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Anticolonial poetics: forging solidarities and imagining futures

This paper explores the construction of affective solidarities within and across the spaces and boundaries of colonised and racialised worlds in the works of militant poets of the Portuguese colonies in Africa. From the 1940s to the 1960s a distinct form of anticolonial poetry emerged written by a generation of Angolans and Mozambicans who became involved in the liberation struggles. The paper examines how poetry served as a vehicle to imagine and call into being various subjectivities and affective relations which actively countered the restrictions of colonialism and racism, especially on the part of the *assimilados*, the small educated elite constructed by Portuguese colonialism. Several important forms of anticolonial connectivity are expressed in these poems: connections with the broader African diaspora in North America, the Caribbean and Brazil; connections with all continental Africans; connections across the spaces of the Portuguese colonial empire – Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe; and connections of solidarity and unity between the *assimilados* and *indígenas* of the Portuguese colonies. These various dimensions of affective connection were constitutive of a new anticolonial imagination and looked towards liberated futures.

Keywords: anticolonialism; transnational poetics; Africa; Portuguese empire

This paper explores how subjectivities of expanded connection and solidarity beyond the imposed colonial frame were forged by students of the Portuguese colonies in Africa from the late 1940s. In the context of the Portuguese empire in Africa, one of the earliest locations of emerging anticolonial consciousness was poetry. The writing and publishing of poems was a key element of African intellectual activity in Angola and Mozambique from the early twentieth century,¹ and this practice continued and consolidated among the group of African students studying in Lisbon and Coimbra from the late 1940s. Poetry continued to be an important element of the written materials produced by the liberation movements MPLA, FRELIMO and PAIGC, and several anticolonial poets, including Alda do Espírito Santo, Agostinho Neto, António Jacinto and José Craveirinha, were imprisoned by the *Estado Novo* fascist regime. This paper explores how, prior to the subsequent formation of anticolonial liberation movements, poetry served as a vehicle for the expression of anticolonial consciousness and, specifically, for the construction of new forms of affective connectivity across various colonial boundaries and divisions within and beyond the space of the Portuguese empire.

Attention to global and transnational histories and practices of connection is not new but remains an important challenge to hegemonic disciplinary imaginaries. Within disciplines which engage with the international, such as International Relations and International History, critical scholars have often had to fight against deeply entrenched assumptions and traditions in order to insist on ontologies and structures of social relations which run counter to schemes of the national and international. In the discipline of History, approaches of global, world or transnational history have long elaborated alternative methods, visions and conceptual vocabularies.² Discussing the importance of global history, Richard Drayton and David Motadel have emphasised two central methodological contributions, sometimes opposed and sometimes combined: comparison and connection. The comparative approach ‘seeks to understand events in one place through examining their similarities with and differences from how things happened somewhere else’, while the connective approach ‘elucidates how history is made through the interactions of geographically (or temporally) separated historical communities’.³ They note that neither of these approaches are new, but define historical discourse going back centuries to scholars such as Sima Qian and Ibn Khaldun, and forward to twentieth century scholars such as Eric Williams and Boubacar Barry. It was the modern discipline of History from the nineteenth century, they argue, which systematically foreclosed enquiry within national and Eurocentric ‘universal’ frames. Equally, scholars of International Relations have for some time been elaborating critiques of eurocentrism, foregrounding the centrality of racialised international thought, and grappling with the challenge of forging knowledge of the international adequate to the actual experiences of the world.⁴ This IR literature could also fruitfully be considered through Drayton and Motadel’s lens of comparison and connection. Some scholars employ methods of comparison in critical ways to map approaches to and concepts of the international elaborated in different parts of the world beyond the West,⁵ or to re-write the history of the West by bringing back in its relations with the East and the South.⁶ Others seek to recover histories and traditions of connection, solidarity and consciousness which have transcended, subverted or side-lined hegemonic national and imperial frames.⁷

These conceptual, methodological and substantive struggles are required because of the deeply entrenched heritage of disciplinary thought rooted in and reflecting the

European or western experience, which instinctively clings to fixed containers of the nation and state.⁸ This necessary challenge for thought and inquiry has been the very starting point for postcolonial theory, since or before Edward Said's delineation of the 'overlapping and intertwined' character of imperial histories and their connected but discrepant experiences, Homi Bhabha's theorisation of hybridity, and Stuart Hall's analysis of race as a floating signifier. For the early part of the twentieth century and the preceding three or four centuries the main form of social and political order which structured societal interactions around the world was colonial empire, a form which was always necessarily extended across territories, continents and oceans, weaving multiple entangled webs, networks and hierarchies of experience and interaction, movement and exchange, of people, flora and fauna, between distant points in space. The lived experience of slavery and colonialism gave rise, for many, to a sense of social relation and connection across spaces which transcended or had nothing to do with the European instinctual frame of the nation-state or with fixed notions of linguistic, cultural or racial essence and difference.⁹

Portugal was one of the first of European countries to embark on expansion, occupation and slavery in the 15th century and, under the fascist regime of the *Estado Novo*, one of the last to relinquish colonial control in the mid-late 20th century. The independence of the Portuguese colonies in Africa was achieved only after lengthy wars of national liberation which contributed fundamentally, in addition, to the liberation of the Portuguese people from the *Estado Novo* in the Carnation Revolution of April 25, 1974. The leading figures and intellectuals of the national liberation struggles against Portuguese colonial rule in Africa were enmeshed in numerous colonial connections and flows. Several of them – Agostinho Neto, Mário de Andrade, Lúcio Lara, Amílcar Cabral, Alda do Espírito Santo, Noémia de Sousa, Marcelino dos Santos, and others – moved from their homelands to the colonial metropole to study at university in Lisbon or Coimbra during the 1940s and 50s. While there they engaged in wide reading: in their minds they eagerly and collaboratively travelled as far and wide as they could, reading literature from North America and the Caribbean, Brazil, France, Russia and beyond.¹⁰ Much of their clandestine critical reading, as well as other connections with their compatriots back home in the colonies, was enabled by the African sailors working on the colonial shipping companies.¹¹

This paper explores a selection of the poetry written by students from the Portuguese colonies of Africa in the 1940s-60s, bringing to the fore various of the affective connections, subjectivities and solidarities which were constructed within the poetic imagination of this generation of anticolonial militants. Before moving to explore the affective connections articulated in their poetic imagination, the paper starts by considering the question of poetry itself. What is it that makes poetry a potential vehicle for the articulation of affective solidarity and transnational connection? And, what is it that makes poetry a characteristic site of anticolonial consciousness and expression?

Transnational poetics, anticolonial poetics

If the disciplines of IR and History have struggled with the nation-centric instinct, so, it seems, has literary studies. Focusing on poetry, Jahan Ramazani has documented the endurance of nationally-framed analyses of numerous poets in the ‘disciplinary nationalisms of the humanities’ and their ‘area- and nation-based pie-charting of the globe’.¹² This was apparent in early studies of African literature as well as politics which tended, by instinct, to analyse processes and forms through a framework and starting point of nationalism, often beginning with European-derived theories of nation and nationalism. For example in an early essay in 1982 Russell Hamilton commented ‘With the possible exception of South Africa, nowhere on the continent has literary expression been so inextricably tied to the rise of national consciousness among members of the educated elites than in Angola and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Mozambique’.¹³

In order to escape this instinctive national framing, Ramazani has developed the notion of transnational poetics. He analyses how many poets considered ‘American’, ‘English’, ‘Irish’ or ‘Jamaican’ were in fact not only migrants themselves and often travelled widely, but also produced work which drew on diverse literary and artistic influences from elsewhere and was thus ‘profoundly cross-cultural, translocal, and transnational’.¹⁴ His central point is two-fold: first, that a mono-national conception of the poets themselves is in many cases flawed. He uses the case of Claude McKay as an example. McKay is considered one of the key figures of the Harlem Renaissance,

the African American cultural flourishing based in New York in the 1920s and 30s.

