Unfolding the Postcolonial City.
Marginality and Resistance between Novel and Collage

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SUMMARY

This research investigates forms of urban marginality and resistance in the postcolonial city by analysing novels and practising collage; in doing this, it explores a possible methodology and considers the decolonial potential of creative approaches in geography. The postcolonial city is an exemplary case of space as a process, while marginality and resistance are aspects of the processual nature of space. The novels *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament* by In Koli Jean Bofane (2018) and *The Land at the End of the World* by António Lobo Antunes (1979), respectively set in Kinshasa and Lisbon, are the starting points for the analysis. Following a theoretical framework inspired by Jacques Derrida's notion of *différance* and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's idea of assemblage, the work merges dismantling reading of the literary texts with visual explorations and assemblages. It first identifies the forms of urban marginality and possibilities of resistance in the novels, then extracts and prolongs them outside of the texts through social scientific literature and visual materials, generating lines of flight and rhizomatic investigations. These lines of flight coalesce in collages, which assemble components of diverse natures in planes of composition centred on simultaneity, movement, and overlapping. Articulating resistance in a Deleuzian key as a line of flight and space-producing force contributes to understanding alternative creative methodologies as possible forms of resistance; indeed, they are potential ways to decolonise the discipline by making space for other practices and forms of knowledge. Therefore, the object of the investigation and the methodology merge towards a common goal: that of contributing to decolonising the colonial matrix of power in its different forms by considering epistemological aspects.

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It is also to acknowledge and investigate the fact that there are spaces that enable particular expressions that scrumple, precisely like a Baroque fold, time as memory, time as instant, and time as itself.

(John-David Dewsbury)

INTRODUCTION

0.1. Overview

This research aims to investigate forms of urban marginality and resistance in the postcolonial city by analysing novels and practising collage. In doing this, it explores a possible methodology and considers the decolonial potential of creative approaches in geography. The postcolonial city is an exemplary case of space as a process that characterises our era, while marginality and resistance are aspects of the processual nature of space; I observe this space through Kinshasa and Lisbon. I use the term marginality in a fairly all-encompassing way to describe a necessary condition for an experiential understanding of the margins, of being 'out of place', as well as the process of marginalisation which leads to that condition. While investigating marginality, I pursue possibilities of resistance, by which I mean a form of creative potential that gives access to a novel frame of mind and attitude. Although this idea of resistance is mainly inspired by Gilles Deleuze's thought, the condition of marginality as a potential site of resistance recalls the reflections of bell hooks (1989). In particular, the margins are a unique space of resistance and creativity, and inhabiting them is a way of being simultaneously inside and outside, of understanding both the margins and the centre and recognising their interdependence. For this reason, following bell hooks, the condition of marginality can offer a "radical perspective" which allows us to imagine alternatives (ibid., p. 20).

The methodology I adopt is an integral part of the analysis. Indeed, through analysis of marginality and resistance, I also test the potential of my creative approach as a form of resistance within the discipline. I have shaped my research around four main objectives. The first is to investigate the forms of urban marginality identified in the novels, with particular attention to affective and psychic spaces, and to consider the possibilities of resistance. The second is to practise a visual analysis through collage and explore the connections inspired by Jacques Derrida's notion of *différance* and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's idea of

assemblage. The third is to identify a possible method that guarantees both the criteria of transferability and that of openness to change and transformation. Finally, the fourth objective is to consider how this approach may contribute to decolonising perspectives within geographical research.

The originality of this work primarily lies in its methodology. This is due, on the one hand, to the search for an alternative relationship between the argumentative and visual dimensions within geography and, on the other, to the fact that the methodology is not separated from the analysis but is a part of it. Indeed, not only does the analysis integrate the literary and visual registers (both of which are considered from a non-representational perspective), but it also incorporates reflection upon the method. The significance of this research is in applying the non-representational idea of space as a process to the postcolonial city. This allows me to consider Kinshasa and Lisbon in their singularity through unusual features, marginality and resistance, which I recognise as spatial issues and components. Moreover, rearticulating resistance in a Deleuzian key as a creative and productive force leads to an idea of resistance as a line of flight and space-producing force. This contributes to understanding the alternative creative methodologies as possible forms of resistance and as potential ways to decolonise the discipline, by making space for other practices and forms of knowledge.

From the preliminary research questions arise implications of a logical-sequential order and connections of an associative nature. I examine these with support from a poststructuralist theoretical framework and by practising a hybrid methodology that is able to accommodate components considered ascientific. Investigating the postcolonial city through examples of marginality and resistance extrapolated from the novels and explored through social scientific literature and collage implies considering creativity within the social scientific discourse. This requires constant monitoring, as the issues and possible solutions that arise during the work do not necessarily conform to argumentative coherence, due to the interaction of the logos-based dimension of the research with emotion- and intuition-based ones. To respond to this need, I devise a procedure that draws from the theoretical framework, translating some of Deleuze and Guattari's indications into practice. Subsequently, I apply it to different materials, keeping the focus on marginality and

resistance in the postcolonial city. In this way, I seek to preserve analytical rigour while practising a methodology that goes beyond the usual schemes of qualitative methodologies.

Marginality is a multifunctional and multiscale concept that can be applied to various situations and assume numerous forms, from the highly individual to the more socially codified. By unpacking it, Chappatte (2015) recognises three components: margins (which relate to space), marginality as a condition, and marginalisation as a process. He also highlights the implications of power asymmetry, revealing the analytical potential of marginality. Being entangled in "a maze of systems", marginality is complex, nuanced, and difficult to define (Déry et al. 2012, p. 14). In my research, marginality is intended to be understood as a condition that may be transitory or permanent, and is not necessarily limited to economic or social status. I chose this term rather than others, such as subaltern or oppressed, to cover a broader array of typologies of exclusion, which can be very different from one another. Indeed, a marginal person may not be oppressed or subaltern at all, but instead be in a comfortable position of power within a social group or belong to a wealthy social class; in such cases, the condition of marginality takes on distinctive psychological or existential traits, as will emerge from the analysis of the novels. Moreover, by evoking the margins, the term marginality emphasises the spatial component; this helps to reinforce the notion that any condition of exclusion, even if it does not seem directly connected to place, is a spatial issue.

