

Ana Paula Coutinho, Maria de Fátima Outeirinho and José Domingues de Almeida (eds.) (2014), *Nos et leurs Afriques. Constructions littéraires des identités africaines cinquante ans après les décolonisations*. Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 249 pp.

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## RECENSÕES

**ANA PAULA COUTINHO, MARIA DE FÁTIMA OUTEIRINHO AND JOSÉ DOMINGUES DE ALMEIDA (EDS.) (2014), *NOS ET LEURS AFRIQUES. CONSTRUCTIONS LITTERAIRES DES IDENTITES AFRICAINES CINQUANTE ANS APRES LES DECOLONISATIONS*. BRUXELLES: PETER LANG, 249 PP.**

This important book explores the plurality of identities (or better, their *polyphony*) at work in Lusophone, Francophone and Anglophone African literature. At the core of its analysis are ‘representations’ of Africa and its gendered and racialized identities, forged *by* the former colonial metropole, *from* its colonial culture. The essays focus on both written and visual texts (mostly cinema and novels), where these ‘images’ are constructed and unravelled through a critique that targets both Europe’s inherent and Africa’s inherited colonial mind. They explore the image of the Self and its Others: whether the Self corresponds to the colonial metropole and its Others to ‘its’ Africas, or Africa is the Self, and its Others are the different ‘whites’ – European, or Western – inhabiting the former colonial metropole or its former colonies.

All the essays in this collection show a tension with the ‘postcolonial *doxa*’, where a certain simplification of Bhabha’s idea of ‘negotiation’ is seen as losing the sense of the violence and the conflict still shaping the so called post-colonial world. Instead, the authors of these essays, in line with the postcolonial approach, try to trace the multiplicity of narratives composing the personal and collective living mosaic of the fictional figures through which novelists and movie directors depict their Africa.

The attention paid to “les différentes perspectives et sensibilités thématiques, stylistiques et culturelles” allows a reading of the different positionings of authors and characters in their precolonial and colonial past, postcolonial present and future that shades a light on the variety of approaches, levels of awareness, and critiques to former and present responsibilities for the violence that African countries experienced before and after their decolonisation.

The volume opens with Paulo de Medeiros' "Como lobos" focusing on *Angola, Saudades de quem te ama* (2006), by Angolan Richard Pakleppa: in this movie, images of an Africa "urbanas e rurais, do passado, presente e possível futuro" are demystified, while the simple binarism between idealised and real life, atrocity and beauty, ruins and luxury are problematised. Following Achille Mbembe, Paulo de Medeiros reflects on the ideological use of the images of Africa, and consequently on "o risco de ser afogado precisamente naquilo e por aquilo que se pretende denunciar e dismantelar" (p. 19). Cinema is also at the core of Manuela Ribeiro Sanches' essay, where the question 'cinema anticolonial, leituras pós-coloniais?' tailors a fine critique to simplifying 'postcolonial' reading of post-colonial texts: discussing *Afrique sur Seine* (1954), she argues for the (re)evaluation of the 'anticolonial' charge of those texts, and of their violent binary understanding of the colonial world Fanonianly understood as divided between colonizers and colonized subalterns.

In his essay, David Murphy focuses on the two *Festival mondial des arts nègres* held in Dakar respectively in 1966 and 2010, in order to understand the different uses of the idea of African Renaissance – and *négritude*, together with the importance assigned to African literature now and then – in the time of decolonisation and in our days.

Acknowledging a diachronic opposition between colonial conceptions that 'unify and simplify' the colonial world, and the irreducible differences inhabiting the latter, Marc Quaghebeur deconstructs ideas of a united Francophone world, bringing to light an important bunk of literature from Congo and Burundi.

The Ivorian novelist Ahmadou Kourouma is at the core of José Domingues de Almeida's essay: in confronting *Les soleils des indépendances* (1976) with the more recent *En attendant le vote des bête sauvages* (1998), and *Allah n'est pas obligé* (2000), the author aims to acknowledge the importance of literary production for a political, social and historical critique that targets those responsible for Africa's present violence and misery – be they colonial or African.

A gendered gaze is then taken up by Vesna Cakeljic in discussing the 'image de l'Afrique en contexte de migration' in French Marie Ndiaye's novel *Trois femmes puissantes*, which forges a counter- and epic (although – the author notes – a little too hagiographic) narrative for three female black 'heroes' of our time.

As that of Cakeljic, many other essays of the collection focus on *movement*, whether the latter is intended as a gaze *in movement through spaces* (Maria de Fátima Outeirinho) able to capture Africa's contemporary complexities; a 'decentering' process that re-signifies stories of the 'Return' of individuals and families back to Portugal after the decolonisation of its African colonies (Ana Margarida Fonseca); a change of

perspective that allows a different viewpoint in narrating male migratory experiences of our days, and the encounter with their ‘white’ Others (Isabel Moutinho); a ‘merging process’ within a language (Portuguese) able to envisage a nonconflictual and inclusive symbolic community founded on the *common* “lengua” (Isabel Pires de Lima); or, finally, a movement between stages of life that reconfigure characters’ power relations along race and gender lines in a postcolonial situation (this is the case of 2004 Mozambican João Paulo Borges Coelho’s novel *As visitas do Dr. Valdez* explored by Leonor Simas-Almeida).

A particular story related to ‘shifting perspectives’ is that described in *Praia Lisboa* by Portuguese Henrique Levy (2010) and discussed by Maria do Carmo Mendes. In this book, a postcolonial love encounter between two women – a white Portuguese and a mixed-race Capeverdian – in the scenario of a violently racist and sexist Cape Verde, disrupts ideas of ‘a mitigated colonialism’ in the case of the Portuguese Empire.

The polyphony enabled by a gendered perspective is also fostered by a children’s perspective. In her essay on Congolese Alain Mabanckou and Angolan Ondjaki, Ana Paula Coutinho shows how the children’s gaze is necessary to represent a variety of aspects of a post-colonial reality *in transformation*, and how it functions as a “manifestação daquilo que continua em suspenso, à imagem da infância que é, como Ondjaki lembra, ‘um punto cardenal eternamente possível’” (p. 129).

The ‘movement’ between colonial and postcolonial times and geographies *à la recherche de la polyphonie* expressed in this collection ends with Rodah Sechele-Nthapelelang’s essay on *Le baigneurs du Lac Rose* (by Ivorian Tanella Boni, 1995). The book concludes with Lola Geraldine Xavier’s descriptive essay on the uses of Lusophone, Francophone, and Anglophone African contemporary literature in education.

Gaia Giuliani

**ANGOLA: POESIA E PROSA, REVISTA TEXTOS & PRETEXTOS, N.º 19, 2015, 220 PP.\***

Fruto de uma parceria com a União de Escritores Angolanos e com o apoio da Embaixada de Angola em Portugal, o volume *Angola: Poesia e Prosa* reúne contributos de um conjunto de investigadores/as conceituados/as na área da literatura

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