Yet McKay, Ramazani reminds us,

wrote his first two books in Jamaican English before emigrating to the United States; he then spent over a decade (1919–21, 1923–33) in Europe, the Soviet Union, and North Africa, barred from the United States and the British colonies after his enthusiastic 1923 Soviet trip; in 1934 he finally returned to the US and in 1940 became an American citizen; still later, he was posthumously claimed as a national poet of Jamaica.¹⁵

Second, and even in cases where a particular poet might not have travelled, Ramazani highlights the ways in which the content and form of poetry exhibits a cross-cultural and transnational poetics, a deliberate mixing and combining of multiple reference points, images, and styles from diverse sources. He shows how poetry is able to grasp and articulate the complex inter-penetrations of local and distant places, cultures and histories, inter-penetrations which were rooted in colonial empire and were experienced unevenly. Ramazani's focus is on poetry written in English and he considers two overlapping sets of poets: modernist poets such as Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, and postcolonial poets such as Kamau Brathwaite, Okot p'Bitek and Christopher Okigbo.¹⁶ Centrally, he explores the many ways in which poets have used language, dialect, tone, irony, rhythm and other formal techniques in order to disrupt imposed mono-national and mono-cultural categories of belonging or exclusion, to articulate discrepant, confused, ambiguous or subaltern experiences, and to construct new forms of connection and citizenship. Ramazani's analysis is rich and extensive. Here I will pick out three of the dimensions of poetry which, Ramazani demonstrates, specifically enable the construction of connections and crossings which counter those imposed by colonialism: the strategy of collage or bricolage; the compressed form of the poem; and the possibility of stretching language.

The strategy of collage or bricolage, of bringing together diverse elements and materials from varied sources and positioning them together in new and unexpected combinations, arrangements and juxtapositions, thereby giving rise to new understandings or realisations, is a central characteristic of modernist art, literature and poetry. Collage or bricolage provides a formal language which can express

disjuncture and discord, which can articulate ‘intercultural collisions and juxtapositions’, ‘epistemic instabilities and decenterings’.¹⁷ The temptation to see modernism as a European or Western form of the early twentieth century, and therefore the employment of modernist techniques by non-Western poets and artists as an instance of cultural learning, imposition or alienation, is an oversimplification.¹⁸ First, the modernism developed by European artists and poets drew precisely on non-European forms. Colonialism was a condition of possibility for modernism, and non-European influences its largely unacknowledged impetus.¹⁹ But if colonialism was central to both modernity and modernism, the lived experiences of colonialism and modernity were highly uneven. Second, therefore, Ramazani highlights significant differences between European and postcolonial modernism. Whereas Western modernists made use of ‘limited heterogeneity, their materials often made available by imperial and ethnographic forays’, developing new work through a sampling of the oriental or exotic, for the postcolonial poet or artist the themes of hybridity and discord were central to their lived experience and were imposed by force:

The conditions of possibility for postcolonial hybridity are violent occupation and cultural imposition at home, across immense differences of power, topography, culture, and economics. Its non-West is primary and profoundly experiential, not the object of extraterritorial questing via tourism and museums, books and ethnography, friendships and translations.²⁰

Modernist collage or bricolage, also employed in literature, art and film, was not specific to poetry. Ramazani therefore draws attention, in addition, to the size of the poem itself, and its tendency to compress, as potentially enabling an additional intensity not always available in longer forms.²¹ In poetry the juxtapositions and unexpected combinations crafted by collage or bricolage are contained within the space of a line, a verse or a page. This ‘poetic compression’ entails that ‘discrepant idioms and soundscapes, tropes and subgenres’ are ‘forced together with intensity’. The poem, ‘pressured and fractured by this convergence’, can reveal to us ‘at close hand’ the contradictions, fusions and impositions of colonial modernity.²² Because of its size, the poem offers ‘a vehicle that affords rapid and radial imaginative

movement',²³ spanning vast distances of time and space and rendering visible unobvious connections.

Finally, Ramazani focuses on poetry's capacity to employ language and form in ways which expand and stretch meaning and connotation, breaking through the boundaries of settled and imposed delineations of the social world to provoke expanded horizons and connections. A locally rooted poem can stretch the horizon of significance and attachment far beyond the official boundaries of the national. The poet's playing, experimenting, distorting, mixing of and with language, vocabulary and dialect can bring charge and disruption to narrative content, while valorising officially marginalised modes of expression and being. This elasticity of poetic form and language, 'its figural and allusive traversals of space, its rhythmic and sonic coordinations of distances, its associative suspension of rational boundaries', Ramazani suggests, 'is well suited to evoking global modernity's interlinking of widely separated sites.'²⁴ Time and space can be stretched within the frame of a poem, bringing distant places and distant times together through the elasticity of the poetic imagination: 'a poem can be literally sited in one place while figuratively stretched to another ... poetry is a literary space that—irreducible to the empirical mapping of singular and self-contained places—miniaturizes, intensifies, and multiplies the entanglements between widely separated sites.'²⁵

Ramazani's insights into the features of poetry which lend themselves to the articulation of *transnational* connections are fundamental, but what is it about poetry which might lend itself to *anticolonial* expression? Histories of anticolonial struggle and the emergence of anticolonial expression suggest several answers. These relate to the space that poetry offers for alternative and new modes of expression and thought, and for disrupting colonial temporality, for articulating new subjectivities before the social conditions of possibility for such new subjects yet exist. Poetry constitutes a realm for the imagining and calling forth of new possibilities yet to come.

When Frantz Fanon examined the question of poetry in relation to colonialism and anticolonial struggle he focused precisely on the uneven and emergent relationship between culture and anticolonial consciousness on the part of what he called the native intellectual. Seeking to historicise the role of the African intellectual in the

dynamic relationship between colonialism, culture and liberation he identified various forms which characterise the intellectual's response at different phases – phases which might map onto the process of decolonisation of any one particular country or of the continent as a whole. These phases of response move from first imitating the European style, to then reclaiming the glories of the African past, before finally reaching the 'fighting phase', which witnesses a 'fighting literature', a 'literature of combat'.²⁶ Discussing poetry in particular, he observes that 'After the period of assimilation characterized by rhyming poetry, the poetic tom-tom's rhythms break through' – the native intellectual turns away from European forms and starts to draw on the cultural resources of his or her own people. 'This is a poetry of revolt; but it is also descriptive and analytical poetry.'²⁷ Yet poetry and the poet can play a more radical role, he argues, offering in their writing 'a true invitation to thought, to demystification and to battle', outlining 'a precise, forward-looking exposition.'²⁸

If Fanon's scheme might appear analytical it resonates with many actual experiences. A seminal and much-studied instance of anticolonial poetry is Aimé Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*.²⁹ Césaire was one of the many writers read by the African students of the Portuguese colonies in Lisbon in the 1950s. Many critics have examined how Césaire's use of poetic structure, vocabulary and syntax enabled him to craft what he called 'the revolutionary image, the distant image'.³⁰ Melas highlights Césaire's own comment that in writing this work, a 'notebook', he was turning away not only from European aesthetic forms but specifically from European *poetry* in order to free his alienated colonised imagination: 'A notebook because I had abandoned the idea of writing poems: all of traditional prosody hampered me a lot, paralyzed me... I discovered poetry the moment I turned my back on formal poetry'.³¹ Melas argues that the new poetic form Césaire develops is one which seeks to express what cannot be expressed in the circumstances of his times: his poem 'takes stock of the absent conditions of its possibility in the muteness of the native land'. The very form of Césaire's *Notebook* is 'constitutively untimely' because, in a colonial world, 'the time of belonging can only be projected into the future'.³²

Michael Hanchard likewise underlines how the very existence of anticolonial thinking contradicts the spatial and temporal circumstances of its enunciation when he argues

for the need to appreciate the varied locations of black and anticolonial thought. Foregrounding the often highly restricted access to the public sphere produced by slavery, racism and colonial segregation, he urges a broader scope of vision when looking for black and anticolonial thought:³³

How would or should racially marginalized groups mobilize in response to fascism and racism, particularly in political contexts where conventional radical and even bourgeois forms of political disputation and claims-making were foreclosed? Or more succinctly, how could disempowered groups act politically when *there is no place in the polity of the society they inhabit for them to do so?*³⁴