While not a desirable condition, marginality is a seemingly unavoidable component of human existence, destined to regenerate as part of the power dynamics that not only define the framework of human beings but also determine quality of life. For this reason, it felt important to focus on the possibilities of resistance. Far from considering resistance in reactive or oppositional terms, as a stance against specific power relationships or targeted forms of authority, I understand it proactively as a form of creative potential within a given situation. In this sense, resistance may be intended as a line of flight in itself; indeed, in an openly Deleuzian and Guattarian sense (2017), it is framed as an escape which is not a mere exit way but instead gives access to the creation of a novel pathway and vision. As will be discussed in the theoretical chapter, for Deleuze and Guattari, resistance is a productive force that precedes the process of stratification of power, intervening during this process

rather than after it has occurred (Deleuze 2018; Collet 2020; Smith 2016). This is the reason why they do not consider resistance in oppositional terms, as a form of counterattack against something. Resistance does not operate by opposing, but rather by creating new modes of existence; it is an affirmative and creative force that does not proceed by negating the existing but by creating new possibilities (Roberts and Dewsbury 2021). This does not imply denying structural or stratified forms of power; instead, it means that resistance precedes these forms of structuration. The theoretical chapter's section on collage and resistance returns to this point and discusses it further. Moreover, crisis, fragility, exclusion, isolation, minority, and every state belonging to the extended family of marginality can be regarded as profitable, because vulnerability generates needs, dependence, and subordination; in turn, these needs serve the dynamics that are engendered by and can benefit from them, through directly or indirectly using them for profit. Resistance, thus, can be understood as originally anti-capitalist.

I have circumscribed the field of investigation to the postcolonial city as a space-time framework. As with urbanisation, postcolonialism is a process that characterises our present and of which we are constituent. In this respect, it is not a condition that we simply go through or allow to pass. Instead, as participants in the process, we engage in its transformation and thus determine what type of postcolonialism we want to belong to. I have further restricted the space and time of the investigation to two capitals: contemporary Kinshasa, and Lisbon in the immediate post-Portuguese colonial war period. Both the cities and their respective historical settings stem from the novels; therefore, the literary angle from which I observe urban marginality and resistance contributes to the definition of the space-time framework used within my research. Moreover, from the novels I select certain forms of marginality and discuss the possibilities of resistance, whether expressed or latent. This further narrows the field of investigation and draws attention to specific types of marginality, namely cultural, socioeconomic, political, and psychological.

This work fits into the creative geohumanities while engaging with debates in cultural geography. With the burgeoning field of geohumanities, my research shares the following characteristics: a concern for encounters with inner and outer worlds, whether in the form of connection or collision (Valentine 2008; Wilson 2016); an interest in relationships between

subjective and collective dimensions, even when the connection is missing, interrupted, or non-recognised; a belief that relational qualities play a substantial role in the process of worldbuilding (Hawkins et al. 2015). Moreover, on the one hand, this research is located at the intersection between geography and humanistic branches of knowledge, such as literature, philosophy, history, and visual art-based practices; on the other hand, it integrates qualitative methods from the humanities, such as literary textual analysis and collage. The significance of this transdisciplinary attitude and the presence of conceptual and practice-based dimensions are traits recognised within geohumanities (Cresswell et al. 2015; Dear 2015), along with a focus on experimentation aimed at the practice of knowledge production itself (Hawkins et al. 2015). Nonetheless, my research participates in the debates within cultural geography, connecting to certain recurrent themes: memory and reciprocal influence in relation to places (Jones 2011; Drozdzewski et al. 2016; Hubner and Dirksmeier 2022); the role of space in the construction and transformation of identity processes; the relationship between globalisation and the local dimension; the impact of conflicts, violence, and trauma (Coddington and Micieli-Voutsinas 2017; Coddington 2017; Pain 2021); and the role of emotions and affects in understanding the world, both theoretically and in its unfolding everyday life (Thrift 2008; Anderson and Harrison 2010; Dixon and Straughan 2013). Above all, it touches upon themes related to postcoloniality and decoloniality by exploring the colonial aftermath and focusing on geographical contributions to promoting alternative approaches to the dominant narrative (Noxolo 2017a; 2017b; Barker and Pickerill 2020; Sidaway 2000). From the perspective permeating the research, all these aspects are intertwined with the creative one; indeed, I emphasise the intrinsic critical value in the creative dimension (Hawkins 2015; De Leeuw and Hawkins 2017).

While the cases that inspired this research arise from novels, the analysis merges a dismantling reading of the literary texts with the practice of collage, integrating the theoretical and visual dimensions of the investigation. I will explain this briefly in the last section of this introduction, and then in more detail in the methodological chapter. What is worth making explicit here, however, is the consideration that the methodological choice of collage has deep-rooted implications for the core of this research, in terms of marginality and resistance. Indeed, the work revolves around this core at different levels. By exploring the novels through textual analysis and the practice of collage, the research investigates not only

the singularities identified as study cases, but also the potentiality for creative approaches to practise forms of resistance within the disciplinary apparatus. In doing this, the object of the investigation and the methodology intersect towards a common goal: that of contributing to decolonising the colonial matrix of power in its different forms, including those that concern knowledge (Quijano 2007; Mignolo 2009). In the theoretical chapter I discuss the meaning of micropolitics for Deleuze and Guattari (2017) and consider the micropolitical aspect of collage.

