and concentrating its wealth within a new "oil *nomenklatura*," siphoning off large amounts of the national oil revenue for their own private gain (Hodges, 44-45).³ After the MPLA formally renounced their socialist orientation at the Third Party Congress of 1990, a social system was put in place founded upon neoliberal policies such as the deregulation of the local economy, the privatization of government-owned assets, and the devaluation of the local currency, leading to the consolidation of a practice of cronyism and opaqueness in the management of state resources that Christine Messiant has termed "clientelist redistribution" ("The Eduardo Santos Foundation"). This trajectory of neoliberal politics in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa, in which the non-aligned governments of Angola and Mozambique were reintegrated into a world-system headed by multinational finance capital, has been coincident with the patterned repetition of specific sets of aesthetic forms in the literary production of the two states.

The Spectral and Dystopian Turns

Towards the end of the 1980s in Mozambique, an upsurge of literary activity occurred that broke with the dominant discourse of ideological unilateralism to offer a new, critical perspective on the course of contemporary events, orbiting around cultural institutions such as the Associação de Escritores Moçambicanos (AEMO), and journal publications such as *Charrua* and *Forja*. In the words of Ubiratã Souza, the 1980s saw the emergence of a new generation of writers, who reinterpreted the literary achievements of their predecessors and in the process forged "*uma nova literatura, eminente em prosa, versando sobre a mais variada gama de assuntos, inaugurando uma literatura urbana, inovadora e absolutamente inventiva*": "a new literature, eminently in prose, dealing with a wide range of topics, inaugurating an urban literature, innovative and absolutely inventive" (72).⁴ Peter J. Maurits has observed that the majority of the literary works that appeared during this period demonstrate a receptiveness 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* in 1986 and continues over a four-year period until 1990, which saw the publication of texts such as Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa's *Orgia dos Loucos* (1990), Suleiman Cassamo's *O Regresso do Morto* (1989), Paulina Chiziane's *Balada de Amor ao Vento* (1990), and other texts by Aldino Muinaga, Aníbal Aleluia, and Helidoro Baptista, all of which are characterized by their use of tropes that draw from the modern ghost story. Maurits argues that this spectral turn in Mozambican literature indicates the moment of consolidation of "the Mozambican ghost story," and that its appearance towards the latter half of the civil war indicates an attempt to come to terms with the reintegration of Mozambique into a now neoliberalized world-system, and the processes of primitive accumulation through which this transition was achieved.

In the Angolan context, there is an analogous outburst of expression, albeit at a later date and spanning a greater period of activity. Beginning in 1995, there is a marked tendency in the country's

³ As Jean-Michel Mabeka-Tali demonstrated in his two-volume study of the MPLA from the outbreak of the anti-colonial war to the creation of the vanguard party structure in 1977, this sort of corruption emerged in the very first years of independence, as conservative factions of the party began to secure posts for their cronies in both the oil and diamond industries.

⁴ All translations in this paper are my own.

novelistic production towards dystopian images of apocalypse, ecological crisis, species extinction, and the future disintegration of existing modes of social reproduction. Ana Maria Mão-de-Ferro Martinho, in her periodisation of the shift from the more rapturous fictions of the anti-colonial struggle towards the literary skepticism of the 1990s, identifies this "dystopian turn" by speaking of a "disenchantment process" in Angolan literature "that is under evaluation from a dystopian perspective" (50). Key examples of this tendency include 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 mysteriously disappeared from the planet; 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 water-spirit tsunami in Pepetela's *O Desejo de Kianda* (1995); the postdiluvian world of Agualusa's adult-fiction novel *A Vida no Céu* (2013); and the momentous oil explosion that marks the finale of Ondjaki's maximalist novel *Os Transparentes* (2012). With its powerful visualizations of the social precarity and ecological fallout attendant on Angola's transition from Afro-Marxism to neoliberalism, the dystopian turn in Angolan literature bears a close affinity to the spectral turn in Mozambique, which was also concerned with registering the reintegration of Portuguese-speaking Africa into the neoliberal world-system. To this extent, it is possible to posit and fruitfully examine the structural similarities, and equivalence between both cultural phenomenon. In what follows, therefore, I offer a set of reflections that seek to understand how Mozambican and Angolan writers have used spectral and dystopian aesthetic forms to register the neoliberalisation of southern Africa. 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?