Possible answers to this question, he suggests, emerge from the historiography and theorization of black and anticolonial politics in contexts where ‘exclusion from the polis and polity ... led black political actors to pursue politics and the political in spaces deemed “extra-political” or “apolitical.”’³⁵ Hanchard’s argument extends from concrete sites such as the workplace lunch canteen, streets and buses, to the site of culture and of poetry: ‘One of the commonalities of the inception of black politics across the Americas, Europe, as well as in nationalist struggle in Africa was the utilization for political purposes of spaces designed and classified as “social” or “cultural” in the spheres of the dominant.’³⁶

For the African students of the Portuguese colonies who were in Lisbon and Coimbra from the late 1940s it was precisely such a space which formed an early site for their cultural and emergent political activity. The *Casa dos Estudantes do Império* (CEI) was established by the Estado Novo regime as a ‘social’ and ‘cultural’ institution for students from the colonial territories, intended to consolidate a colonial sensibility. Over time, however, as the African students within the CEI gained a more prominent role in managing the institution, this space of social and cultural interaction, of sports, dances, concerts and seminars, and its bulletin *Mensagem*, came to be a crucial site of anti-colonial consciousness.³⁷

Anticolonial connectivity in the poetic imagination

The generation of African students in Portugal in the late 1940s and early 1950s who would go on to lead the national liberation movements – Alda do Espírito Santo of São Tomé and Príncipe, Amílcar Cabral of Guinea and Cabo Verde, Agostinho Neto, Mário Pinto de Andrade and Viriato da Cruz of Angola, Marcelino dos Santos and Noémia de Sousa of Mozambique, and others – did not necessarily first arrive in Portugal with a clear anti-colonial consciousness.³⁸ For the most part they came to Portugal to further their studies and gain qualifications with the intention of returning to their respective territory to work as a doctor, an engineer or a teacher within the context of Portuguese colonial rule. Their understanding of themselves as Angolans, Mozambicans, Guineans and Africans, their understanding of colonial and racial oppression and their emerging anticolonial consciousness developed through their experiences as students in the colonial metropole, through their collective discussions and debates, their wide reading of international literature, and their keen attention to events and developments back in their colonial territories, in the rest of Africa, and in the world.³⁹ For some, however, even in the late 1940s the question of independence was already being imagined. António Jacinto recalled that already in 1948, 1949, for some sections of the literary movement in Angola the question of independence was already at stake, already their positions were ‘more ... political than really literary’, but it was the realm of poetry which, as Hanchard emphasises, enabled their political expression:

What was needed was to communicate a political message. The means? What was accessible was poetry: so, therefore, it would be poetry. If there had been other possibilities, it would have been different ... By means of the short story, of poetry, the preoccupation was of a political order.⁴⁰

In this section I draw on the preceding reflections to explore how the formal possibilities of the poem, especially its capacity for compression, intensity, juxtaposition and the stretching of language, enable the articulation of affective connections across expanses of time and space far beyond and sharply counter to the imposed framings of the *Estado Novo*'s colonial space. I am discussing, in English, poems which were written and published in Portuguese, often with words or refrains

in Kimbundu, Xironga and other African languages. While I read and speak Portuguese, where possible I have drawn on already-published English translations of those poems. In their discussion of global history scholarship, Drayton and Motadel highlight the anglocentric character of much of this work and the lack of scholars who can read other European let alone non-European languages. They therefore advocate that ‘the edited volume and the work of translation are the natural media of global history’.⁴¹ Ramazani, however, considers that poetry cannot be adequately considered in translation; that poetry is ‘stitched and hitched to the peculiarities of the language in which it is written’.⁴² Perhaps that is so from the perspective of literary criticism. My aim here is not to analyse these poems from such a perspective, however, but to consider the specificity of poetry as an element of a broader practice of political thought and struggle, and to explore the political connotations and the anticolonial subjectivities which this poetry facilitates.

There are other compelling reasons why reading poetry in translation is necessary, especially in light of colonialism. The practice of translation was integral to the work of these and many other anticolonial intellectuals.⁴³ Indeed, critics have recently emphasised that Césaire’s *Notebook* was first published in book form in Spanish translation in Havana in in 1943.⁴⁴ While studying together in Portugal the African students read and shared works of poetry in French, Spanish and English. Neto, Andrade and Sousa translated works by Langston Hughes, Léopold Senghor, Aimé Césaire and Keita Fodéba into Portuguese.⁴⁵ The Nigerian poet Niyi Osundare provides a compelling account of painful linguistic barriers constructed between African poets which prevented him from reading or even speaking with poets and writers from the former Portuguese colonies – Costa Andrade, Marcelino dos Santos, Paulina Chiziane – and his joy at finding a collection of Agostinho Neto’s poems in English translation:⁴⁶

I remember my chance encounter with Agostinho Neto’s *Sacred Hope* in the bookstore of the University of Dar es Salaam in 1983. Yes, *Sagrada Esperança* in English translation! It was for me like a moment of epiphany. There, at last, was Neto’s poetry in black and white – and in a language I understood!⁴⁷

He relates returning to Nigeria with six copies, for ‘the hunger of Nigerian readers for Neto’s poetry was no less ravenous than mine. ... *Sacred Hope* became part of our “canon”.’

Those who cannot read Portuguese can only read the poetry of the anti-colonial generation of the Portuguese colonies in translation. Yet a striking feature of many of these poems are the references to the world beyond. Connections of affective identity, solidarity, and inspiration are forged in the poetic imagination. Luis Mitras has observed of the Mozambican poet José Craveirinha that many of his greatest poems ‘are reflections on the situation in South Africa, Vietnam, Palestine, and also on the United States.’⁴⁸ Mitras discusses how in his poems, such as *Joe Louis Nosso Campeão* (Joe Louis Our Champion), Craveirinha constructs an affective relation of identity between the Mozambican people-yet-to-be and African Americans through the figure of the African American boxer Joe Louis, who defeated Max Schmeling from Nazi Germany in 1938. In Craveirinha’s poems the Mozambican people identify ‘with the suffering, with the joy, and the achievements of all African Americans’.⁴⁹ Likewise in *Cântico a um Deus de Alcatrão*, published in *Mensagem* in 1959, Craveirinha references the news of the murder of Emmett Till.⁵⁰ Emmett Till was a young African American boy who was kidnapped, tortured and brutally murdered in Mississippi in 1955 by two white men who were subsequently acquitted. Christopher Metress has discussed how the figure of Emmett Till has recurred repeatedly in African American literature, in the works of James Baldwin, Audre Lorde and many others.⁵¹ So too did the violence and injustice of his murder resonate in colonial Mozambique. Craveirinha later recalled that ‘what happened in America in relation to the blacks touched us a lot...the drama of the black American spoke to us a lot, it really spoke to us.’⁵²

References to individuals, places, and events of the African American and Caribbean experience recur in many of their poems. Agostinho Neto of Angola, employing what Ramazani calls poetry’s capacity for ‘extraordinary compression’,⁵³ summons in one line connections over centuries and continents, a connection of solidarity rooted in shared ‘sadness’: ‘Still my mournful song / And my sadness / In Congo in Georgia in Amazonas’.⁵⁴ The repeated and accentuated ‘still’ (*ainda*) –

Still

My dream of *batuque* on moonlit nights

Still my arms

still my eyes

still my cries

Still the lashed back

still the forsaken heart

the soul surrendered to faith

still doubt

conjures and intensifies the long temporality of slavery and colonialism, measured in centuries of repetition, centuries of exploitation and violence against continental and diasporic Africans, each sharing this suffering in their ‘isolated world’ over centuries, with ‘time standing still’. We find the same spatial and temporal coordinates of racial oppression, suffering, solidarity and hope across continents and centuries, the ‘living drama of a Race / drama of flesh and blood / which Life has written with the pain of centuries’, condensed within the space of a few lines of Angolan poet Viriato da Cruz’s *Mama Negra Canto de Esperança* (Black Mother Song of Hope).⁵⁵

Addressing ‘minha Mãe’, my Mother, African voices come to him,

voices from the plantations of Virginia

from the fields of the Carolinas

Alabama

Cuba

Brazil

from Harlem District South, Mississippi, ‘voices from the whole of America. Voices from the whole of Africa / voices of all the voices, in the loud voice of Langston / the beautiful voice of Guillén’. Cruz’s poem travels in a few lines from one continent to another, nimbly jumping between and bringing into close connection widely disparate contexts.⁵⁶ Neto and Cruz transcend vast expanses of time as well as space within the short lines of their poems. In doing so they interpolate the varied experiences of continental and diasporic Africans, separated by oceans and centuries, within the long

duration of a project of racial oppression and domination. This temporal connotation creates a sensibility of experiences and processes which connect Africans of the continent and diaspora in one historical structure which began with slavery and continues with colonialism. A sense of solidarity across experiences vastly distant in space and time is thus expressed, with this sense of long time which maintains a continuous project of oppression.