The novels *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament* by In Koli Jean Bofane (2018) and *The Land at the End of the World* by António Lobo Antunes (2012), set in Kinshasa and Lisbon respectively, are my starting point for analysis. Their selection was driven by a focus on different expressions of marginality in the postcolonial city, which can be found in both texts. While drawing on literary and creative geography, this research adopts a non-representational approach and is grounded in a poststructuralist theoretical framework, which is based upon the thinking of Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari. The methodology integrates textual analysis with collage, experimenting with a hybrid investigation and incorporating the Derridean concept of textuality and the assemblage theory of Deleuze and Guattari. Indeed, it considers literary writing as a trace for further investigation and proposes a reading that aims to go beyond the boundaries of the novel, through lines of flight of explicit Deleuzian and Guattarian influence. Collage is part of the process, potentially in becoming; the compositions integrated into the analytical chapters are not intended as results, but as visual explorations of the 'overflowing' triggered by lines of flight, a visionary deflagration of meanings. The Deleuze-inspired textual analysis goes beyond the novels by following these lines of flight, while collage seems to execute the Derridean concept of *différance* through a migration of visual fragments, which share a plane of composition through juxtaposition and non-syntactical relations. Therefore, novels are used not to provide a vision of the literary product but to raise other visions beyond it. In the same vein, the aim of collage is not to create deep maps of the literary texts. Instead, the novels become a hub for a differential network, which develops through discursive and visual ramifications. By practising collage, I move beyond the literary text and explore related topics through visual and conceptual fragments and stronger or weaker connections. Indeed, collage is a rhizomatic tool that can expand and deepen elements, concepts, emotions, and images,

without the need to achieve any particular result. The outcome is the process and the investigation in itself.

Following a non-representational approach, I do not consider novels as representative of reality nor understand fiction and reality to be opposing dimensions. Instead, I interpret reality as being composed of facts and their narration, a narration that is always fictional and outside of which facts cannot be understood. There are certainly many ways of stating facts, which can be closer or further from the happening itself and, therefore, descriptive, theoretical, symbolic, argumentative, and more or less narrative (in the sense of linear, or at least organic, development of content). Nonetheless, to embrace Eduardo Lourenço's words, "[in literature] life manifests in terms of paradoxical splendour … the character of *fiction* of our relation with reality" (Lourenço, quoted in Vecchi and Russo 2019, p. 19 [translation mine]). Therefore, not only is narration part of reality, but it can reveal this state when it is of high quality, thus disclosing the layered veil of fiction that binds us to the world.

Taking into consideration the novels from the specific angle of literary geographies, and inspired by Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, I attempt to open up the literary texts and recontextualise them by going beyond a given structure, and then exploring a non-narrative visual analysis. The textual aspect of analysis is intertwined with the visual one. On the one hand, a Deleuze-inspired analysis of the novels is conducted through lines of flight; this proceeds through incursions from the texts both outwards and inwards, establishing other planes of meaning beyond the authorial narrative. On the other hand, less perceptible aspects are explored through collage as a form of assemblage of non-linear order; this triggers an escape from the text in the Derridean sense, opening up new planes of composition made up of a plurality of meanings or of no meaning, and going beyond the narrative dimension in itself. Finally, this analysis reconnects to the decolonial in two ways: by relating to the openly postcolonial contents of the novels, which direct attention to marginality and resistance; and by recognising the importance of going beyond the boundaries of social scientific paradigms and a Western-centric idea of knowledge, inviting forms of non-academic or non-scientific knowledge to be incorporated into the social scientific discourse.

0.2. The literary texts

In both novels, colonialism is a recurrent theme unveiled in the city, although the authors operate through different qualities of urban space. The more tangible and figurative space of In Koli Jean Bofane's writing articulates the narrative and punctuates the stages of an urban parable, which becomes a synecdoche for the Democratic Republic of Congo. Set in the present day, the literature regards neocolonialism as a substantial component of the everyday life of Kinshasa, an emblem of the whole country's position in the contemporary world order. Plot and characters are the key elements in Bofane's novels. Indeed, the plot incorporates several elements which are inescapable in any analysis of the capital. They refer, for instance, to the rural-urban dynamic, the dominions of multinational corporations, the phenomenon of street children, the presence of China in trade and economic affairs, the war in Kivu, mineral exploitation, corruption, and political manipulation. The protagonist of *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament* is Isookanga, a pygmy who lives in a village in the Congolese province of Equator. Despite being the nephew of the chief of the village and heir to its leadership, Isookanga hates the forest and tradition, and instead dreams of modernity. The internationalist Pygmy considers himself a 'mondialist' and wants to be a globaliser, but the horizons of his village are too close so he decides to leave for Kinshasa. The object of Isookanga's desire, the city, is the spatialised quintessence of colonialism, modernity, and progress; Bofane sees the capital as a magnet, attracting and condensing all positive and negative forces. In this polyhedric city, the protagonist meets a multitude of characters, each one significant in defining the urban universe; among them are a group of children who live in the central market, a Chinese street vendor of water sachets, and a corrupt MONUSCO officer who parodies the UN Mission for the consolidation of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Bofane depicts an urban parade, occasionally cruel, more often carnivalesque, and the postcolonial condition is rendered parody through the use of obscene and grotesque imagery (Kuenen, 2020). The language of excess seems to be the only possible way to describe a reality which seems beyond fantasy; the irony is necessary because, as the author himself has declared in several interviews, the tragedy is so great as to be ridiculous. More than a political entity, Congo is, in fact, a reserve of raw materials, and those who supply them are condemned to be ever further excluded from the global economy. Indeed, Congo

Inc. is an algorithm that, since Bismarck's time, has been working to realise the great projects of the leaders of the world.

The impressionistic and sometimes hallucinatory space of Lobo Antunes' novel introduces dispossession, loss of place, and alienation. The literary text delivers an intimate spatial dimension that penetrates the emotional and psychic spheres. Space is evoked rather than described, and is stylistically used to convey emotions in place through a sophisticated work of spatial empathy. From a geohumanities and cultural geography perspective, the stylistic dimension appears to be eloquent as it allows multiple levels of analysis, which move from colonial issues to the more intimate postcolonial condition of the individual. Colonialism emerges from the perspective of loss of relationship with place, both the irreparable deprivation of the land itself (where a return is physically impossible) and a lack of relationship with it (even after returning). *The Land at the End of the World* recounts a meeting between a woman and the narrator, a former soldier who relates his experiences in the Angolan colonial war. The narrator proceeds to take a triple journey, into the night of Lisbon, into his own memory, and into a faraway African land. Different spatial and temporal planes are mixed, often contrastingly, through incursions and anamorphosis, which revisit the disturbances caused by the war. The space of Lisbon is split into a city of the memory and a nocturnal city of the present, which has become alien and intimidating. At the centre can be found Angola, an awareness of what colonialism is, and an irreversible crumbling of identity. Over the last 20 years, the novels of Lobo Antunes have been extensively reviewed by literary critics. Beyond the value and thematic diversity of their content, great interest has been paid to Lobo Antunes' style. Concerning places, they condense the profound alteration begun by the experience of Angola, colonialism, and war and acquire a significance that transcends them. Indeed, places are stylistically used, so Lobo Antunes' writing has been described as "poetic of places" (Seixo 2002, p. 534) and "presentification" (Carriço Vieira 2004, p. 217). For instance, when places emerge from the depth of the narrator's imagination, an atmosphere takes shape and, although apparently decontextualised, communicates the sense of place empathically.