Spectres of Blood and Fire

While the spikes in spectral and dystopian fictions in the two states thus emerge as local responses to the same process of economic restructuring, they also correspond to very different phases of capitalist development within this broader historical framework. This paper argues, therefore, that, although the spectral and dystopian turns register a world-systemic horizon that encourages comparison between them as well as with other texts produced as analogous yet historically specific moments across the long spiral of capitalist history, they should also be read in light of the particular phase of neoliberalisation to which they belong. In Mozambique, for example, the same decade that witnessed the proliferation of spectral aesthetic forms was the latest phase of a period of primitive or original accumulation stretching back to the arrival of European colonial capitalist powers from the late-fifteenth century onwards. During this phase of primitive accumulation, 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 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-proletariat partially reliant on wage labor and the cash-nexus for its means of subsistence (see O'Laughlin). 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, over a period beginning with the Kondratieff A-phase running from 1897 to 1913/20, 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 labor for coal and gold mining complexes at Witwatersrand and the Transvaal (First, "Subdesenvolvimento"; First et al.). In order to exert downward pressure on the price of labor power and thus maximize the extraction of surplus value, the Portuguese colonial regime and its South African partners sought to keep these semi-proletarian migrant laborers tied to the land, through redistributive modes of social reproduction that would externalize the costs of maintaining the workforce onto gendered labor and the *machamba* "family plot" instead of the infrastructural circuits of national or regional capitalism (Abrahamsson and Nilsson, 21; Wuyts). In Mozambique, this new moment of formal subsumption marks a stage of primitive accumulation in which

the expropriation of agricultural populations is met with the superimposition of capitalist wage labor onto the pre-existing labor process.⁵

Crucially, Mozambican writers during the 1980s attempted to register this legacy of colonial underdevelopment and its role in the transition to neoliberalism in the country by means of spectral and broadly gothic aesthetic strategies that codified the culture of uncertainty of the period into their texts at the level of form, through the figure of the ghostly returning miner, who occupies an ambivalent ontological position at the borderline between life and death. Early texts such as Orlando Mendes' episodic novel *Portagem* (1966) had been effective in describing the plight of the "magaíças"—"cross-border migrant laborers" who were subjected to perilous working conditions and structurally underpaid—but Mendes' text ultimately seemed pessimistic as to the chances of actually overthrowing Portuguese colonialism and instituting majority rule.⁶ Similarly, Noémia de Sousa's poem "Magaíça" (1950), although indignant regarding the injustices involved in the colonial system of migrant labor, describes the itinerant miners with adjectives such as "mamparra"—"childlike"—and verbs like "entontecer", with its connotations of silliness and stupidity, thus lending her poem's speaker an at-times demeaning quality (84).⁷ Towards the late 1980s, however, writers began to register the colonial history of mining labor in a new way that restores a sense of dignity to the *magaíças*, but the spectral register in which these new fictions were cast also serves to intimate the rise of class tensions that accompanied the establishment of the new national bourgeoisie. In Aldino Muianga's short-story collection *Xitala Mati* (1987), the miners are repeatedly cast in ghostly terms as occupying a space between life and death, while the land itself is often endowed with anthropomorphic and phantasmagoric qualities that enact a surreal protest against the disruptive socio-ecological effects attendant on the terraforming violence of capitalist extractivism, such as in "O Caso Muzila," where "a terra revolveu-se, rugiu e abateu-se com fragor, num violento protesto contra a profanação à paz secular das suas entranhas"—"the land began to churn, roaring and pining with an explosion, in a violent protest against the profanity committed against the secular peace of its entrails" (32). In "O Filho de Mussassane," this irrealist register is extended to the description of a spectral miner named Mussassane, who returns to his hometown after years spent down the mines in Witwatersrand, where he was able to amass a small fortune. Although South Africa is presented here in the exotic light of adventure and conquest (14), the mines are nevertheless described as hellish and dangerous, and Mussassane returns with a serious case of phthisis. When he arrives back at his hometown, the local villagers are shocked by Mussassane's wretched condition, which undercuts the mood of respectful exaltation with a foreboding and melancholy air:

O corpo de Mussassane, metido num fato de macaco de ganga coçado e largo, contorce-se num bailado singular. As pernas são finas e angulosas. Levanta muito os joelhos pontiagudos e pisa com mil cuidados, como se ferissem as asperezas do chão "...". Arfa, tosse com muito ruído e leva a mão ao peito, no gesto instintivo e inútil de acalmar as pontadas. E a vida foge-lhe aos poucos nas borras vermelho-escuras de saliva que lhe caem junto ao pés.

Mussassane's figure, in scuffed and large denim overalls, contorts in a strange dance. His legs are thin and bony. He raises his pointy knees and steps carefully, as if the roughness of the path would injure them. He gasps, coughs loudly, and raises his hand to his chest, in the instinctive and useless gesture of calming the attacks. And life left him but by bit, with the sludge of dark red saliva that fell by his feet. (14-15)

Mussassane's noble reputation in his village is in this way belied by his wasted physique, as an ambivalent mood is established that combines grandeur with pathos, independence with degradation, esteem with decay.

Cognisant of his imminent death, Mussassane then summons all the village elders to his cabin, and an eerie, quasi-gothic atmosphere takes hold of the text: "o ar é de mistério, quase de encantamento"—"the air is mysterious, almost enchanting" (16). Mussassane then confronts those present with a bizarre request: "Quando eu morrer quero que me enterrem com o meu dinheiro. Com todo o meu dinheiro"—"When I die I want to be buried with my money. With all my money" (16). Sighs of disappointment follow from those who had hoped to inherit some of Mussassane's vast wealth, which is so great it would

⁵ Indeed, as Carlos Nuno Castel-Branco has argued, the history of capital accumulation in Mozambique from colonialism to structural adjustment is almost identical to the Marxian concept of primitive accumulation (259).

⁶ As Brookshaw and Maurits have suggested, the ambivalent pessimism of Mendes' text can in part be understood as a way of avoiding the colonial censors and ensuring the novel's publication.

⁷ For an excellent reading of Sousa's poem, see Helgesson 260-61.

enable its inheritor to purchase all of the lands and cattle of the village. After his death, Mussassane is buried according to his request, but the night after the burial, a thief approaches the grave and attempts to disinter Mussassane's corpse in order to steal his riches. Convincing himself of the ethics of the undertaking, the thief successfully begins to retrieve the gold coins, when he is stopped in his tracks by a supernatural occurrence: "*Num intrigante espasmo, a boca do defunto cerra-se com um ruído seco e entala os dedos do violador*"—"In a beguiling convulsion, the mouth of the dead man closes with a dry noise and traps the fingers of the thief" (19). The unreal quality of the passage, in which the old man rises from the dead in order to protect his riches, functions as a satirical comment on the madness of hoarding itself, which mistakes exchange value for use value by assuming that money has intrinsic worth. Just as Mussassane's attachment to his material wealth extends beyond the expiry of his physical form, so the hoarder "sacrifices the lusts of his flesh for the fetish of gold" (Marx 231). However, in light of the 1980s conjuncture out of which Muianga is writing, this satire of a village noble who is so attached to his money hoard that he insists on being buried with it, and will rise from the dead just to ensure its protection, cannot but call to mind the emergence of a national bourgeoisie in Mozambique towards the end of this decade, which had its own irrational attachment to the accumulation of wealth, as Carlos Nuno-Castel Branco suggests when he wryly characterizes this emergent Mozambican class as "*proprietários sem capital*"—"owners without capital" (284-85).⁸