While Ramazani has compellingly foregrounded how the size of the poem offers a vehicle for moving widely across space and time within the limits of a line or page of text, others have explored how music can similarly transcend space and construct connection.⁵⁷ Bringing these sonic possibilities of affective connection within the space of the poem, Mozambican poet Noémia de Sousa plots the constellation of a broad historically rooted black identification and mobilisation through the transatlantic circulation of music, sounds and dancing. Her poems bring African American music and Brazilian dance into the colonial dance halls of Lourenço Marques and the soft night air of the African *bairros*. In *Samba*,⁵⁸ written in 1949 and published in the CEI bulletin *Mensagem* in 1959, this Brazilian dance developed by slaves in Bahia returns to Mozambique with its ‘fraternal rhythms’. Such broader cultural connections might in other hands afford substance for spurious claims to a unified and harmonious lusotropical identity. Sousa, on the contrary, conjures the discrepant, tense and, as Ramazani noted, profoundly experiential contradictions of colonial modernity, bringing into scornful juxtaposition the sham falsity of Western ‘civilization’ with the animated energy of African sound and rhythm. It is this form of what Ramazani terms modernist bricolage, the forging of disjuncture, which in Sousa’s poem refuses any trace of ahistorical ethnographic exoticism. The ‘hollow of the ballroom dance-hall’ is ‘filled with the fictitious lights of civilization’, with ‘false laughter’, ‘hand-painted dresses’ and ‘the frizzy hair / which civilization has de-frizzed’. But then the ‘sudden sounding of the jazz percussion’ ignites the room, soaring ‘like a cry of freedom’, ‘like a spear that tore away / the cellophane wrapped around the contrived poses.’ And then ‘the laughing smiles became as pure as the white of the manioc ... the glittering dresses of civilisation were gone’.

Sousa’s account of ‘the rhythms of the cow-hide drum’, the ‘guitars weaving the sorceries of the *xicumbos*’⁵⁹ is no celebration of the exotic. Here Sousa articulates

not just what Ramazani calls ‘intercultural collision’⁶⁰ but the discord of colonial imposition. Through her scornful, concise account, counterposing the ‘duplicity of the hired poses’ with the ‘fraternal rhythms of the samba’, the women’s ‘prudish high-heels’ with the bodies rising ‘victorious / gleaming’, Sousa compresses a searing contempt for the empty claims of European racial and cultural superiority. The trappings of civilisation are fictitious, false, cellophane wrapped, borrowed; the ‘familiar landscape’ of Africa is soft, warm, laughing, gleaming, shrieking. The fraternal rhythms bring with them across the ocean ‘the broken pieces of a slave’s lament’, reminding her people ‘long-dulled by a prescription of European quinine’ that ‘the shackles of the slave ships never died, no / they just changed name’. In the space of the colonial dance hall Sousa boldly traverses time and space, centuries and continents, weaving a shared and connected history, energy and spirit between contemporary Mozambicans, Africans, and Brazilians.

In *Deixa Passar o Meu Povo* (Let My People Go) it is the music of Marian Anderson and Paul Robeson that Sousa brings into her house of wood and corrugated iron in one of the poor African neighbourhoods on the edge of Lourenço Marques.⁶¹ Sousa’s poem again bounds across time and space to articulate and intensify a trans-continental sonic resonance based on shared histories of racial oppression and cultural expression. Robeson and Maria ‘sing for me / negro spirituals of Harlem’. Written in both English and Portuguese – ‘Let my people go / – oh deixa passar o meu povo / deixa passar o meu povo’ Sousa does not simply transcend linguistic boundaries, but reveals the necessarily multi-lingual character of colonial experience and of transnational solidarity. These sounds and words brought from afar by the cheap technology of radio disrupt her sleep and calm: ‘And I open my eyes and now I cannot sleep / Anderson and Paul resound within me / and they are not sweet voices of calm / Let my people go’. Fuelled by the inspiration of their music, their words, she is impelled to transcend her individuality and to write, with the help of Marian Anderson and obliged by the pain of her people, the ‘rebellions, sufferings, humiliations / tattooing in black the virgin white paper’.

The militants of the Portuguese colonies used poetry to insistently state and articulate their identity as Africans and their solidarity and shared identity with all Africans of

the continent as well as the diaspora. Such poetry constituted a firm rejection of any sense in which the peoples ruled and oppressed by Portuguese colonialism considered themselves to be Portuguese. In doing so, therefore, they spoke for Africans of all the Portuguese colonies and they situated themselves and their peoples in a broader shared subjectivity of the continent. African identity or being, African-ness, could be articulated in numerous ways and the actual content of African identity was, over decades, a central core of debate and differentiation within and between broader strands of Pan Africanism and Negritude. The African students in Lisbon in the 1940s and 50s, whose education had been solely focused on the Portuguese language, Portuguese history, culture and literature, read the literature of the Harlem Renaissance and Negritude and were radically affected by these bold affirmations of black and African identity.⁶² In the philosophical and poetic writings of Negritude, especially of Senghor, the question of Africa and African identity was configured through symbols of the continent, the environment, the music, the sculpture, the tom-tom, and rhythm.⁶³ Many of the same themes appear across their poetry, but articulating a historicised rather than essentialised African experience.

In her poem *Se me quiseres conhecer* (If you want to know me), Noémia de Sousa articulates a shared collective African identity with reference to sculpture.⁶⁴ But, just as Fanon observed how, with emerging colonial crisis and consciousness, the forms of ‘traditional’ sculpture appear with ‘new vigour ... carving figures and faces which are full of life’, with ‘arms raised from the body as if to sketch an action’,⁶⁵ so too Sousa describes the sculptures of her ‘unknown Maconde brother’ as vividly contemporary and urgent: ‘empty eye sockets despairing of possessing life / a mouth slashed with wounds of anguish / enormous, flattened hands, / raised as though to implore and threaten’.⁶⁶ Sousa’s ‘African soul’ is found not in the timeless forms of tradition – in Fanon’s words, ‘the dregs of art, surviving as if in a daze’,⁶⁷ – but ‘in the groans of the Negroes on the docks / in the frenzied dances of the Chopes / in the rebelliousness of the Shanganas’.⁶⁸ Naming various of the peoples of the Portuguese colony of Mozambique within the space of her poem she establishes the coordinates of a new Mozambican and African subjectivity, refusing the colonial impositions of Portuguese, *assimilado*, *indígena*, and tribe.

The symbols characteristic of negritude poetry – the idea of Africa, rhythm, the ‘tom tom’, the African landscape – also appear repeatedly in Agostinho Neto’s poems, but crafted to historicise the African condition. Neto situates the African experience on the terrain of colonial history, refusing any timeless ahistorical embrace of African tradition and culture. Neto’s construction of Africa is not one of a glorious past or a timeless present, but fundamentally a condition of suffering, slavery, centuries of oppression; and of struggle, hope, longing for freedom, resolute determination. Neto achieves this deliberate political historicising through a poetic stretching of language and imagery to weave political consciousness through the very landscape of Africa, the rivers, colours and skies of the continent:

We

of immense Africa

...

bleeding with pain and hope grief and strength

bleeding on land disembowelled by blood of hoes

bleeding in the sweat of estate of cotton field compulsion

bleeding hunger ignorance, despair death

...

bleeding and germinating

of immense Africa

black

and light as mornings of friendship

desirous and strong as steps of freedom

Our cries

are messenger drums of desire

...

flowering in the earth like the sun in seeds

cries Africa

cries of mornings when in the seas abound

shackled corpses

bleeding and germinating

...⁶⁹

In the space of one line, ‘bleeding in the sweat of estate of cotton field compulsion’, Neto compresses the political economy and lived experience of colonialism, for all Angolans, all Mozambicans, all Congolese, all Tanzanians, all Africans. In simple language he articulates a profound condemnation of the systematically corporal nature of the colonial political economy and racial violence. The entire edifice of colonial accumulation rested on the suffering African body, treated as one more resource among others. This is conjured acutely in Neto’s systematic mixing and combining of references to body, land and tool: ‘bleeding on land disembowelled by blood of hoes’. And yet in the one tight phrase, ‘bleeding and germinating’, repeated and echoing along the poem, he welds Africa’s long experience of colonial violence with the emergence of anticolonial struggle.