Both writers trace a link between colonialism, modernity, urbanisation, neocolonialism, globalisation, and necropolitics (Mbembe 2003). This association is quite explicit in Bofane's

writing, where the 'right to the city' claimed by Isookanga becomes the narrative stratagem used to foreground the consequences of colonialism and the wish to return to the forest and Indigenous knowledge within a different frame of power. In Lobo Antunes' novel, meanwhile, the connection between these themes is less evident and works through the dissolution of places, whether they belong to memory or the present. The methodology adopted here expands upon the issues highlighted. On the one hand, it allows us to consider the postcolonial city as a place of desire, power, oppression, marginality, and resistance; on the other hand, it contributes to decolonising the perspective, particularly with respect to knowledge and its forms of reproduction.

For each novel, I extract three lines of flight which extend outside the books, both visually and in terms of content. These are components of the story, such as characters or aspects of everyday life, or less evident aspects implicated within. In *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament* by Koli Jean Bofane, the urban shape, street children, and informal activities are the elements I consider relevant with respect to marginality, which is mainly socioeconomic. In *The Land at the End of the World* by António Lobo Antunes, I explore the narrator's detachment from the city as a condition of psychological and existential marginality, and the colonial dimension of knowledge and the war in Angola as implications of this state. In both cases, I investigate these aspects through social scientific literature and through collage, moving away from the novel in terms of story and deepening the selected contents through rhizomatic lines which proceed argumentatively and visually. The novels revolve around two subjects: the protagonist in *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament*, and the narrator-protagonist in *The Land at the End of the World*. Both these individuals are somehow engaged in escaping 'fiction', which has long coincided with their everyday lives. Isookanga, the protagonist of Bofane's novel, first evades the village and tradition in search of the city, progress, and globalisation; later, he evades the illusion offered by the previously yearned-for neocolonial and neoliberal condition. Although this condition does not allow for exit in the literal sense, the author suggests alternative possibilities and, through an open ending, invites the reader to participate in a rewriting of a different future. In Lobo Antunes' novel, meanwhile, the narrator evades the Portuguese 'Empire of Fiction'; in other words, the cultural apparatus built on the myth of discoveries and manipulated with particular emphasis during Salazarism. In this case, the escape involves sorrow, trauma, and awareness. These flights from different

dimensions of fictionality are the forms of resistance investigated in this thesis. Resistance, therefore, may be intended as a form of escape from a condition of marginality determined by a given context, which, in turn, defines a system of power that is 'fictional' and 'real' simultaneously.

0.3. Forms of resistance

As for marginality, the forms of resistance identified in the novels also differ from one other and are analysed through different conceptual lenses; first and foremost, the Deleuzian lenses of diagram and exhaustion are used (Deleuze 2018; Deleuze 1998). The forms of marginality and resistance are limited to the individuals, and to the specific situations in which they find themselves and with which they interact. There is no intention to compare these cases or make examples of them; nonetheless, these singularities constitute the driving force of the analysis. Indeed, singularity leads back to the question of the fragment as a subordinate element to the idea of the whole and structure (McFarlane 2021; Jazeel 2019). By the early twentieth century, surrealism had already come to consider comparison as a form of recognition of the known rather of the production of the new (Murat 2013). Focusing on fragments and singularities aligns with collage, and implies a perspective oriented towards differences and plurality rather than totality. In addition, singularities remind us of the untranslatability of the language and text of the other, and thus of *différance* (Derrida 2004; Jazeel 2019). Moreover, they oppose certain forms of academic knowledge as a constituted corpus, resisting categorisation through incomparability and evoking the existence of different epistemic domains (ibid.). To the aspects mentioned above of untranslatability and incomparability, which can be understood as epiphenomena of *différance*, I add the right to opacity, appealed for by Glissant (2007), in which I see a further form of escape offered by singularity. Indeed, opacity contains a nucleus of resistance to the clarification and standardisation of contents according to predefined social and cultural order procedures, in which social scientific knowledge also participates.

In the textual analysis proposed, together with the other literary singularities analysed through the lines of flight, individuals may be regarded as fragments: of a presumed

community, of a given context, of a hypothetical 'whole' or structure that I consider to be unfinished, unstable, open, constantly subject to transformation, and then in becoming. While focusing on individuals and singularities, the analysis attempts to reconnect with the collective dimension within specific historical, social, and cultural frames, shifting from one dimension to another through lines of flight. It is precisely this practice of opening the text and temporarily stabilising meanings by redefining a context, as well as the practice of navigating the intertextual levels that intervene and produce other contexts, which allows new relations to emerge between material, perceptual, affective, and discursive levels. Collage participates in this movement by introducing further levels of analysis through the use of codes that are not necessarily syntactic, and by allowing comprehension of a non-linear nature. It is an escape by status, and the line of flight in the Deleuzian sense can be considered its engine. However, unlike the use made of lines of flight in the textual analysis of the novels, which follows a linear narrative, collage eludes explanation, rationalisation, geometric order, and representation; it opposes paratactic dynamics to forms based on syntax and works through coincidence and spatial contiguity in place of narrative (Cresswell 2019). Collage resists logos with poetics and discourse with silence. It fills gaps while opening holes, admitting irruptions from other planes. These planes can be temporal, and then collage can make visible what Walter Benjamin (1999) understands as secret appointments with the past and, I wish to add, with the future. Still, they can also be planes of meaning, which reveal the immanence of space and exhibit intersectionality.

