


ARTICLE

## The Eurocentric Constant: An Approach to the Study of Mozambican Literature

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### Abstract

The study of Mozambican literature is present at various latitudes within the academic world. There are, however, different outlooks and interests that must be analyzed if we want to account for the epistemologies present when facing a postcolonial reality such as Mozambique. On the understanding that literary texts are codified cultural information and that academics function as legitimators of discourses, this article offers an analysis of a corpus of academic publications on Mozambican literature published between 1975 and 2018. It posits thereby the possible existence of a Eurocentric constant within academic knowledge production and proposes some paths of action that may be of relevant pedagogical and self-reflective potentiality to the investigative exercise itself.

**Keywords:** Mozambican literature; epistemology; academy

### The Eurocentric Constant: An Approach to the Study of Mozambican Literature

The topic of his article is the study of Mozambican literature—who studies it and how it is studied. This implies an engagement with a number of different hypotheses, coordinates, and chronologies. The main aim, however, is to find out what kind of views are formed about Mozambique by focusing on academic texts that study its literary system. To what extent do these views promote and strengthen the autonomy of a territory in the global south and whose processes of independence and decolonization are still relatively recent and marked also by neocolonialism.<sup>1</sup> We start, in fact, from a hypothesis based on a historical

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<sup>1</sup> See Lavinia Gasperini, *Moçambique: educação e desenvolvimento rural* (Roma: Edizioni Lavoro/ISCOS, 1989).

prejudice inherited from colonialism and the low quality of life of Mozambicans:<sup>2</sup> that neocolonialism weighs heavily on the country and influences the perspectives adopted when talking about literature of this country.

My methodology is mainly empirical and quantitative. Using statistical tools, this allows me to contrast data systematically and thus present assumptions or hypotheses for verification, as well as establishing relationships and interrelationships among the data.

## The Academy and Power

I am dealing here with two concrete components within the literary institution: the academic text and the literary scholar as a social actor. Both are crucial in order to understand the places that literary texts occupy in culture and the repertoires that are formed from them. As Pierre Bourdieu proposes, these two elements—academic texts and social agents—are inserted in an institution that is configured as a field of power within society. For the French researcher, a field operates with specific laws and on the basis of a relation structure of struggles between agents and institutions, which, in the case of the academy, form and institutionalize a constant tension between the production of knowledge and the control of knowledge.<sup>3</sup> The academy functions thereby as an entity with the power, albeit increasingly limited and diluted, to impose its cultural norms on society.<sup>4</sup> The reason for this is that social actors in the academy select the works that will be preserved or achieve greater social representation. The academy is hence not only a place of diffusion and transmission. Rather, the very existence of consecrated works and of rules that define and model tastes turns it into an institution of legitimation and consecration.

Furthermore, I intend to offer some perspectives on social actors who have been dealing with Mozambican literary texts. This may contribute to understanding how the academy works also within Mozambique, which texts and which repertoires are consecrated, what is the consecrating role of Mozambican academics and how far their production reaches. A question of particular interest is how much of an overlap there is between the interests of Mozambican researchers and of outsiders. More concretely: does the “agenda” of Mozambican literary studies outside Mozambique coincide with interests in the Mozambican academic field? We might also remember that when talking about Mozambique we are dealing with a space that is completely peripheral in relation to the West—the hegemonic seat of legitimate knowledge and (relatively speaking) of capitalist dynamics.

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<sup>2</sup> See Wilson Domingos, *A herança neocolonial portuguesa em moçambique: (1885–1975): Desenvolvimento ou estagnação?* (Faculty Presidente Venceslau, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Bourdieu in *Questions de sociologie* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1984) claims that fields present themselves to synchronic apprehension as structured spaces of positions whose properties depend on their position in these spaces and which can be analyzed independently of the characteristics of their occupants (in part determined by them).

<sup>4</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu, *Campo de poder, campo intelectual* (Montessor, 2002).

My epistemological and ideological coordinates take into account in this way certain geopolitical notions, starting from the hypothesis that there is a certain conservatism in academic knowledge that makes it necessary to revise Eurocentric concepts and their neocolonial echoes.<sup>5</sup> This article attempts, in other words, to consider critically whether the cultures and epistemic perspectives of ex-colonized peoples are legitimized and to what extent they are made visible or accessible in the Eurocentric project and product of modernity.

In subaltern studies and postcolonial theorization, the focus lies on the rejection of the cognitive and socio-cultural legacies of colonialism, such as Eurocentrism, considered as an epistemic stance, as well as the questioning within the connections among power, knowledge, and territorial distribution of the world, with Europe at its center. The pretension of objectivity and universality of the forms of knowledge institutionalized as “sciences” in the course of the process of colonial subjugation of the world also enters the debate, as does the geocultural decentering of the locus of enunciation of knowledge, from the West to other postcolonial spaces.