Neto’s poems politicise and historicise the very description of the African continent, inscribing the centuries of colonialism, the present of struggle and the future of freedom into the fabric of land, sea, sky, day and night. ‘There is no light / no stars in the dark sky / Everything on earth is shadow’. These simple lines describe the dark night of colonialism, as a woman whose ‘face depicts the soul / creased with suffering’ watches her love depart by sea for forced labour in São Tomé.⁷⁰ Even the moon is historicised in the poverty of the *musseques*, the poor African urban neighbourhoods: ‘at full moon / lit instead of / street lamps / for poverty and moonlight / marry well’.⁷¹ Ramazani emphasises how the line, verse and page of a poem enables a poetic compression, forcing discrepant or distanced referents together with increased intensity. This poetic compression articulates connections through historical time as well as across space. On the space of a page a poem can bring the long past into critical relation with the present, compressing time and confounding the linearity and separation of dominant temporalities.⁷² The bottomless seas hold the memories of slave ships, the corpses of slaves and of recently massacred workers; the earth is scorched by colonial violence, moistened with the sweat and blood of the forced labourer: ‘On the land burned by the terror of eras / enslaved in chains’⁷³; ‘and from the haemorrhage of the rhythms of Africa’s wounds / and even in the death of

blood on contact with the soil'.⁷⁴ But Neto's descriptions of the luxuriance of the African landscape are threaded with determination, hope and future:

Following
 the pathway to the stars
along the gazelle neck's agile curve
...

Alone

But tangible
clad in the green
of the new smell of forests after rain
of the sap of the thunderbolt
hands cupping the germination of laughter
in the fields of hope

Freedom in the eyes⁷⁵

Through a practice of naming places Neto simultaneously elaborates a continental sense of connection and solidarity and, again, historicises Africa which appears not as a timeless referent but a concrete set of places, peoples and struggles:

Bamako!
Where truth dropping on the leaf's sheen
unites with the freshness of men
like strong roots under the warm surface of the soil

and where grow love and future
fertilised in the generosity of the Niger
shaded in the immensity of the Congo
to the whim of the African breeze of hearts⁷⁶

The figure of the African drum, another characteristic trope of Negritude, appears often in Neto's poems. He conjures the image of the drum, however, not in the

celebration of a timeless African rhythm, but again in order to charge his rendering of the historical present. Employing the elasticity of poetic discourse, Neto stretches his words around the image of the drum to assert a new urgency, a newly beating African consciousness: 'Violent hands insidiously beat / the African drum / and the struck drum releases in me loud tom toms / of athletic shadows / in the red light of the fire after work'.⁷⁷ As if acknowledging the tired stereotypes of the drumming African, Neto continues 'I vibrate in the skinned hide of the festive drum / in europe's smiling with luxuries and tourisms' but through immediate juxtaposition he ties the luxuries and tourisms of Europe with the harsh labour of the colonised African: 'over fertilisation by black sweat / in africa's aged by the shame of being africa's / in africa's renewed of the sun's firm shine and the / silky and explosive transformation of the universe'. The weight of oppression apparently brings despair; 'I never thought myself so perverted / oh criminal impurity of colonial centuries'. But Neto conjures the tradition of drumming as, in the words of Fanon, 'an invitation to action and as a basis for hope'⁷⁸: 'outside the darkened chasms of negation / beside the rhythms of congested fingers / on the aged skin of the drum / in which I live and vibrate and cry out: / FORWARD!'.

Finally, one of the most important of the many connections of identity and solidarity forged in the anticolonial poetry of the Portuguese colonies was that between the *assimilados* and the *indígenas*. Portuguese colonialism was based on the ideology of assimilation, the fiction that the purpose of colonial occupation was to bring uncivilised Africans within the embrace of Portuguese civilisation. In the African colonies of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea the regime of assimilation, the *Estatuto dos Indígenas*, entailed a legal distinction between the small 'assimilated' elite, the *assimilados*, judged to have absorbed Portuguese culture, and the African majority, the *indígenas*.⁷⁹ While even the *assimilados* experienced various forms of racial discrimination and humiliation, the vast majority of the African population, the *indígenas*, had no rights whatsoever and only minimal social provision. The defining reality for the *indígenas* was on one hand forced labour: compulsory crop production and compulsory labour on roads, in mines, on Europeans farms and plantations; and on the other, systematic lack of education. Portuguese colonialism held the majority of the African population deliberately in a condition of modern illiteracy.

Fanon argued that ‘the first duty of the native poet is to see clearly the people he has chosen as the subject of his works of art. He cannot go forward resolutely unless he first realizes the extent of his estrangement from them.’⁸⁰ The anticolonial poets of the Portuguese colonies, both those who had travelled to Portugal and those who remained in the colonies, were keenly and painfully aware of the social and political inequalities between the *assimilados* and the *indígenas*, of the alienation of the *assimilado* from their fellow Mozambicans, Angolans and Guineans, and of the cruelties of forced labour, hunger and illiteracy suffered by the *indígenas*. Repeated denouncement of the reality of assimilation would be a central thread of the broader political discourse of the liberation movements.⁸¹ The political and strategic need to transcend divisions between *assimilados* and *indígenas* was analysed theoretically as a central challenge of the armed liberation struggle.⁸² And the pain of injustice and alienation, and strong commitment to solidarity across the divisions forged by colonialism, was a central thread of their poetry, even as they knew that their compatriots could not read their poems. Mário de Andrade, anticolonial intellectual and militant of Angola, observed in 1959 that while African poets writing in Portuguese, French and English had started to denounce the colonial situation, ‘if it is true to say that the coloniser finds himself dangerously concerned by the tone of these cries, the troubling fact remains: the great African masses do not participate in this poetic current.’⁸³ After providing short accounts of the historical development of poetry in each of the Portuguese colonies of Africa, Andrade concluded his article with the assertion that

Beyond the influence of other poetry from Africa and Black America, what dominates Portuguese poems is the willingness to assume the situation of the indigenous people. They bear witness to the failure of a policy of spiritual assimilation to Portuguese culture, through an awareness of African, popular and therefore national realities.⁸⁴

The poetic forging of solidarity between *assimilados* and *indígenas* is manifest in the centrality of certain themes which run through much of this poetry: the condition of the contract worker or forced labourer; the harsh realities of everyday life in the *musseques*, the poor urban African neighbourhoods; the figure of the market woman in the *musseques*; and the enforced illiteracy of the *indígenas*.

The pain of the *assimilado*'s estrangement from their fellow Africans forged cruelly by colonial policy is articulated in Neto's poem *Mussunda Amigo (Friend Mussunda)*.⁸⁵ In this poem he addresses a childhood friend, *Mussunda*, whose figure stands for all the *indígenas* and who reappears across subsequent poems.⁸⁶ "Here am I / friend *Mussunda*, Here am I", he begins. He recalls 'the sadness of those times', the times of their shared childhood, their songs of lament and their despair, the clouds in their eyes when they went to buy mangoes, regretting together 'the fate / of the women of *Funda*'. Situating their shared childhood in the streets of the poor African neighbourhood, Neto recounts the suffering of African women trying to scrape a living in the market, an image repeated in many of his poems.⁸⁷ Recalling those childhood times, and talking to his friend in Kimbundu – '*O ió kalunga ua mu bangele! / O ió kalunga ua mu bangele-lé-lelé...!*' ('This was the misfortune that happened! / This was the misfortune that happened that happened ...') – Neto confirms again, 'Here am I / friend *Mussunda*', and then 'My life I owe to you'. Recollection of an incident when his friend rescued him from a snake stands in for an entire social and historical relationship between all *assimilados* and all *indígenas*, in an attempt to stitch back together the bitter sundering wrought by colonial policy. And yet, speaking as an adult to his now-grown childhood friend, the poet cries out 'And I write poems you cannot follow / do you understand my anguish? / Here am I / friend *Mussunda* / writing poems you cannot follow'. '*O ió kalunga ua mu bangele!*', the terrible misfortune of colonialism.