This relationship between migrant labor, village nobility, and the fetish of material wealth is taken up in several other spectral literary texts of the period, such as Aníbal Aleluia's short story "O Regresso do Soba," from his impressive collection *Contos do Fantástico* (1988). Here the prestige gained through periods of contract work is cast as ultimately corrupting, in what manifests as a muted comment on the seeds of corruption growing within the *politburo* of the Frelimo leadership of the time. As Aleluia's narrator prophetically warns: "*A felicidade pode traumatizar. A alegria pode matar*"—"fortune can traumatize. Happiness can kill" (150). Like Mussassane, the story's protagonist, Mucarala, builds a reputation for himself working in the South African mines. Seeking out fame and fortune in the villages surrounding the mining complex, Mucarala rises to the position of *régulo* ("chief"), where he has at his disposal new forms of material wealth and symbolic power that have a degenerative effect on his psyche and ethical values. Despite the narrator's cautionary excursus on the corruption of power, Mucarala is wholly given over to the power of corruption: "*Eram milhares os seus súbditos. Possuía gado, machambas, mulheres. Disporia do poder que conferia direito ao uso do rebenque, à cobrança de alcavalas, à extorsão de benesses*"—"He had thousands of subjects. He possessed cattle, *machambas* [arable plots], women. He used his power to grant himself the right of using the whip, collecting taxes, extorting goods" (151). In his newfound state of moral degeneracy, Mucarala fails to recognise himself in his actions and feels dissociated: "*era outro que não ele*"—"he was another that wasn't himself" (151). One day, a traveler turns up at the community looking for work and accommodation, but Mucarala suddenly loses his temper and, stimulated by a potent mix of *fenim* ("aguardiente") and *mbanguê* ("cannabis sativa"), mercilessly beats the man to death. A host of bad spirits are thereby released in the area, and the village witchdoctor informs Mucarala that he must pay for the crime he has committed against the unknown outsider. This news plunges Mucarala into a period of crisis. He becomes demoralized, people turn against him, and he eventually passes away. After his death, however, Mucarala's spirit returns to haunt the local mining community, inspiring a sense of fear and dread in all who live there. The words that Mucarala had uttered to the outsider as he beat him to death sweep across the land as a disembodied and otherworldly presence: "*Você não é de bater, hein? Você não é de bater, hein?*"—"you're not one for fighting, hey? You're not one for fighting?" (162). The land is thus quite literally haunted by the spirit of violence and corruption. Published only a year after *Xitala Mati*, Aleluia's short story also mobilizes spectral aesthetics as a means of registering the rise in class tensions that will unfold across the course of the rest of the decade. The disembodied voice of Mucarala in "O Regresso do Soba" acts as a fictional analogue to the "*onda de privatizações*"—"wave of privatisations" (Castel-Branco 285) that transformed the ruins of the Marxist-Leninist nation-building project into an emergent neoliberal capitalist society, restructuring the economic landscape of the country. Corruption, wealth, greed: these are symptoms of the neoliberal turn in southern Africa that Mozambican writers

⁸ As Joseph Hanlon has argued, the emergent national bourgeoisie in late-1980s Mozambique was "entirely dependent on foreigners" and had "a vested interest in the donors staying and in the continuation of IMF involvement, privatization, and structural adjustment" (226). 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 in *The Wretched of the Earth*, whereby the national bourgeois became a "transmission line" between the nation-state and foreign capitalist investors (122).

anticipated and critiqued through the use of ghostly and broadly gothic fictional techniques during the moment of primitive accumulation in the late 1980s, when the foundations of neoliberalism were first being set in place.

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 reorganization 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. 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 the female population's reproductive rights were brutally suppressed through the manipulation of rising cultural fears over witchcraft, devil worship, and rituals of the occult. Following Maurits, to read the proliferation of spectral forms in Mozambican literature as an aesthetic registration of the country's reintegration into the neoliberal world-system is consistent with a broader trend in world-cultural production whereby monstrous, 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 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. 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.