Despite being based on these contextual shifts and escapes from the text, this research hinges on the issues of postcolonial urban marginality and the possibilities of resistance, which act as connectors in the investigation. While the postcolonial city is seen as an unavoidable frame of our current and future lives, marginality is considered as a potentially common condition generated by the coloniality of power that can affect anyone at any moment and in any context. Moreover, whereas marginality may be transitory, it is the outcome of a far more pernicious process of marginalisation. Evading this process requires a more complex operation than that necessary to mitigate or even eradicate a condition of marginality. Indeed, to elude marginalisation, we need to escape the frame; that is to say, to open up the context and redefine new transitional borders which draw a novel, unstable terrain. We do not escape marginalisation by aiming at the centre. Conversely, in this way,

we only remove marginality as a circumstantial condition and, worse still, establish the premises to confirm the context of power that reproduces marginalisation as a process within a frame of repetition without difference – and without resistance. Therefore, while starting from a literary point of origin to inspect the multifarious issue of marginality, I consider the aspects it can assume within the discipline and which directions to take to avoid or mitigate its reproduction in the geographical discourse. My analysis attempts to investigate this escape, both conceptually and methodologically, by analysing novels and making collages.

0.4. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised into five chapters. The first chapter provides a literature review and focuses on the areas of creative geohumanities and cultural geography closest to the discussion that I intend to pursue: literary geographies, non-representational theories, creative geographies, and postcolonial and decolonial studies. Indeed, these areas relate to the contents and methodological approach of my research due to the prominence of the novels and collage, which characterise the creative dimensions of the work, the focus on the postcolonial city, the non-representational perspective adopted throughout the research and embodied by collage, and the decolonial intents, inspected both in the novels and in the methodological approach. In particular, textual analysis and reflection on representations are literary geography's legacy; my work benefits from these, alongside attention to emotions, indeterminacy, singularity, unintentional dimension, and the transformative conception of representation inherited from non-representational geography. Due to the involvement of collage in the analysis, the literature review also focuses on debates in creative geography, oriented to consider art as an analytical tool, productive rather than representative, a conception in harmony with the non-representational perspective. Postcolonial approaches deconstruct the colonial discourse while paying attention to colonial cities and the imperial metropolis, both of which are present in my work. Finally, decolonial theory considers the world order as an outcome of colonialism and coloniality. This is relevant to my research in relation to the production and reproduction of knowledge and the effort to explore, while remaining within geography, other logics which go beyond the frame of the modern

disciplines. Indeed, the decolonial approach is a common thread that links collage and, more generally, my methodology to the contents of marginality and resistance. Finally, while focusing on urban marginality and resistance, this research attempts to fill a gap regarding analysis of the postcolonial literary city. More specifically, the geographical creative approach to the postcolonial city remains underexplored, particularly when considering combining art-based practices with literary texts.

Chapter 2 discusses the research's theoretical framework, which is identified in poststructuralism and specifically in Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari. It focuses on certain key concepts of their philosophical production, which constitute this research's keystones, and considers geographical implications. There is the case, for instance, of the Derridean discussion on the conceptualisation of context and the deconstruction of its spatial regime, which is based on linguistic consensus and transforms norms into facts. Deconstructionism questions the division between text and context and frees the text from a reduction to the plane of meaning, transforming it into a differential network. While text is always moving across contexts and in continuous articulation, context is no longer a container but a relation between elements. The overflow of the text and the opening of context constitute an important theoretical point for my research. Indeed, in the textual analysis proposed, the novels act as differential networks from which discursive and visual ramifications depart.

Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari's thinking describes a world in which all materiality is constantly involved in the process of becoming, transformation, and differentiation, creating assemblages through rhizomatic formations. Connections are possible at any point and occur through lines of flight, triggering a process of deterritorialisation of the previous assemblage and reterritorialisation of a new one. This approach informs the analysis practised in the research, which seeks to extend specific aspects of marginality in the postcolonial city outside the novel, through Deleuzian textual analysis and collage. After considering the postcolonial and decolonial charge of Deleuze and Guattari's thoughts and the theoretical framework's literary implications, the chapter focuses on the concept of resistance, understood in a transversal way. This is done by connecting Deleuze's reflections on the diagram and some geographical outcomes regarding resistance and fragmentation with collage, through the surrealist reflection on the image and the Deleuzian concept of exhaustion.

The third chapter focuses on the methodological aspects of the research, discussing the process that led to the analysis. It considers the research questions, the material employed, the themes investigated, the methods, and positionality. Wondering what marginalities and forms of resistance emerge from the novels and how they connect to the postcolonial condition, the research attempts to construct a method for practising textual analysis and a form of non-representational visualisation. After describing the themes of urban marginality and resistance in the novels, the chapter illustrates the hybrid method employed by merging textual analysis of the novels with collage. In particular, the textual analysis is driven by an active dismantling reading, identifying a series of lines of flight and exploring them through social scientific literature. These lines of flight relate to specific aspects of urban marginality that I consider significant for understanding the condition of marginality in the city, both in terms of its social and psychological nature. The Deleuzian concepts of resistance and exhaustion also support the analysis of the diverse cases of marginality identified in the novels. Collage visually investigates the elements that emerge from the active dismantling reading of the novels, creating a sense of place characterised by fragmentation, multiplicity and incompleteness, and emphasising the open-ended nature of places. I identify the innovative charge of this method in the transition from a logos-based and yet narrative register to one characterised by the image. Therefore, I recognise the methodological contribution of this work to geohumanities and cultural geography in the exploration of 'more-than-visual' relationships between materials and geographical thought. This transition from the logos-based to the non-linear is also understood as a practice of decoloniality. Finally, I reflect on my positionality concerning the themes investigated, the ontological and epistemological assumptions, and the *where* of the research.