Theorists such as Paulo Medeiros point out as indispensable the refusal of European nostalgia and the acceptance of the postcolonial reality of a Europe that must rethink itself, rejecting methodological dichotomies between colonizer and colonized, as well as the assumption that Europe itself is post-imperial.<sup>6</sup> For her part, Ana Mafalda Leite, when talking about the function of the academic as producer/legitimator, states:

The question of the academic’s responsibility, when vouchsafing the expressive “subjectivity” of the subaltern, leads ultimately to the promotion of their own subalternity, to the extent that its representation amounts to a substitution and an exoticization, hence to yet another act of silencing, or to the absolute unrepresentability and absence of that subjectivity.<sup>7</sup>

The challenges and ambitions of postcolonial studies and its variants face enormous contradictions. We refer to the idea of a subalternity of all knowledge produced outside Europe, to an “asymmetrical ignorance” that characterizes the relations between knowledge arising in the first and third world. As Fernando Coronil points out, “Postcolonialism did not sufficiently recognize the persistence of neocolonialism, imperialism and structures of dependency.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Elias Torres Feijó, *Pensar a Literatura no séc. XXI* (Braga: Publicações da Faculdade de Filosofia Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 2011), 241–56.

<sup>6</sup> See Paulo Medeiros’s article “7 passos (para pensar uma Europa pós-imperial),” in *Narrativa Pós-colonial I. Angola e Moçambique*, eds. Ana Mafalda Leite et al. (Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 2012), 323–38.

<sup>7</sup> My translation. Ana Mafalda Leite, *Cenografias Pós-Coloniais & Estudos sobre literatura moçambicana* (Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 2018), 23: “A questão prende-se antes com a responsabilidade do académico que, ao garantir ao subalterno ‘uma subjetividade’ expressiva, acaba por promover deliberadamente a sua subalternidade, na medida em que a sua representação consiste na sua substituição e exotização, mais uma vez no seu silenciamento, ou na sua total irrepresentabilidade e ausência.”

<sup>8</sup> “The End of Postcolonial Theory? A Roundtable with Sunil Agnai, Fernando Coronil, Gaurav Desai, Mamadou Diouf, Susie Tharu and Jennifer Wenzel,” *PMLA* 122.3 (2007): 642.

## Cultural Diplomacy: The Gaze of the Other

Besides the aforementioned academic practices, another form of power in relation to the production of knowledge is also needed: cultural diplomacy. If we understand that cultural diplomacy, acting in the exchange of ideas and information, is fundamental for the mutual understanding of people and nations, we will see how, in terms of culture, the relations between systems are configured and apply—in a positive case—concepts implicit in the theoretical framework of this field.

Examining concretely the case of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) we see how cultural diplomacy plays a fundamental role within international relations, influencing both the way in which others see it and the ways in which it constructs itself. Cultural diplomacy can be fruitful as long as the knowledge of the Other is mutual, providing a dialogue that implies equity between the spaces that participate in it.

As a result, the declarations will often fall well short of the realities. In 2021, the CPLP, for example, defined itself as “a privileged multilateral forum for deepening mutual friendship and cooperation between its members.” Created on July 17, 1996, it is governed by the principles of:

Sovereign equality between its member states; non-interference in the internal affairs of each state; respect for each others’ national identity; reciprocity; the primacy of peace, of democracy, of the rule of law, of human rights and social justice; respect for territorial integrity; promotion of development; promotion of mutually beneficial cooperation.<sup>9</sup>

Contrary to these challenges, however, Elias Torres highlights the historical, social, economic, and cultural asymmetry of the Lusophone world (already the use of this denomination invites dissent, as is known), suggesting that it inevitably carries with it imperial or neocolonial echoes.<sup>10</sup>

On the basis of these orientations, we ask ourselves here, therefore, in terms of what Feijó calls the intersystem and focusing on the scope of academic studies, whether there is a critical mass of studies focusing on Mozambique and, given also the decolonizing and decentering challenges of postcolonial studies, whether it aims at minimizing hegemonic tendencies and relationships.

## Corpus: Establishment and Management

The primary material for this article was gathered by conducting database searches of academic texts focusing on Mozambican literary texts, including

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<sup>9</sup> My translation. CPLP. *Comunidade de Países de Língua Portuguesa*, (<https://www.cplp.org/id-2763.aspx>): “igualdade soberana dos Estados membros; não-ingerência nos assuntos internos de cada estado; respeito pela sua identidade nacional; reciprocidade de tratamento; primado da paz, da democracia, do estado de direito, dos direitos humanos e da justiça social; respeito pela sua integridade territorial; Promoção do desenvolvimento; promoção da cooperação mutuamente vantajosa.”

<sup>10</sup> See Elias Torres Feijó, “Estudos da literatura e da cultura no âmbito da língua portuguesa e diplomacia da cultura: carências e possibilidades,” *Revista UFG*, 14 (2013): 161–81.

articles, books, PhD, master's and bachelor's theses. In this section specifically, I will focus on articles produced by academics.

The *JabRef* bibliographic management software was used as a tool, both for compilation and classification, including the type of support of the academic text; the title; the author's name, the origin, and the institution to which they belong; year, publisher, or organism of publication and, if it exists, the link to access it. Regarding the content, an abstract and five keywords were included.