Almost the End of the World

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 inadequate provision of social welfare and manifold human-rights violations. 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 the civil war in Angola in such a way as to render a whole class of citizens effectively "trapped in poverty" (Tvedten and Lázaro 4). The massive influx of global capital flows engendered by the deregulation of Angola's oil sector, in its turn, led to the formation of a new oil *nomenklatura* that siphoned off the national oil revenue for their own private gain (Hodges 44-45). 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 sector in Angola is now characterized by a situation in which "neither the oil nor most of the money it brings in ever touches Angolan soil" (35; 194-210). The pattern of class stratification that 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 privatization 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 widening class inequalities, institutionalized corruption, and intensified ecological violence attendant on this very transition have been fully brought the fore.

Just as Mozambican writers during the long-1980s had turned to spectral aesthetic strategies in order to register the emergent process of neoliberal transition, so have Angolan writers of the neoliberal era deployed the literary dystopia as a means of coming to terms with the creatively destructive impact of global capital on the local landscape. José Eduardo Agualusa's adult-fiction novel *A Vida no Céu* (2013), for example, is set in an eco-apocalyptic future in which the entirety of the earth's surface has been

submerged under water after a catastrophic deluge has forced the few remaining survivors to migrate to the sky. Recalling the finale of Pepetela's earlier novel *O Desejo de Kianda* (1995), where the Kimbundu water-spirit Kianda causes a tsunami that floods the razed remains of a Luanda in ruins, as well as, in a more distant way, the apocalyptic oil explosion that marks the climax of Ondjaki's sprawling novel *Os Transparentes* (2012), *A Vida no Céu* constructs an environmental allegory that comments upon the ongoing devastation of life and land in post-independence Angola, whereby an intensification of modes of energetic extraction has led to the degradation of local ecosystems. However, unlike these earlier novels, *A Vida no Céu* is set *after* the apocalyptic event, and as such introduces the theme of societal reconstruction, albeit in a tentative and ambivalent way, as the last survivors of humanity must relocate to the sky where they take up residence in gigantic zeppelins:

Depois que o mundo acabou fomos para o céu. O grande desastre — o Dilúvio — aconteceu há mais de trinta anos. O mar cresceu e engoliu a terra. A temperatura à superfície tornou-se intolerável. Em poucos meses fabricaram-se centenas de enormes dirigíveis. Entre os maiores estão o Xangai, com cinquenta mil habitantes, e o New York, o São Paulo e o Tokio, cada qual com vinte mil. As famílias mais pobres, sem meios para comprar apartamentos nessas cidades flutuantes, contruíram balões, a que chamamos balsas, muitos deles rudimentares.

After the world ended we went to the sky. The great disaster—the Deluge—happened over thirty years ago. The sea grew and engulfed the land. The temperature on the surface became intolerable. In a few months hundreds of enormous airships were built. Among the biggest were Shanghai, with fifty thousand inhabitants, a New York, São Paulo and Tokyo, each with twenty thousand. The poorest families, without the means to buy apartments in these floating cities, built balloons, which we call barges, many of them rudimentary. (15)

"It seems to be easier for us today," Fredric Jameson once wrote, "to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and nature than the breakdown of late capitalism" (xii), and indeed here Agualusa's novel would appear to corroborate Jameson's insight as the world-ending event of a biblical deluge is seen, not to break with the existing order of capitalist power, but only to reinscribe it within the defamiliarised space of cities in the sky. The current international network of urban cores and peripheries is, in this way, projected beyond the collapse of the system that reproduces it, and the worst of its structural effects are cast in transhistorical terms as immune to either remedy or abolition. There are, for example, "*bandos de marginais*," "groups of marginals" who are excluded from the wealth of the cities, and who roam around as pirates trying to commandeer stray ships and barges, while swaths of clandestine passengers are similarly persecuted for the mere fact of being illegal. Among the various ships themselves—each of whose names have an analogue in the old world that is supposed to have been transcended—an inequality reigns that mirrors that of the old terrestrial capitalist society. Meanwhile, the flooded earth itself is reduced to "*uma irrealidade paralela*," "a parallel irreality" (19), which serves as a mere graveyard into which the corpses of those who have died in the sky are thrown as if into oblivion. As the narrator comments later in the novel, "*para a maioria dos filhos do céu, a terra é uma fantasia dos velhos. Para os velhos é um sonho no qual eles próprios já não acreditam*"—"for the majority of children of the sky, the land is a fantasy of the elders. For the elders it is a dream in which they themselves no longer believe" (45). At the heart of Agualusa's novel is thus a productive tension: on the one hand, there is an ecological consciousness that is acutely sensitive to the destructive impact of anthropogenic climate change; on the other, the text is pervaded by an encroaching sense of disillusionment towards the possibilities for addressing this environmental crisis, as well as towards the futures to which it is likely to give rise.