Chapter 4 explores urban marginality in Kinshasa by analysing the novel *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament* by In Koli Jean Bofane (2018) and practising collage. Inspired by the Derridean conception of textuality and Deleuzian active dismantling reading, this analysis goes beyond the boundaries of the novel by considering traits or elements from the story, characters, and places. To investigate marginality, I identify three lines of flight: urban space, street children, and informal activities. I explore them through social scientific literature and visual materials, also putting them in dialogue with other macro spaces or spatial-related elements emerging from the novel. This is the case for the Equatorial forest and the Congo

River, which I consider in terms of their roles and relations within and outside the novel as well as in past and present everyday life. While urban space, street children, and informal activities become the ground for exploring certain forms of marginality, they also allow me to examine the possibilities of resistance. I do this through the connection between urban marginality and resistance built on the Deleuzian reinterpretation of Foucault's concept of diagram. Deleuze considers resistance as a diagram of escape, thus a line of flight in itself, which I associate with the protagonist and a specific turning point in the plot: the decision to return to the forest. Indeed, unlike the forms of resilience and survival, resistance is a desiring and productive force in the Deleuzian conceptualisation. In this chapter, I also discuss the visual aspect of the analysis by illustrating the collages; they are primarily focused on the informal sector and the city, which I explore through de- and recontextualisation of visual elements, overlapping, and contrasts. Specifically, I attempt to emphasise the processual nature of collage as a non-representational form of visualisation by illustrating the photographic and cartographic fragments used, the alterations and visual effects produced, and connections with other fragments that originated from the dismantling reading of the novel and the rhizomatic use of social scientific literature. Centred on urban marginality in Kinshasa, the collage touches on aspects such as informal activities, housing, urban expansion, children, the villagisation of the capital's outskirts, colonialism, mineral exploitation, and war. Its multiform nature allows a high thematic density, generating an atmosphere that manifests the open-ended nature of places while transmitting emotional and affective qualities.

In chapter 5, I consider a form of psychological urban marginality recognised through progressive detachment from the city. The analysis starts with António Lobo Antunes' novel *The Land at the End of the World* (2012), centred on the Portuguese colonial war in Angola. Focusing on more immaterial traits of colonial power, I try to emphasise the nexus between the protagonist's extraneousness in the present, the Angolan war, and the colonial cultural apparatus that fuelled colonialism. I work on the subject's incapacity to recognise the city's spatial dynamics and inscribe himself in the familiar and historical narrative; in doing this, I identify three lines of flight: the detachment from Lisbon, the colonial dimension of knowledge, and the war in Angola. The latter two are implications of the first, that is to say the narrator's condition of marginality, and are all linked by their relation to Portuguese

imagery. After using conceptual tools such as placelessness, topophobia, and atmosphere to explore emotional disconnection from the place of origin, I consider detachment from the city as a spatial manifestation of the trauma triggered by the war in Angola. I first investigate the role of trauma from a Lacanian perspective, underlining the possibility of resistance to the dominant historical narrative, and then connect trauma to the Deleuzian concept of exhaustion. Subsequently, I explore the other two lines of flight and the colonial cultural implications evoked, also through the critical reflection of Eduardo Lourenço on Portuguese colonial imagery. The chapter illustrates the role of collage, which intervenes in particular with the issues of Portuguese imagery and the Angolan war, contributing to exploring literary atmospheres, fragments of memories and images delivered by the novels and social scientific literature; this offers an insight into urban marginality in the postcolonial city which unveils a sense of continuity from discovery to exploitation until decolonisation.

The conclusion begins by tracing the overall research design, focusing on the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of the findings and analysis. Subsequently, it reflects on the limitations met throughout the work and considers future research suggestions. I close the thesis with a visual section constituted exclusively by collages, highlighting the open-ended nature of the research.

CHAPTER 1

Literature review

1.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the debates within geohumanities and cultural geography that directly affect the research. It is organised into five parts, covering the main areas of the discipline that are involved in the reflection within which the research is placed: literary geographies, non-representational theories, creative geographies, and postcolonial and decolonial studies. The selection of these areas relates to the contents and methodological approach, which, as I explain in the introduction and illustrate throughout my thesis, work together rather than functionally: this means that, far from being something tested in or applied to the analysis, the method itself is part of the analysis. Therefore, on the one hand, the prominence of novels and the practice of collage call for an overview of literary and creative geographies, two subfields particularly active in the last decade; on the other hand, non-representational, postcolonial, and decolonial theories intervene in any aspect of the work, interacting with both the literary and creative disciplinary sides. Although poststructuralism has been debated intensely within cultural geography in recent decades, it will be discussed in chapter 2, dedicated to the theoretical framework.

Through focusing on urban marginality and resistance, the research attempts to fill a gap regarding the postcolonial city. Although within the broader investigation into postcolonial geography (Sidaway 2000; Blunt and McEwan 2003; Noxolo et al. 2012; Jazeel 2012a and 2012b) there have been studies focused on the postcolonial city (Yeoh 2001; King 2009 and 2016; Jazeel 2019), and although attention has been paid to the postcolonial city in literary studies (McLeod 2004; Lisiak 2010; Varma 2012; Tally 2017), this subject has yet to receive much interest from literary geography. This absence may be interpreted as a delay rather than a lack of interest, considering literary geography is a relatively emergent field. In fact,

African cities have been more seriously considered recently, with cases of narratives set in metropolitan Africa (Manase 2022; Amimo 2022; O'Connel 2022). The postcolonial literary city occupies a marginal position, even when widening the observation beyond geography. In particular, literary urban studies seem mainly to be focused on theoretical issues (Gurr 2021) or on 'alpha' cities, that is, world centres or cities that have a role in the global network. This focus on power also remains when attention is paid to secondary urban centres rather than metropolises (Finch et al. 2018). It is only recently that the postcolonial urban condition has begun to attract scholarly interest (Finch 2021). Moreover, the relationship between postcolonial literary cities and other dimensions of cultural production, particularly art-based ones, has not been examined. This situation is also reflected in creative geography, despite the long-lasting relationship with art having assumed diversified and experimental aspects, encompassing writing, painting, photography, film, music, graphic novels, sculpture, and other artistic forms (Hawkins 2011; Marston and De Leeuw 2013), as we will see shortly. Along with the formal variety, this field has addressed diverse themes, which stretch from the landscape, rural contexts and urban gentrification to issues related to non-humans, body and identity. Moreover, with the phase of the new cultural geography, the political aspect has started playing a greater role than it did in the previous period (Hawkins 2011). Nevertheless, even within the large array of geographical art-based works, their thematic variety, and the insertion of the political dimension, the geographical creative approach to the postcolonial city remains underexplored, and there is no evidence of its use in combination with analysis of literary texts.