When searching for academic texts, I consulted the main world databases to obtain as reliable and exhaustive information as possible. This is the case of the World Catalogue of information on library collections *WorldCat*, the collaboration and academic publishing platforms *Research-gate* and *Academia.edu*, and the database on Mozambican literature produced by the chair of Portuguese at Eduardo Mondlane University. In the first three cases, we used as keywords: "Mozambican literature" (in Portuguese, Spanish, and English because the former is the official language in Mozambique and in the Lusophone intersystem and because the latter two are the two languages with the greatest presence in the Western academic sphere), with the keywords "Mozambique literature" as a variant.

In this sense, it is necessary to clarify that the intention of this work is not to gather all the existing publications, but a significant number of them that could represent the existing totality in a more or less reliable way. As mentioned, we resorted to a specific and restricted number of platforms, so we are aware of the limitations of the corpus.

The chronological period of publication or elaboration of this corpus ranges from 1975 to 2017; that is to say, since the Mozambican independence, the constitution of Mozambique as a nation-state within the African continent with incipient capacity of internal academic production and object of attention as a new socio-political reality, and a term *ad quo* sufficiently broad and, at the same time, reliable to determine its entire corpus exhaustively. There were thus 150 academic articles published in various academic journals.

## Results: Statistics and Description of Statistics

About this total volume, the following tables and considerations show the results obtained.

Firstly, concerning the year of publication (from 1975 to 2017), there is a rise from 2009 (twelve articles registered) onwards, but very little before then.

These tables clarify that there is in Brazil a sustained interest in the study of Mozambican literature (Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4). The reason for this hegemony is largely its demographic weight and number of academic institutions. In contrast, the low number of publications in Portuguese journals apparently contradicts the magnitude of Portugal's academic field, its historical relations with Mozambique, and the very objectives marked by the CPLP. In the Mozambican case, the low figure can be explained by the lack of resources of the country's university institutions.

**Table 1.** Origin of Academics

| Country        | Number of Academics |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Brasil         | 76                  |
| Mozambique     | 18                  |
| Portugal       | 10                  |
| Spain          | 2                   |
| France         | 2                   |
| Angola         | 1                   |
| Colombia       | 1                   |
| Italy          | 1                   |
| Austria        | 1                   |
| Czech Republic | 1                   |
| Germany        | 1                   |
| USA            | 1                   |
| UK             | 1                   |

Source: My production.

**Table 2.** Origin of the Institution

| Origin of Universities  | Number of Universities |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Brazilian universities  | 45                     |
| Portuguese universities | 5                      |
| Mozambican universities | 4                      |
| US universities         | 4                      |
| Spanish universities    | 3                      |
| French universities     | 2                      |
| Angolan universities    | 1                      |

Source: My production.

As shown in [Table 5](#) the ICDS index (Composite Index of Secondary Diffusion) established by the Information Matrix for Analysis of Journals (MIAR) and the presence in two of the most relevant bibliographic databases in this area (*Scopus* and *Arts & Humanities*) were used as indicators to assess the relative importance of the journals. We can see that the journals with the greatest impact are European and American (only two are from Brazil), which confirms that there is greater dissemination and legitimization of knowledge produced in the West.

**Table 3.** Origin of Academic Journals

| Origin of Journals     | Number of Journals |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Brazilian journals     | 39                 |
| Mozambican journals    | 5                  |
| Portuguese journals    | 5                  |
| French journals        | 5                  |
| Spanish journals       | 4                  |
| US journals            | 2                  |
| Polish journals        | 1                  |
| South African journals | 1                  |

Source: My production.

The list of the themes (Table 6) was based on the abstracts and keywords of each article. I want to draw attention here to the articles dealing with the condition of Mozambican women, a trend that has been increasing since 2005 through the study of Paulina Chiziane's works, according to the results of the database. The presence of the Indian Ocean in literary texts is also important as a symptom of multiculturalism and hybridism. In this sense, the appearance of this theme in 2013 in a Portuguese journal, *Diacrítica*, through work by Nazir Ahmed Can and the Italian scholar Jessica Falconi, may indicate a non-Eurocentric intercultural turn.

## Discussion of Results

For an effective discussion of the results presented, we can establish a periodization that delimits some approximate phases in the period from 1975 to 2017.

From 1975 until the beginning of the millennium, the number of publications was low. This coincides with a turbulent time in Mozambican history, notably civil war. It is worth noting that at this time most of the publications were literary anthologies and sketches of Mozambican literary histories. Given that this was so soon after the country's independence, it makes sense that the publications wished to consolidate a national literary canon.