Pepetela's novel *O Quase Fim do Mundo* (2008) engages with much the same themes as it imagines a post-apocalyptic world confronted with problems of scarcity and societal reconstruction. Set in the fictional location of Calpe at the intersection of the Nile, Congo, and Zambezi rivers in central Africa, the text begins with the narration of a mysterious event in which all signs of biotic and abiotic life have been wiped off the surface of the planet, leaving only a small, ragtag group of survivors—including a doctor, a communist thief, a religious fundamentalist, and a gorilla specialist from the United States—with the ostensible task of rebuilding the world, so that the novel is accordingly shot through with what one of its protagonists calls the "*esperança de reconstrução do que fora antes*"—"hope of the reconstruction of the past" (141). The radical step of Pepetela's speculative fiction is to take seriously the idea of wide scale societal change, as Philip Rothwell suggests when he notes that, in *O Quase Fim do Mundo*, "the dominance of the Law of capitalism—both symbolic and judicial—has been suspended" (131). While the majority of the text unfolds within this zone of suspension, daringly confronting the issues of cooperation and mutual aid that necessarily arise within periods of large-scale social collapse, the climax of the novel reveals the cause of the mysterious extinction event—what the characters can only refer to as "*a coisa*"

("the thing") (22)—to be the work of a religious group of white supremacists in Europe. One of the survivors in Calpe, Jan Dipenaar, is an ex-pilot from South Africa who proceeds to teach the others how to fly so that they can visit other areas of the world and see if there are more survivors like themselves. Upon arrival in Europe, however, what they discover is a sect of racist zealots in a bunker in the Austrian alps who have devised an elaborate plan to rid the world of "impure" races and leave only those with "superior" white DNA behind. Yet, a fault in the execution of their plan, results in the elimination not only of everyone in their sect but of the majority of humanity itself: in the blind passion of their racism, they had forgotten to extend the destruction beam to Africa, sparing a small group of survivors in the center of the continent whose story the novel is dedicated to telling. Nevertheless, as in Agualusa's novel *A Vida no Céu*, there is also a marked ecological consciousness to Pepetela's novel that deals imaginatively with the problem of species and resource extinction. By setting his novel in a dystopian future devoid of almost all living creatures, Pepetela reflects on the pattern of environmental destruction that is codified into the logic of capital accumulation—the destruction of human and extra-human local habitats, the extinction of animal species brought about by deforestation and toxification—and takes it to its logical extreme. The characters are continually faced with the problem of allocating scarce resources, of looking after the vulnerable in times of crisis, and as such the novel addresses some of the most pressing questions for the current era of global ecological turmoil and the sixth mass extinction. However, just as the theme of climate change and ecology in *A Vida no Céu* was shot through with a pervasive sense of capitalist realism, so does the finale of *O Quase Fim do Mundo* resort to a pessimistic outlook on the chances of rebuilding society in a more just and equitable way. On the eve of their return to Calpe in central Africa, the survivors begin to speak of the problem of reorganizing and managing production to cater for their incipient community, which has begun to welcome other survivors from nearby. After one of the survivors asks whether their group will have preferential access to the means of subsistence, Dipenaar replies in a way that seems to suggest that relations of domination are unavoidable if not a fact of nature: "*Apoiou com a cabeça, é isso mesmo que vai acontecer, sempre foi assim, uns trabalham, outros mandam*"—"he nodded his head, this is precisely what is going to happen, it was always this way, some work, others rule" (376).