Colonial illiteracy not only separated the *assimilado* from the *indígena* but, even more cruelly, the *indígenas* themselves. Their lives were often brutally wrenched apart by the compulsion to travel vast distances for forced labour, as described with grief in the São Tomean poet Alda do Espírito Santo's *Avo Mariana (Grandma Mariana)*.⁸⁸ Espírito Santo especially foregrounded the plight of women and children in her poetry, articulating pain and suffering, and endurance and strength.⁸⁹ In *Ano Mariana* she mournfully depicts Grandma Mariana, 'washerwoman / for the whites in the Fazenda' in São Tomé who 'One day ... came from distant lands / with her piece of cloth round the waist / and stayed.' Through repetition and poetic compression, she expresses with terrible simplicity the almost unspeakable personal fate of being sent to live and work far away:

Grandma Mariana stayed
washing, washing away, on the plantation
smoking her gourd pipe
outside the slave-quarters' door
remembering the journey from her sisal fields

...

Grandma Mariana came
and sat outside the slave-quarters' door
and smoked her gourd pipe
washing, washing,
a wall of silence.

The years drained away
In the hot land.

Osundare has commented that 'The tyranny of distance becomes one of the instruments with which a brutal system undermines the humanity of its victims. Illiteracy becomes disablement, silence, and disarticulation'.⁹⁰ This burden and cruelty of the modern illiteracy of the *indigenas* is addressed with equal pain in Angolan poet António Jacinto's *Carta dum Contratado* (Letter from a Contract Worker).⁹¹ Jacinto's simple love poem compresses and intensifies within its verses and its rhythm the inter-personal violence wreaked by the colonial political economy of forced labour, plantation labour. We learn of the tender passion between two young lovers, their 'intimate secrets', 'caresses', memories of 'lips as red as henna', 'hair black as mud', 'eyes sweet as honey', 'breasts hard as wild orange', 'nights lost in the long grass', the madness of their passion under the moonlight filtered through endless palm trees. Sweet memories of passion and the bitterness of separation are contained within this letter, which would be taken 'by the passing wind', understood by 'the cashew and coffee trees / the hyenas and buffaloes', so that 'if the wind should lose it on the way / the beasts and plants' would carry the 'burning words' of love. But the modern cruelty of colonialism is revealed, intensified, like a punch, in the final short lines.

I wanted to write you a letter ...

But oh my love, I cannot understand
why it is, why it is, why it is, my dear
that you cannot read
and I – Oh the hopelessness! – cannot write!

Conclusion

The poetry of the anticolonial generation of the Portuguese colonies in Africa has been studied widely over decades. In daring to revisit this poetry, not from within literary criticism but from a broader concern with anticolonial thought and practice, this paper has explored the ways in which poetry afforded a space and medium through which to articulate a new set of subjectivities, connections and solidarities which countered those violently imposed through colonialism. The various dimensions of affective connection forged in the poetic imagination of the African student intellectuals of the Portuguese colonies were constitutive of a new anticolonial subjectivity and looked towards liberated futures. Hanchard has observed that the quest for political community ‘often entails the imagining of texts, institutions, societies, even people that exist only in the headquarters of the imagination.’⁹² Prior to the formation of national liberation movements fighting against Portuguese colonialism, poetry served as a vehicle to imagine and call into being new subjectivities and affective relations which actively countered the restrictions and boundaries of colonialism and racism. For the students of the Portuguese colonies, poetry offered a space in which to construct solidarities and visions of new political communities of belonging, freedom and flourishing, according to their own sense of long and wide histories across and beyond the space of the Portuguese empire. In part limited to the restricted realm of the elite and the literate – though poems did circulate and were spoken – poetry was nevertheless a space for the construction of imagined publics not yet available, but willed into being. The anticolonial poetic imagination stretched time and compressed space, transcending oceans, centuries and social divisions to call into being new bonds and connections, new visions of shared hope,

shared futures of struggle and freedom. Occupying the space between imposed categories of colonial discourse and the lived experiences of the colonised, the language of poetry was employed to deny, defy, scorn and transcend the barriers and containers of racialised exclusion and oppression imposed by colonial violence.

If the initial impulse for returning to this poetry is a concern with the political, however, should we not also consider the actual politics of anticolonialism practised by these poet militants? In short, did the practice of these leaders and their liberation movements, and the legacies of their practice, live up to the visions, values and dreams set out in their poems? And is it a basic error, as David Scott has suggested, to look back from our own times to heroic expressions of anticolonialism, in light of the subsequent tragedies and failures of the postcolonial condition?⁹³ Such questions engage with the broader relationship between poetry and politics, and with the politics of studying anticolonial histories in our own present times. Just as the meaning of poetry cannot simply be translated into prose, so too we cannot expect a direct relationship between the poetic imagination and what is achieved through political practice.⁹⁴ The register of political practice and, especially, the armed liberation struggle, is necessarily shaped by a very different set of imperatives which enable and constrain action and change. Perhaps this is why David Scott considers tragedy to be the most suitable mode through which to apprehend anticolonial pasts. We might also explore the ways that contemporary poets themselves construct a relationship with the poetry of this earlier generation, as Inocência Mata has done in the context of Angola.⁹⁵ In doing so she finds, through this strained dialogue, that the current ‘generation of uncertainties’ are discovering their mission and, again, seeking ‘the pluralization of views about the country and about the nation which is, at long last, in the process of being made painfully.’⁹⁶

This paper has focused on how poetry provided a space to articulate numerous affective connections within and beyond the rigid and imposed containers of the colony. Rather than asking to what extent this poetry informed the actual practice of the liberation movements, perhaps we should understand this poetry as one of the conditions of possibility for the subsequent formation of the linked liberation struggles.

¹ There is a huge literature on this poetry. One of the earliest pioneering studies in English is Russell G. Hamilton's *Voices From an Empire: a History of Afro-Portuguese Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975).

² See Richard Drayton and David Motadel, "Discussion: the futures of global history," *Journal of Global History* 13, no.1 (2018): 1-21; Maxine Berg (ed) *Writing the history of the global: challenges for the 21st century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Simon J. Potter and Jonathan Saha, "Global History, Imperial History and Connected Histories of Empire," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 16 (2015); Bernhard Struck, Kate Ferris and Jacques Revel, "Introduction: Space and scale in Transnational history," *International History Review* 33 (2011), 573-584.

³ Drayton and Motadel, "Futures of global history," 3.

⁴ Amitav Acharya, "Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 647-59; Alex Anievas, Nivi Manchanda and Robbie Shilliam (eds), *Race and Racism in International Relations: Confronting the Global Colour Line* (London: Routledge, 2014); John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760-2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁵ Allan Layug and John M. Hobson (eds), *Global International Theory: Beyond the Western-centric Conception of the International* (London: Routledge, forthcoming); Arlene B. Tickner and David L. Blaney (eds), *Thinking International Relations Differently* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Arlene B. Tickner and Ole Wæver (eds), *International Relations Scholarship Around the World* (London: Routledge, 2009).

⁶ John M. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Sandra Halperin, *In the Mirror of the Third World: Capitalist Development in Modern Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997).

⁷ Sam Okoth Opondo, *Diplomatic Para-citations: Genre, Foreign Bodies, and the Ethics of Co-habitation* (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2022); Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015); Siba N'Zatioula Grovogui, *Beyond Eurocentrism and Anarchy: Memories of International Order and Institutions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁸ See, among many others, Sanjay Seth, *Beyond Reason: Postcolonial Theory and the Social Sciences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); Sankaran Krishna, "Race, Amnesia and the Education of International Relations," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 26 (2001), 401-424.

⁹ See Maryse Condé's remarkable novel *Segu* (London: Penguin, 2017, first published in English in 1978, in French in 1984) and the novels of Amitav Ghosh such as his Ibis trilogy *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011), *Flood of Fire* (2015).