This research attempts to fill the gap by focusing on urban marginality and resistance in the postcolonial city. The creative approach is considered to be an amplifier of factual, conceptual, and emotional content, which can extend and emphasise aspects of the analysis and transform the analysis itself during its course. Indeed, in this work, art-based practice is not *about* novels but is an integral part of the analysis, driven through visual exploration by means of collage. Acting as a multiplier of unexpected and uncompleted possible meanings, collage contributes to gaining insights into the multifaceted postcolonial dimension and offers different perspectives on marginality and resistance. Therefore, I begin by reviewing those issues that I consider to be of greatest interest to my research, and which have significantly characterised the most recent discourse within cultural geography. In particular,

I start with literary geographies; I attempt to trace their development by focusing on discussions around textuality and the dimension of fiction. I consider both of these aspects essential to my work, as they are recurrent and reconnect to the theoretical framework, the methodology, and, inevitably, the analysis.

1.2. Literary geographies

Ideas about space have changed since the cultural turn in social sciences, which originated in the mid-1970s, and whose earliest geographical outcomes can be identified in the works of Yi- Fu Tuan (1974; 1977) and Douglas Charles David Pocock (1981). Following this momentum, the spatial turn in the arts and humanities focused attention on space, potentially opening the way for further development and shared perspectives with geography. Nevertheless, the geographical and humanistic disciplinary discourses have remained distinctive for a long time (Alexander 2015). The relationship between literary geographies and narrative theory is central to the work of Sheila Hones (2011), whose aim is to combine the former's developments with the latter's analytical strategies. According to Hones, the role of space in literary texts has passed through different phases, moving from a vision of space as a background, a container, or a location for actions and facts, to an idea of space as a process, something ongoing rather than stable. This shift has conferred renewed vitality on literary geographies, where text and space are finally considered co-productive. In contrast, narrative theory seems to focus more on categorising and defining different typologies and the need to support and convey a relatively conventional view of space. For this reason, in Hones' opinion, narrative theory's general strategies and technical vocabulary provide productive analytical tools for literary geographies and are more useful than discussions about narrative space. In fact, a more specific debate on space within the field of narrative theory would require the reconceptualisation of issues already assumed in literary geographies.

Hones' concern for clarifying these differences is particularly significant when considering the reciprocal influence between literary geographies and spatial literary studies – the set of spatial-oriented literary studies that followed the aforementioned spatial turn in the

humanities. From this perspective, she highlights distinctions in terms of disciplinary origins, aims, and methods, identifying the geographical interest of literary geographies and their place among the social sciences (Hones 2018). The author's insistence on keeping the two fields of study distinct is also due to the need to continuously redefine a subdiscipline that is strongly interdisciplinary on the one hand and relatively young on the other. Hones (2014) investigates the novel as a spatial event between heterogeneous participants. Authors and readers, in fact, contribute to this encounter, along with editors, publishers, critics, and all those specialists or non-specialists who dialogue with the text. These interactions incorporate a wide spectrum of influences across spatial, temporal, and linguistic distances. As a result, the writing-reading dynamic generates a distinctive combination, which merges further writings and readings from a variety of processes and contexts. According to this perspective, space may be identified at the intra-textual, intertextual, and extra-textual levels. The first of these concerns the literary space, whether it is mentioned, described, or evoked by writing, regardless of its role and organisation within the novel. The second refers to the relations with other novels through implied or explicit references. Lastly, the extra-textual encompasses the socio-spatial dimension in which the aforementioned participants in the geographical events of the novel are inevitably involved. A remarkable aspect of Hones' analysis is the assumption that the space of fiction is a real space. This assertion is discussed in her case study, in particular through the attempt to reveal the conjunction of literary and material spaces through the spatiality's psychic, relational, and social aspects. However, Hones' explicit request not to consider literary space metaphorically seems not to have been developed further. Indeed, her primary interests are focused on the collective and participative dimension of the literary-geographical event, which allows the cogeneration of a variety of spaces, leading to the statement that "text is a multidimensional space" (Hones 2014, pp. 16-17).

Relational thinking considers the world as a system of actor-centred networks, in which meaning depends on the positioning of components rather than on some *a priori* (Anderson and Saunders 2015). Due to their changeable position in a relationship, components can be defined only impermanently, and their recompositions generate the possibility of interdependent epistemologies. Concerning literary texts, this highlights the multiple interactions that participate in the production and usage process – which Hones investigates

from a spatial perspective. Concerning geography, the relational turn allows the description of places as dynamic texts, constantly evolving. Ultimately, "fiction and geographies are understood as 'culturally produced' and differentially enacted through embodied practice" (Anderson and Saunders 2015, pp. 123-124). In another work, Jon Anderson (2015) proposes a further theoretical perspective, taking into consideration the role played by the relational turn in the social sciences. His approach implements that of Hones, and also introduces Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage theory. An assemblage is a conceptual tool and an operative concept which may connect with the spatial dimension and the materiality of territory. Moreover, it may concern the material processes and plurality of knowledge that shape life's spaces; therefore, the assemblage can summon the political dimension (Giardini 2017). Assemblages are subject to deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, which occur when their articulations disconnect or rearticulate, forging new assemblages. Anderson focuses on the potential impact of the book-as-assemblage on place, considering the novel from this perspective. The novel's shift from event to spatial assemblage focuses on the influence of writing on the extra-textual and socio-spatial contexts of "more material geographies" (Anderson 2015, p. 128). Therefore, this influence considers neither exclusively the textual and intertextual world nor the imaginative space; instead, it transforms real territories through engagement with the world. From Anderson's perspective, a "novel can enter in collective and personal consciousness" and directly influence perception and understanding of places. This may entail psychogeographical engagements, due to interactions between text, reader and places. A book potentially has "an effect on the location in which it fictionally occurred", not only in the imagination of the reader but also materially, because it can alter places in terms of "use, identity, meaning" (ibid.). Furthermore, within this reassembling of the world occurs the division between "representation, subjectivity and reality", a recomposition that recognises the potential and role of imagination (ibid., p. 133).