The study of poetry also abounds, notably through the names of Eduardo White, Isaac Zita, and José Craveirinha. The name of Mia Couto, the most studied Mozambican author (Table 7), does not appear in the database until 1996 in the journal *Luso-Brazilian Review*, by a scholar of Portuguese from the University of Massachusetts. This data reveal the beginnings of a process of consecration and legitimization of Couto's work on the international scene, derived from the publication of his work by publishers such as the Brazilian *Companhia das Letras* or the Portuguese *Caminho*, which published the short story collection *Vozes Anoitecidas* in 1987 and the novel *Terra Sonâmbula* in 1992. Moreover, this is contrary to what otherwise is common in this period (according to the corpus

**Table 4.** Registered Journals

| Journal's Name                                    | Number of Published Articles | Origin     |
|---|------------------------------|------------|
| <i>Via Atlântica</i>                              | 22                           | Brazil     |
| <i>Mulemba</i>                                    | 12                           | Brazil     |
| <i>Diadorim</i>                                   | 5                            | Brazil     |
| <i>Nau Literária</i>                              | 5                            | Brazil     |
| <i>Crioula</i>                                    | 5                            | Brazil     |
| <i>RILP-Revista Integral em Língua Portuguesa</i> | 3                            | Brazil     |
| <i>Buala</i> <sup>11</sup>                        | 3                            | Mozambique |
| <i>Cadernos CESPUC</i>                            | 3                            | Brazil     |
| <i>Navegações</i>                                 | 3                            | Brazil     |
| <i>Tempo</i>                                      | 3                            | Mozambique |
| <i>Luzo-Brazilian Review</i>                      | 3                            | USA        |
| <i>Udwizi</i>                                     | 2                            | Mozambique |
| <i>Diacrítica</i>                                 | 2                            | Brazil     |
| <i>Lattitudes</i>                                 | 2                            | France     |
| <i>Itinerários</i>                                | 2                            | Poland     |
| <i>E-Scrita</i>                                   | 2                            | Brazil     |
| <i>Crítica Cultural-Palhoça</i>                   | 2                            | Brazil     |
| <i>Colóquio/ Letras</i>                           | 2                            | Portugal   |
| <i>África- Arte y Literatura</i>                  | 2                            | Brazil     |
| <i>Abriu</i>                                      | 1                            | Spain      |
| <i>Álabe</i>                                      | 1                            | Spain      |
| <i>Ambivalências</i>                              | 1                            | Brazil     |
| <i>Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales</i>       | 1                            | France     |
| <i>Research in African Literatures</i>            | 1                            | USA        |
| <i>Caligrama</i>                                  | 1                            | Brazil     |
| <i>Cerrados</i>                                   | 1                            | Brazil     |
| <i>Conexão Letras</i>                             | 1                            | Brazil     |
| <i>Consortium Erudit</i>                          | 1                            | France     |

(Continued)

<sup>11</sup> We consider these magazines/blogs (*Buala* and *Tempo*) because, with the participation of scholars of Mozambican literature, they fill an academic space in the Mozambican social space.



**Table 4.** *Continued*

| Journal's Name   | Number of Published Articles | Origin       |
|--|------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Contra Corrente</i>                                   | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Forma Breve</i>                                       | 1                            | Portugal     |
| <i>Gragoatá</i>  | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Grial</i>   | 1                            | Spain        |
| <i>Horizonte</i>   | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Horizontes Antropológicos</i>                         | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Revue de littérature comparée-Klincksieck</i>         | 1                            | France       |
| <i>Kronos</i>  | 1                            | South Africa |
| <i>Letras &amp; Letras</i>                               | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Límite: revista de estudios portugueses</i>           | 1                            | Spain        |
| <i>Literatas</i>   | 1                            | Mozambique   |
| <i>Litterata</i>   | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Moara</i>   | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Diogène</i>   | 1                            | France       |
| <i>Revista brasileira de Historia e Ciencias Sociais</i> | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Revista PUCRS</i>                                     | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Fórum Identidades</i>                                 | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Inhumanas</i>   | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Revista do Centro de Estudos Portugueses-UFMG</i>     | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Revista do NEPA/UFF</i>                               | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Graphos</i>   | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Língua &amp; Literatura</i>                           | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Revista Lusófona de Estudos Culturais</i>             | 1                            | Portugal     |
| <i>Sociedade e Estado</i>                                | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Teografias</i>  | 1                            | Portugal     |
| <i>Terceira Margem</i>                                   | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Terra Roxa e Outras Terras</i>                        | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Todas as musas</i>                                    | 1                            | Brazil       |
| <i>Verbum</i>  | 1                            | Brazil       |

Source: My production.