¹⁰ Mário Pinto de Andrade, *Mário Pinto de Andrade: Uma Entrevista dada a Michel Laban* (Lisboa: Edições João Sá da Costa, 1997), 68-84; Dalila Cabrita Mateus, *A Luta pela Independência: A Formação das Elites Fundadoras da FRELIMO, MPLA e PAIGC* (Lisboa: Editorial Inquérito, 1999), 65-114. Focusing especially on the activity of publishing, Daniel Melo has emphasised and analysed how the circulation of people within the space of the Portuguese empire, between Portugal, Brazil and Africa and especially through exile, was tightly connected to the circulation of various strands of radical and progressive ideas, texts, literature, poetry and short stories. See Daniel Melo, "The contribution of Lusophone publishing in the autonomy of the

periphery: Exile, diaspora, anti-colonialism and national literature in Africa,” in Maria do Rosário Monteiro, Mário S. Ming Kong and Maria João Pereira Neto (eds) *Modernity, Frontiers and Revolutions* (London: CRC Press, 2018).

¹¹ Andrade, *Uma Entrevista*, 74-5, 80-83; Lúcio Lara, *Um Amplo Movimento: itinerário do MPLA através de documentos e anotações. Vol. 1 Até fev. 1961* (Luanda, 1997), 30. See in particular Alexandra Reza, “African Anti-colonialism and the Ultramarinos of the Casa dos Estudantes do Império,” *Journal of Lusophone Studies*, 1 (2016), 37–56; and Reza, “As geografias de conexão insurgentes da Casa dos Estudantes do Império,” in Cláudia Castelo and Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo (eds), *Casa dos Estudantes do Império: dinâmicas coloniais, conexões transnacionais* (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2017).

¹² Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 31, 47. See also his earlier analysis of postcolonial poetry in Ramazani, *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001).

¹³ Russell G. Hamilton, “A country also built of poems: Nationalism and Angolan Literature,” *Research in African Literatures* 13 (1982), 321. Hamilton begins this essay with a lengthy discussion of theories of nationalism focusing on the work of Joshua Fishman. See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minnesota, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) for a critique of analyses of anticolonial struggles informed by European or apparently universal theories of nationalism.

¹⁴ Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 28.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁶ The way in which Ramazani employs the category of postcolonial, as in postcolonial theory more broadly, does not imply a period of time after colonialism, but a social condition and context shaped by colonialism and its legacies.

¹⁷ Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 99.

¹⁸ See, as well as Ramazani, Simon Gikandi, “Preface: Modernism in the World,” *Modernism/modernity* 13 (2006), 419-424; Hanchard, Michael, “Afro-Modernity: Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora” *Public Culture* 11 no. 1 (1999): 245-268.

¹⁹ Simon Gikandi, “Picasso, Africa, and the Schemata of Difference,” *Modernism/modernity* 10 (2003), 455-480; Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel (eds), *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Kobena Mercer (ed), *Cosmopolitan Modernisms* (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Institute of International Visual Arts; MIT Press, 2005).

²⁰ Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 100.

²¹ Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*; Ramazani, “The Local Poem in a Global Age,” *Critical Inquiry* 43 (2017), 670-696.

²² Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 4-5.

²³ Ramazani, “The Local Poem,” 676.

²⁴ Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 14; Ramazani, “The Local Poem”.

²⁵ Ramazani, “The Local Poem,” 695.

²⁶ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 170-179, 193.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 182.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 183.

²⁹ Many published versions exist in different languages. See for example Césaire, Aimé, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, Bilingual ed. Trans and ed. A. James Arnold and

Clayton Eshleman, 2013). For important discussion about the changing form of these various editions, see Césaire, Aimé, *Resolutely Black: Conversations with Françoise Vergès* (Oxford: Polity, trans. Matthew Smith, 2020); Melas, Natalie, “Poetry’s circumstance and racial time: Aimé Césaire, 1935-45,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 115 no. 3 (2016):469-493; Arnold, A. James, “Beyond Postcolonial Césaire: Reading Cahier D’un Retour au Pays Natal Historically,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 44 no. 3 (2008): 258-275; Arnold, A. James, “Césaire’s Notebook as Palimpsest: The Text before, during and after World War II,” *Research in African Literatures* 35 no. 3 (2004): 133-140. This scholarship emphasises the changing form and style of the Cahier across various versions published in Havana (1939), New York (1947), Paris (1947), Paris (1956) and elsewhere, underlining the contextual particularity of the claim on the 1956 volume published by *Présence Africaine* that it was the ‘definitive’ version. Almeida’s research demonstrates that Mário Pinto de Andrade had a close role in editing this 1956 version and that it was perhaps he who added this very claim. See Almeida, Lilian Pestre, *Césaire hors frontières. Poétique, intertextualité et littérature comparée* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2015); Arnold, A. James, “Césaire’s Negritude: to ‘Africa’ and back,” *New West Indian Guide* 91 (2017): 265-270.

³⁰ Edwards, Brent Hayes, “Aimé Césaire and the syntax of influence,” *Research in African Literatures* 36 no. 2 (2005): 1 citing Césaire, Aimé, “Poesie et connaissance,” *Tropiques* 12 (1945), 166; Césaire, Aimé “Poetry and knowledge” in *Lyric and Dramatic Poetry, 1946-82* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990, trans A. James Arnold), 27.

³¹ Césaire cited in Melas, “Poetry’s circumstance and racial time”, 471; Melas’s translation.

³² Melas, “Poetry’s circumstance and racial time”, 473, 474.

³³ Hanchard, “Contours of Black Political Thought: An Introduction and Perspective,” *Political Theory* 38 (2010), 510–536. In this article Hanchard focuses specifically on the question of black political thought. He occasionally includes the context of apartheid in his discussion, but rarely if ever specifically mentions colonialism. However, some elements of his argument resonate strongly with the analysis of anticolonial thought and practice. See also Hanchard, *Party/Politics: Horizons in Black Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) and “Afro-Modernity”.

³⁴ Hanchard, “Black Political Thought,” 518-19 (original emphasis).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 519.

³⁶ *Ibid.*; this theme is explored widely in Hanchard, *Party/Politics*.

³⁷ Reza, “African Anti-colonialism and the Ultramarinos of the Casa dos Estudantes do Império”.

³⁸ Vítor Barros documents this point in detail with regard to Amílcar Cabral. See Barros, “Between truth and inventions: How public commemorations recite the biography of Amílcar Cabral” in Anaïs Angelo (ed) *The Politics of Biography in Africa: Borders, Margins, and Alternative Histories of Power* (London: Routledge, 2022), 97-117.

³⁹ Andrade, *Uma Entrevista*; Lúcio Lara, *Um Amplo Movimento*. See also Branwen Gruffydd Jones, “From rupture to revolution: race, culture and the practice of anti-colonial thought,” *African Identities* 13 (2015), 4-17; and “Race, Culture and Liberation: African anticolonial thought and practice in the time of decolonisation,” *International History Review* 42 (2020), 1238-1256.