As Agualusa's and Pepetela's novels engage with ecological themes of abundance (deluge) and scarcity (extinction), they respond to the destructive effects of capitalist development in neoliberal Angola. 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 function as "insistent barometers of the contradictions of global capitalism and of the impending crises of ecocide and irreversible climate change" (195). Thus in Mexico, for example, Miguel López-Lozano has shown how "dramatic images of the eco-apocalypse" reappear in the fiction of writers such as Carlos Fuentes and Carmen Boullosa, where they are employed to critique both "the impact of neoliberal policies on indigenous communities and "the detrimental effects of industrialization on the environment" (231). Lawrence Buell has claimed in more general terms that the trope of the apocalypse is "the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal" (285). The dystopian imaginary of much recent Angolan fiction can be seen to voice a similar sort of collective anxiety in its registration of the ecological fallout of the country's transition from Afro-Marxism to free-market capitalism. Kristin Reed has noted at length the degradation of ecosystems 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 (44-69). 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. In this sense, the motifs of architectural destruction, societal collapse, and climate catastrophe that have permeated Angolan fiction since the mid-1990s—even when inflected with the pessimism and capitalist realism that lies within Pepetela's and Agualusa's novels—are just as much expressions of the literary protest against the post-independence turn of events as they are indices of the same neoliberal transition that has determined the experiences of (semi-)peripheral societies throughout the capitalist world-system.

By encoding the contradictions of capitalist development—abundance/scarcity, hope/despair, disintegration/reconstruction—in the figure of the literary dystopia, Angolan writers have sought to come to terms with the neoliberalisation of southern Africa, just as Mozambican writers of the late 1980s had responded to the violence of the phase of primitive accumulation that precluded the transition to

neoliberalism through spectral narrative strategies that blur the line between life and death. However, while Mozambican writers of the spectral turn sought to capture the "ontological uncertainty" (Waller 93-110) that prevailed within the transitional economic conjuncture in which they were writing, deploying the literary figure of the ghost as a topos with which to register and critique the collapse of the Marxist-Leninist nation-building project, the texts of the dystopian turn in Angolan literature engage with environmental themes that span a much larger period of capitalist history. The uneven politics of resource extractivism in Angola, for example, cannot be limited to the era of neoliberalism and multi-party democracy in the country, but are rather embedded in a *longue-durée* timeframe that can be traced back (at least) to the Kondratieff B-phase of 1873-97 in which inter-imperialist competition led to the intensification of settler colonialism in southern Africa and the development of the oil and diamond industries in Angola. The spectral Mozambican texts of the late 1980s, on the other hand, offer aesthetic registrations of the much more specific process of the dissolution of the Marxist-Leninist state apparatus and the emergence of neoliberal forms of political economy in Mozambique. Yet, insofar as this parallel trajectory of Marxist-Leninist decline and neoliberalisation is also characteristic of Angolan society in the post-independence era, spectrality in late-1980s Mozambican literature speaks to a much broader, regional economic reality in southern Africa that includes the Angolan experience, while its affinity with the gothic genre suggests a world-cultural comparison with monstrous, otherworldly, or irrealist texts produced at analogous moments across the long spiral of capitalist history where primitive accumulation had also been prominent. Similarly, the more expansive extractivist thematic underpinning the Angolan dystopian novel registers the opening up of the Angolan economy to the influx of multinational capital. As such, it comments on the ecological effects of this process of neoliberalisation on practices of resource extraction throughout southern Africa, including the recent discovery of globally significant quantities of oil and natural gas in and off the coast of Mozambique, which looks set to produce an intensification of the extractives economy in the country over the course of the 2020s. In this way, the geo-temporal passage from spectrality to dystopia maps the emergence of neoliberal modes of postcolonial governance in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa and anticipates its possible futures.

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