**Table 5.** Impact of Academic Journals

| Journal  | ICDS | Index in Scopus | Index in Arts and Humanities |
|--|------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Colóquio/Letras</i>                                       | 11   | Yes             | Yes                          |
| <i>Luso-Brazilian Review</i>                                 | 11   | Yes             | Yes                          |
| <i>Research in African Literatures</i>                       | 11   | Yes             | Yes                          |
| <i>Revue de littérature comparée-Klincksieck</i>             | 11   | Yes             | Yes                          |
| <i>Annales</i>   | 10   | Yes             | No                           |
| <i>Sociedade e Estado</i>                                    | 10   | Yes             | No                           |
| <i>Caligrama</i>   | 10   | Yes             | No                           |
| <i>Horizontes Antropológicos</i>                             | 9.9  | Yes             | No                           |
| <i>Via Atlântica</i>   | 9.9  | No              | No                           |
| <i>Límite</i>  | 9.6  | No              | No                           |
| <i>Alabe</i>   | 9.5  | No              | No                           |
| <i>Abriu</i>   | 9.4  | Yes             | No                           |
| <i>E-escrita</i>   | 9.4  | No              | No                           |
| <i>Itinerários</i>   | 7.9  | No              | No                           |
| <i>Revista brasileira de História &amp; Ciências Sociais</i> | 7.5  | No              | No                           |
| <i>Diogène</i>   | 6.5  | No              | No                           |
| <i>Grial</i>   | 6.5  | No              | No                           |
| <i>Kronos</i>  | 6.5  | No              | No                           |
| <i>Diacrítica</i>  | 6.5  | Yes             | No                           |
| <i>Diadorim</i>  | 6.3  | No              | No                           |
| <i>Terra Roxa e Outras Terras</i>                            | 6.3  | No              | No                           |
| <i>Navegações</i>  | 6.1  | No              | No                           |
| <i>Revista do Centro de Estudos Portugueses</i>              | 4.5  | No              | No                           |
| <i>Graphos</i>   | 4.4  | No              | No                           |
| <i>Cerrados</i>  | 4.3  | No              | No                           |
| <i>Ambivalências</i>   | 3.9  | No              | No                           |

Source: miar.edu catalog and my production.

used), magazines with high impact, such as *Colóquio/Letras*, *Via Atlântica*, and the aforementioned *Luso-Brazilian Review*, published at this time.

On the other hand, we detect the beginnings of a trend present in the entire database: publications on postcolonial theory applied to the Mozambican

**Table 6.** Topics Covered in the Academic Articles

| Topics  | Number of Articles |
|---|--------------------|
| History and memory                            | 32                 |
| Nation and identity                           | 18                 |
| Orality                                       | 14                 |
| Feminism                                      | 12                 |
| Literary aesthetics                           | 8                  |
| Negritude                                     | 7                  |
| Ethnicity and multiculturalism                | 6                  |
| Indian Ocean                                  | 5                  |
| Alterity                                      | 5                  |
| Social questions (hunger, violence, and fear) | 5                  |
| Oneiric                                       | 4                  |
| Mozambican literary canon                     | 3                  |
| Cosmopolitanism and tradition                 | 3                  |
| Journalism                                    | 2                  |
| Youth literature                              | 1                  |

Source: My production.

territory by academics from non-Lusophone countries, namely English- or French-speaking Europeans.

If the Portuguese presence was relatively high until the beginning of the millennium, between 2000 and 2005 it disappears almost completely in the dataset, possibly indicating an inability to confront or overcome the colonial past, thus accentuating the aforementioned historical asymmetries. It was during this period that Brazil began to take a growing interest in Mozambican literature, including both academics and Brazilian institutions and journals. In fact, this phenomenon persists. A historical-political fact that could motivate this dialogue between Brazil and Mozambique was the enactment, in the first year of the Lula government, in 2003, of law 10,639, which made the teaching of African history and culture compulsory in Brazilian primary and secondary schools. The compulsory nature of the teaching in secondary schools leads us to the potential development of African literatures of Portuguese language in higher education. Thus, some high-impact journals in the academic world such as the Brazilian *Horizontes Antropológicos* and *Via Atlântica* open the way for the study of Mozambican literature at this stage.

It is at this moment, post-2003, that Mía Couto is consecrated in Brazil and Paulina Chiziane emerges (Tables 7 and 8). Frequent themes in the articles are the dream, utopia, otherness, and orality. These themes, as in the previous case,

**Table 7.** Most Studied Authors

| Authors                  | Number of Articles |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Mia Couto                | 28                 |
| Paulina Chiziane         | 26                 |
| José Craveirinha         | 16                 |
| Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa     | 8                  |
| João Paulo Borges Coelho | 7                  |
| Noémia de Sousa          | 6                  |
| Isaac Zita               | 3                  |
| Luis Bernardo Honwana    | 2                  |
| Eduardo White            | 2                  |
| Aldino Muianga           | 2                  |
| Helder Faife             | 2                  |
| Sangare Okapi            | 2                  |
| Glória de Sant'Anna      | 2                  |
| Rui Knopfli              | 2                  |
| Carneiro Gonçalves       | 1                  |
| Sebastião Alba           | 1                  |
| Lina Magaia              | 1                  |
| Rui Nogar                | 1                  |
| Campos de Oliveira       | 1                  |
| Nelson Saúte             | 1                  |
| Lilia Momplé             | 1                  |
| Luís Carlos Patraquim    | 1                  |
| Virgílio de Lemos        | 1                  |
| Lica Sebastião           | 1                  |
| Francisco Noa            | 1                  |
| Emmy Xy                  | 1                  |

Source: My production.

may have to do with the need to build and rethink the country, attending to genres such as the short story as a representative element of traditional Mozambican oral culture.