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- ⁴⁰ Jacinto, interview with Michel Laban, Luanda 23 April 1988, in Michel Laban, *Angola: Encontro com Escritores vol. I* (Porto: Fundação Eng. António de Almeida, 1991), 147.
- ⁴¹ Drayton and Motadel, “Futures of Global History,” 15.
- ⁴² Ramazani, *Transnational Poetics*, 19, 53.
- ⁴³ See Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2003) for extended discussion of the necessary centrality of translation in black and anticolonial thought and practice, and the fascinating discussion of translation as a work of anti-colonial solidarity in Capancioni, Claudia, “Joyce Lussu’s ‘Africa, Out of Portugal’: translating José Craveirinha, Kaoberdiano Dambarà, Marcelino dos Santos, Agostinho Neto, and Alexander O’Neill in Italian” *Scientia Traductionis* 11 (2012).
- ⁴⁴ Melas, “Poetry’s circumstance and racial time”; James “Beyond Postcolonial Césaire”; James, “Césaire’s Notebook as Palimpsest”.
- ⁴⁵ Andrade, *Uma Entrevista*, 76-81, 101.
- ⁴⁶ Osundare, “António Jacinto, Poet of Consequence” in Niyi Afolabi and Donald Burness (eds), *Seasons of Harvest: Essays on the Literature of Lusophone Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press), 29-31.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.
- ⁴⁸ Mitras, “‘America’ in the Poetry of José Craveirinha: The Mirror of an Imaginary Other,” *English in Africa* 31 (2004), 122.
- ⁴⁹ Mitras, “Poetry of José Craveirinha,” 129.
- ⁵⁰ Craveirinha, “Cântico a um Deus de Alcatrão,” *Mensagem: Boletim – Orgão Mensal da Casa dos Estudantes do Império* Agosto, Ano II número 3 (1959), 15.
- ⁵¹ Metress, “‘No Justice, No Peace’: The Figure of Emmett Till in African American Literature,” *MELUS* 28 (2003), 87-103.
- ⁵² Craveirinha, interview with Michel Laban, Maputo, 27 July 1993, in Michel Laban, *Moçambique: Encontro com Escritores vol. I* (Porto: Fundação Eng. António de Almeida, 1998), 89.
- ⁵³ Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 16.
- ⁵⁴ “Aspiração,” in Francisco Tenreiro e Mário Pinto de Andrade (eds), *Poesia Negra de Expressão Portuguesa* (Lisboa: Editora Gráfica Portuguesa, 1953) 6-7. Fundação Mário Soares / AMS - Arquivo Mário Soares / DMJ - Documentos 50º MUD Juvenil: http://hdl.handle.net/11002/fms_dc_93955. Citing the English translation in *Agostinho Neto: Complete Poetry* (Luanda: Dr. António Agostinho Neto Foundation, 2015), 91-2.
- ⁵⁵ Cruz, “Mama Negra Canto de Esperança,” in Tenreiro and Andrade, *Poesia Negra*, 15-17.
- ⁵⁶ Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 16; 53-4.
- ⁵⁷ See Shana L. Redmond, *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2013); Brent Hayes Edwards, “The Sound of Anticolonialism” in Ronald Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan (eds), *Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique* (Duke University Press, 2016), 269-91.
- ⁵⁸ Sousa “Samba,” *Mensagem: Boletim – Orgão Mensal da Casa dos Estudantes do Império* Janeiro, Ano II no. 1 (1959), 14-15; citing the English translation by Luís Rafael in Rafael (ed), *Stained Glass: Poetry from the Land of Mozambique* (Howrah: Roman Books, 2011), 120-122.
- ⁵⁹ *Xicumbos* (in Xironga) are the spirits of the ancestors.
- ⁶⁰ Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 99.

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- ⁶¹ Sousa, “Deixa passar o meu povo,” in Tenreiro e Andrade, *Poesia Negra*, 14-15. Citing English translation in James de Jongh, *Vicious Modernism: Black Harlem and the Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 123-4.
- ⁶² See Gruffydd Jones, “From rupture to revolution,” and “Race, Culture and Liberation,” for further exploration of this critical engagement.
- ⁶³ Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Ce que l’homme noir apporte” in Le Cardinal Verdier (ed), *L’homme de Couleur* (Paris: Plon, 19), 292-314; Senghor, “The spirit of civilization, or the laws of African negro culture,” *Présence Africaine* New bimonthly series (Special Issue nos 8-9-10 June-November. The 1st International Conference of Negro Writers and Artists, Paris-Sorbonne 19th-22nd September 1956. Full Account), 51-64.
- ⁶⁴ Sousa, “Se me quiseres conhecer,” *Mensagem: Boletim – Orgão Mensal da Casa dos Estudantes do Império* Agosto, Ano XIV no. 3 (1962), 47; citing the English translation in Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier (eds) *The Penguin Book of Modern African Poetry* (London: Penguin Books, fourth edition, 1998), 216-17.
- ⁶⁵ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 194.
- ⁶⁶ Sousa, “Se me quiseres conhecer,” 216.
- ⁶⁷ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 194.
- ⁶⁸ Sousa, “Se me quiseres conhecer,” 217.
- ⁶⁹ “Bleeding and Germinating (1953)” in *Agostinho Neto: Complete Poetry*, 108-9.
- ⁷⁰ “Departure for Forced Labour (1945),” in *ibid.*, 65.
- ⁷¹ “Saturday in the *musseques* (1948)” in *ibid.*, 66.
- ⁷² Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, 16; 53-4.
- ⁷³ “The Massacre of São Tomé (1953),” in *ibid.*, 112.
- ⁷⁴ “The Tears of Africa (1960),” in *ibid.*, 146.
- ⁷⁵ “The pathway to the stars (1953),” in *ibid.*, 104-5.
- ⁷⁶ “Bamako (1954),” in *ibid.*, 116.
- ⁷⁷ “On the skin the drum (1953)” in *ibid.*, 110.
- ⁷⁸ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 187.
- ⁷⁹ See José Capela, *O Imposto de Palhota e a Introdução do Modo de Produção Capitalista Nas Colónias* (Porto: Afrontamento, 1977); Mário Moutinho, *O Indígena no Pensamento Colonial Português (1895-1961)* (Lisboa: Edições Universitárias Lusófonas, 2000); Elisabeth Ceita Vera Cruz, *O Estatuto do Indigenato: Angola: A Legalização da Discriminação na Colonização Portuguesa* (Luanda: Chá de Caxinde, 2006); Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, *The ‘Civilising Mission’ of Portuguese Colonialism, 1870-1930* (Cambridge: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
- ⁸⁰ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 182.
- ⁸¹ See Gruffydd Jones “Race, Culture and Liberation.”
- ⁸² Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture”.
- ⁸³ Mário Pinto de Andrade, “Poètes noirs d’expression portugaise,” *Le Journal des Poètes* 9 (1959), 6.
- ⁸⁴ Andrade, “Poètes noirs,” 7.
- ⁸⁵ Neto, “Mussunda Amigo,” *Mensagem: Boletim – Orgão Mensal da Casa dos Estudantes do Império* Agosto, Ano II número 3 (1959), 24-5, citing the English translation in *Agostinho Neto: Complete Poetry*, 102-3.
- ⁸⁶ “The Green of the Palm Trees of my Youth”; “The Tears of Africa,” in *Agostinho Neto: Complete Poetry*, 127-132; 146-7.
- ⁸⁷ See Phyllis Peres, “Women, Bodies, and Nation in Angolan Poetry of the 1950s,” *Research in African Literatures* 38 no. 1 (2007), 35-45.

⁸⁸ Alda do Espírito Santo, “Avo Mariana,” *Présence Africaine*, Nouvelle série, No. 57 (1966), 493-494. Citing English translation in Moore and Beier, *Modern African Poetry*, 309-310.

⁸⁹ See also her poems *Lá no Agua grande* in Tenreiro and Andrade, *Poesia Negra*, 6; and *Para lá da Praia* in *Mensagem: Boletim – Orgão Mensal da Casa dos Estudantes do Império* Fevereiro, Ano II no. 2 (1959), 21.

⁹⁰ Osundare, “António Jacinto,” 40.

⁹¹ Jacinto, “Carta dum contratado,” *Mensagem: Boletim – Orgão Mensal da Casa dos Estudantes do Império* Fevereiro, Ano II no. 2 (1959), 13-15. Citing the English translation in Moore and Beier, *Modern African Poetry*, 12-14. As Hamilton highlighted, the figure of the contract worker was a central theme in this anticolonial poetry. Hamilton, “A country also built of poems,” 323.

⁹² Hanchard, *Party/Politics*, 5-6.

⁹³ David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005).

⁹⁴ See João Paulo Borges Coelho’s discussion of the autonomy of the literary and political spheres in Mozambique in “Writing in a changing world: the difficult relationship with reality,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 50 (2013), 21-30.

⁹⁵ Inocência Mata, “Under the sign of a projective nostalgia: Agostinho Neto and Angolan postcolonial poetry,” *Research in African Literatures* 38 no. 1 (2007), 54-67. See also, in a similar vein, Ana Mafalda Leite, “Exile and Death in José Craveirinha’s Later Poetry,” *Research in African Literatures*, 38 no. 1 (2007), 87-94 and Hamilton, “The audacious young poets of Angola and Mozambique,” *Research in African Literatures*, 26 no. 1 (1995), 85-96.

⁹⁶ Mata, “Agostinho Neto and Angolan postcolonial poetry,” 65.