The period between 2005 and 2010 implies a diversification in several senses, as well as a very considerable increase in publications. The theme moves toward

**Table 8.** Most Studied Works

| Work Studied                   | Number of Articles |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Niketche</i>                | 10                 |
| <i>Ventos do apocalipse</i>    | 6                  |
| <i>Terra Sonâmbula</i>         | 4                  |
| <i>Ualalapi</i>                | 3                  |
| <i>Vinte e Zinco</i>           | 3                  |
| <i>Karingana ua Karingana</i>  | 3                  |
| <i>Balada de amor ao vento</i> | 2                  |
| <i>O Olho de Hertzog</i>       | 2                  |

Source: My production.

the appearance of identity discourses in Mozambican fiction in a more marked way than in previous periods. History and memory are also recurrent themes through names such as Mía Couto or Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa, and the work of Paulina Chiziane continues to open spaces for the study of feminist issues in Mozambique.

As far as spaces are concerned, because Portugal and Portuguese institutions remain a minority, Brazil has consolidated its position and Mozambican academics, often through Brazilian journals, have achieved a relative voice in the academic field.

In the end, we would like to highlight two relevant data: that this is the period in which the academic production curve begins to rise, fundamentally due to the work of academic institutions and scholars from Brazil (probably an effect of the measures taken by Lula's government), and in non-Lusophone territories, especially France, the themes dealt with in Mozambican literature underwrite the more general concerns of the postcolonial theoretical debate. That is, instead of studying specific works or authors, there is a tendency to use the postcolonial and neocolonial situation of Mozambique as fodder for more general arguments about postcolonial literature.

Between 2011 and 2016, we can highlight the entry of new names regarding the authors, such as Lina Magaia, Lilia Momplé, Nelson Saúte, or Sangare Okapi, and also the journals, such as *Kronos*, from South Africa, and others from the United States. The themes are centered on memory in the study of the postcolonial imaginary with a focus on multiculturalism in relation to identity.

The year that closes the chronology established in this database, 2017, is one of the years with the most academic articles. The constant study of the work of Luís Bernardo Honwana, Mía Couto, or Paulina Chiziane confirms them as renowned within the Mozambican literary system, and the repertoires that are of most interest revolve around otherness, violence, and identity.

In the next section we will analyze the results, the territories present in the delimited corpus, inside and outside the Lusophone intersystem.

## The African Gaze

The question of whether there is an African gaze, be it from the PALOP countries or not, is not easily resolved. From material precarity and lack of resources to situations of indifference, different kinds of proximity (physical, affective, political, etc.) may explain what lies in focus for African critics. Mozambican scholars are interested in themes such as orality, multiculturalism, Mozambicanity as identity, realism, and violence. Moreover, those scholars generally publish in Mozambican and Brazilian journals with low impact, which, we suspect, detracts legitimacy and, undoubtedly, dissemination of their discourse. This has the added consequence of sustaining the external ignorance of the interests and perspectives of the Mozambican academic world, without the possibility of counteracting it.

There is another relevant conclusion: at least in the case of the Mozambican literary system, Africa and, more specifically, scholars in other PALOP countries do not study the Mozambican case, hindering the possibility of building an African intersystem and, more specifically, an African intersystem of Portuguese language, which shows a relevant academic lack of communication. All this shows notable shortcomings in terms of cultural diplomacy and in the relationship between the Portuguese-speaking African countries, perhaps mirroring or correlating with a lack of real consistency of the PALOP as a whole.

These results are in line with the statements made by the São Tomense academic Inocência Mata when she speaks of the “recent and sometimes ambiguous nature of knowledge institutions in African societies” and points out that “as these societies are eminently agraphic and emerging from the colonial situation ... they suffer from a constraint that concerns the fact that the Africans continue to be the object and rarely the subject of scientific knowledge.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, the nonexistence or nonaccess to academic texts produced in the PALOP may be indicating the persistence of this continent in a peripheral situation regarding the production of knowledge.

Although Portugal has magazines with high impact factors and cultural institutions with international visibility, the interest in Mozambique in the academic world is low in all senses. A symptom of this is that some of the Portuguese academics publish in foreign journals, including *Luso-Brazilian Review* and *Latitude*.

Judging from our results, it is likely that the lack of Portuguese academic interest in Mozambican literature has certain neocolonial traits. Further fieldwork in the Portuguese academic world would be needed to confirm this, but everything seems to point to a certain disingenuousness regarding Portugal’s history as a colonizing country. We can thus confirm the hypothesis that, in terms of Portuguese cultural diplomacy in relation to its excolonies, the Portuguese academic field presents little contribution to reducing the historical asymmetries caused by the colonization process. It has been stated by Torres that the African presence in Portuguese literary historiographies disappears

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<sup>12</sup> Inocência Mata, “A crítica literária africana e a teoria pós-colonial: um modismo ou uma exigência?,” *Ipotesi* 10.1 (2006): 33–44.

after the independence period; specifically, in the most well-known manual of Portuguese literature in the university sphere, António J. Saraiva and Óscar Lopes's *História da Literatura Portuguesa*, it is as though a debt had been paid in editions immediately after the 25th of April and the subsequent step was to obviate the study of this new reality in the following editions.<sup>13</sup> The reasons for this were complex, but all of them linked to the colonial past.

In this sense of materialization of the intentions of cooperation and dialogue among the Lusophone communities, Brazil stands out once again with the creation in 2008, of UNILAB, University of International Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophony, a public federal university located in Ceará, Brazil. The major courses offered are preferentially the ones included in the mutual interest of all countries in the CPLP. Because its objective is international integration, 50 percent of the seats in the university are for international students from those countries.

In these terms, with regard to cultural diplomacy within the Lusophony, we see how the Brazilian case represents a breakthrough—also with Mozambican studies—in terms of an effective dialogue, minimizing an excessive nationalization of studies or hegemonic tendencies.

Specifically and in thematic terms, Brazilian academic production reinforces the historical ties between Africa and Brazil with constant comparisons between Brazilian and Mozambican authors. The articles deal with issues of social inequality, subalternity, and decolonization. Another constant theme is the study of orality and the genre of the short story, which tends, although it may function as a strategy of exoticization, to rescue traces of African culture in Brazil.

Mia Couto is the most studied author, not only in Brazil, but also in Portugal and beyond. Hence, a writer from a peripheral country and on the periphery of the Brazilian literary system moves to the center of it through certain legitimization strategies, such as the already mentioned publication in one of the most important Portuguese publishing houses or the award of the Camões Prize in 2013. His work is also the main topic of the largest number of articles in the corpus. Thus, Mia Couto's centrality within the Lusophone literary system is a clear and obvious fact.

### **The Non-Lusophone View**

It may be that because of the emergence of postcolonial studies during the 1980s, publications by non-Lusophone authors on Mozambican literature began to appear already in these years, highlighting names such as Russell Hamilton and Patrick Chabal in contexts such as the United Kingdom and the United States. Although the number of results is very low, we detected that in non-Lusophone universities the study of Mia Couto and the works *Terra Sonâmbula* and *Vozes Anoitcidas* constitute the relative majority. The study of

<sup>13</sup> Mata, "A crítica literária africana e a teoria pós-colonial: um modismo ou uma exigência?."

specific authors or works is not frequent, however, but rather publications on postcolonial theory applied to the Portuguese-speaking African spaces, along the lines of the problematization of identities in postcolonial studies, the study of otherness, and hybridism as determining factors in Mozambican literary production.

For obvious cultural and historical reasons, non-Lusophone spaces tend not to cultivate a special interest in Mozambican literature, but we detect a notable presence in universities of the United States, the United Kingdom, and, not least, in Spain and France. This can be explained by a greater dedication to postcolonial theories due to the fact that, in the case of these last two countries, they were European colonial powers.

## **Conclusions and Proposals**

As we have seen, within the Lusophone intersystem, there is a strong Brazilian academic interest in Mozambican literary production. By focusing on certain historical commonalities, such as the consequences of colonization, social inequalities, racism, blackness, and feminism, Brazilian academics are making room for Mozambican literature in their literary system. They legitimize in this way certain works and import Mozambican cultural repertoires that, at the same time, also feed into Brazil's own cultural interests.

In the case of the Portuguese academic field, this still appears dependent on political and historical positions that may show some neocolonial echoes. The cultural diplomacy based on balance and dialogue between communities established by the CPLP is not fulfilled. The scarcity of studies on Mozambican literature may indicate some trends of concealment of the colonial past that have already been pointed out by several scholars, such as Jorge Dias (1995), Eduardo Lourenço (1982), or José Gil (2007), who point to a certain traumatism that may be interpreted as a neocolonial melancholy in Portuguese society in the face of the loss of the colonies.<sup>14</sup>

Still, alluding to academic production outside the Lusophone intersystem, the study of Mozambican literature has some presence within European (namely Anglophone and Francophone) and North American postcolonial studies, whose thematic tendency insists on the problematization of identity and national cohesion. Moreover, in these territories we find the journals with the greatest impact and, therefore, the greatest capacity to legitimize knowledge. This supposes that it is the West that presents itself as the subject offering models and repertoires, a fact that may lead to a certain dependence on Western models in the African country when it comes to facing its national problems.

In Mozambique, the results show that, in addition to the scarcity of production within Mozambican academia, there is a certain tendency to depend on

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<sup>14</sup> These considerations are discussed in Jorge Dias, *Os elementos fundamentais da cultura portuguesa* (Imprensa nacional: Casa da Moeda, 1995); José Gil, *Portugal, Hoje: O medo de existir* (Relógio D'Água, 2007); and Eduardo Lourenço, *O labirinto da saudade. Psicanálise Mítica do Destino Português* (Lisboa: Publicações Dom Quixote, 1982).



external academic agendas rather than those emerging from the interests and perspectives of the African country itself. Therefore, it would be valuable to apply notions of cultural diplomacy to the academic world, proposing interactions between Mozambican teachers and academics with others from various latitudes, analyzing various interests.

Is there, in the final analysis, a Eurocentric constant in the study of Mozambican literature? Our results suggest this, the further implication being that the production of knowledge, despite the deconstructivist pretensions of postcolonial studies, continues to be centered in the West.

The aforementioned findings point to a necessary reorientation of European academic studies if it wishes finally to do away with the Eurocentric and neocolonial bias that it rejects on an explicit level. It is a matter of making way for new epistemological categories, of the awareness that Western categories determine the parameters of African intellectual debate, while at the same time denying space to voices from these territories and thus possibilities for that knowledge to be legitimized. The interests and perspectives of the primary sphere of production of these texts and of those who participate, directly or indirectly, in the same social space as the authors who produce the texts studied may thus become evident.

In epistemological terms, the formula is simple and should be approached decisively in relation to the Mozambican literary production: ask yourself what the interests of the Mozambican reading society are, which can be seen reflected in the same works that students and researchers produce. And, a little further on, to open up, beyond the usual coercions and classifications of Western academic capitalism (for example, in the publication in certain journals), to the audience of African colleagues.

If we remain focused on the corpus of books and magazines in our databases, Mozambican academic production on Mozambican literature is relatively small. But we can resort to other academic sources that allow us to better illustrate the “Mozambican agenda” in this sphere of knowledge and allow us to better understand the perspectives and interests to which we alluded. Thus, although this is not the object of this article, we have noted some substantive differences when comparing different corpora. Specifically, the graduate thesis of Eduardo Mondlane University allow us to mirror the priorities of Mozambican teachers and students at the country’s largest university.

As we can see in [Table 9](#) (based on records running from 1996 until 2013, i.e. 186 theses in total), the hierarchy of works (and, consequently, of authors) is not the same as the international one, with a preferential attention to Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa and Paulina Chiziane, both of them black authors; or there is the work of Midó das Dores, *A Bíblia dos Pretos*, of 2008, published by Índico Editores, which seems to be entirely ignored in circles outside of Mozambique.

In epistemological terms, we should remember that there is an external tendency to see Mozambican works as representative testimonies (and authors as spokespersons) of Mozambique. This is a common trend, given that scholars are concerned with extracting information about the reality of the country—something not usually done with other Western literary productions. The result may be epistemological insufficiency and the deformation of the reality that one

**Table 9.** Works Focused on UEM's Graduation Thesis

| Work  | Author                   | Mentions |
|---|--------------------------|----------|
| <i>Ualalapi</i>                                   | Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa     | 16       |
| <i>O Sétimo Juramento</i>                         | Paulina Chiziane         | 8        |
| <i>Niketche</i>                                   | Paulina Chiziane         | 8        |
| <i>Vozes Anoitecidas</i>                          | Mia Couto                | 8        |
| <i>A Bíblia dos Pretos</i>                        | Midó das Dores           | 8        |
| <i>Terra Sonâmbula</i>                            | Mia Couto                | 7        |
| <i>Malungate</i>                                  | Albino Magaia            | 7        |
| <i>A Varanda do Frangipani</i>                    | Mia Couto                | 7        |
| <i>Nos Matamos o Cão Tinhoso</i>                  | Luis Bernardo Honwana    | 6        |
| <i>Portagem</i>                                   | Orlando Mendes           | 5        |
| <i>Ventos do Apocalipse</i>                       | Paulina Chiziane         | 4        |
| <i>Godido</i>                                     | João Dias                | 4        |
| <i>Zambeziã-cenas de uma vida colonial</i>        | Emílio de San Bruno      | 4        |
| <i>Balada de Amor ao Vento</i>                    | Paulina Chiziane         | 4        |
| <i>O Alegre Canto da Perdiz</i>                   | Paulina Chiziane         | 3        |
| <i>Meledina (ou a história de uma prostituta)</i> | Aldino Muianga           | 3        |
| <i>As Visitas do Dr. Valdez</i>                   | João Paulo Borges Coelho | 3        |
| <i>Yô Mabalane</i>                                | Albino Magaia            | 3        |
| <i>Karingana ua Karingana</i>                     | José Craveirinha         | 2        |
| 'As mãos dos pretos'                              | Nelson Sáúte             | 2        |
| <i>Macunaima</i>                                  | Mário de Andrade         | 2        |
| <i>Olhos Brancos de Farinha de Milho</i>          | Bertina Lopes            | 2        |
| <i>Choriro</i>                                    | Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa     | 2        |
| <i>Ninguem Matou Suhura</i>                       | Lília Moplé              | 2        |
| <i>Xitala-Mati</i>                                | Aldino Muianga           | 2        |

Source: My production.

intends to investigate—as well as the exclusion, in practice, of the reality and the community that is to be served by the texts. New perspectives of knowledge, reconfiguration of teaching and the academic curriculum in the university sphere, in which direct contact with other people may be part of learning processes, allied to new technological means, and a theoretical framework that houses the active perspective of the social spaces in which the productions that are the object of study are inserted may be immediate and viable alternatives.

**Competing interests.** None

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**Cite this article:** Doval, Helena González. 2023. "The Eurocentric Constant: An Approach to the Study of Mozambican Literature." *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 10, 198–216. <https://doi.org/10.1017/pli.2023.6>