The contribution of literary geographies to geographical and metageographical discourse has been particularly fervid in recent years. As a distinctive way to practise the discipline, by working on, with or through the fictional dimension, literary geographies have progressively specified, redefined and refined their contents and methods. This has led to a cutting edge and still ongoing debate, frequently marked by innovative thinking on crucial, wide-ranging,

and cross-disciplinary issues. Based on a pluriversal perspective to which diverse worlds belong, Gabriel Eshun and Clare Madge (2016) aim to practise creative geography, introducing poetry to express affective geopolitics and to serve as a postcolonial research tool. These authors argue that poetry can convey aspects of everyday life and, through empathy, promote a new and diverse quality of understanding. At least two aspects of their proposal appear particularly relevant: firstly, the importance of form in concretising emotions (for instance, of rhyme, repetition, and alliteration); secondly, the political agency of form as a personal or collective mode of resistance. Similarly, Eshun and Madge also bring certain hidden issues within the practice of poetry to the foreground: the culturally-oriented nature of creativity, the conception of which can be different and differently evaluated from one society to another; the question of translation, which presents aspects that are not only linguistic but also connected to what remains unknown and non-communicable; and the power relations intrinsic to knowledge, which are never neutral.

Although not dominant, the political aspect nonetheless circulates within debates in literary geographies. Laurie McRae Andrew (2018) identifies a pivotal moment in the shift from a vision of space as a fixed dimension to space as a relational event. It is precisely social relations, with the social material processes involved, that make a textual event a political event. McRae Andrew argues that there is a "knowable community not just *in* the text, but *of* the text", which assembles characters and the represented spaces in which they unfold, alongside actors and places involved in the spatial event of the text – namely, writers, editors, publishers, readers, and their physical and social spaces. The political aspect of the text emerges from "the terms on which its participants become knowable to one another" (ibid., p. 36). This perspective raises the question of who can participate in this encounter, which actors are included and which ones are left out. Furthermore, geographical analysis of the text may be oriented towards a plurality of interpretations of spatial contexts and their political implications through constant confrontation with alterity.

This theme of alterity is explored by Patricia Noxolo and Marika Preziuso (2013). Through considering the engagement of postcolonial geography with historical texts and colonial archives, rather than with postcolonial fiction, their main focus is on literary texts identified as postcolonial. The reason for the absence of explicit geographical attention to postcolonial

fictional literature, according to the authors, stems from the discipline's concern with spatial factuality and its supposed verifiability. This care for the tangible world would also directly result from the material turn, a reaction to the importance too long assigned to the text. However, if the historical issue which opposes the fictional to real dimension is evoked, it is also quickly resolved. Indeed, it is precisely due to its unverifiability that the fictional makes the world "fictionable" and creates a variety of possible interpretations of the factual (Wood 2005, p. 158). Therefore, the engagement of geographical research with postcolonial literary texts is a way to investigate diverse perspectives and consider different forms of resistance. The essential point of Noxolo and Preziuso's analysis revolves around two essential facets of alterity: the multivocality of knowledge and its political connotations. Particular attention is given to narrative structure and form, which contribute to meaning, interact with contents, and are considered powerful tools of resistance.

Concerning postcolonial literary texts, Sten Pultz Moslund (2015) considers them from the geocritical perspective of place, paying attention to those places in world literature where Western metaphysics has caused displacement. He focuses on place, language, and body, investigating how sensorial geographies may challenge the conceptual organisation of reality. Analysing the process of construction of space and place in postcolonial narratives through topoi, Jon Thieme (2016) identifies a progression from the colonial perspective towards formations more focused on mobility, migration, and multiplicity. In this way, postcolonial writing challenges the stable vision of place and highlights its heterogeneous nature. Madhumita Roy (2024) looks at the future of postcolonial literary geography. Reflecting on the spatial, affective, and environmental turns, she recognises the contribution of postcolonial literary geography in the development of critical humanistic thought.

Current interest in the political agency of form, structure, and style is the outcome of the development of geographical interest in texts and the evolution of the conception of textual space within the discipline. Literary geographies have continuously enlarged their thematic horizons, widening the range of possibilities for scrutiny, and exploring new connections. Among these, there is the questioning of the centrality of the subject in the experience of the landscape; José Luis Romanillos (2008) investigates this through the analysis of literary spatialities indifferent to the subject, and problematises the presumed anthropocentrism of

the spatial experience. On the other hand, Bala and Singh (2024) explore the human-animal relationship, investigating the ways in which the narrative of the novel blurs the border between human and animal spaces.

One fascinating ramification of the thematic and methodological progress of literary geographies is the investigation of mapping. For instance, Juha Ridanpää (2018) frames her work within metafiction and literary GIS, re-presenting the issues of fact and fiction in a different light. On the one hand, metafiction is a particular typology of fiction, focused on itself as an artefact and consequentially on relationships between fiction and reality. Therefore, in metafiction, the distinction between real and unreal is not only explicit, but is interwoven within the work. On the other hand, literary GIS investigates how fiction can be located in the real world and become "coordinatable", attempting to geovisualise in reality fictional locations which do not correspond to real places. Ridanpää's approach not only reveals, once again, that any distinction between fact and fiction disappears during the process of reading, but also conveys relevant methodological and epistemological implications. For instance, attempting to generate cartographic information from narrative space which can be undefined and fragmented, converts GIS into a more experimental tool and transforms the mapping process into a creative exploration method. At the same time, the shift towards metafiction may help to reveal the levels of construction of space, and contribute significantly to critical analysis of spatial power relations.

Framing their study within non-representational geography, Sara Luchetta and Juha Ridanpää (2019) intervene in reader-generated maps created during and after reading a literary text. In the authors' view, literary maps do not only link the geographies of the text with those of the world but also "embody the relationship between the geographies of the reader and those of the text" (ibid., p. 13). Moreover, they may function as a cognitive and emotional tool, due to their ability to induce emotions. Considering this propensity to go beyond mere representation, research into maps contributes to the non-representational approach in geography, producing spatial thinking rather than merely representing its outcomes. Luchetta and Ridanpää's work retraces the main stages of the interrogation of cartography, which occurred between the late 1980s and early 2000s, identifying significant changes in the field. In fact, it was during this period that maps were first deconstructed and their relation to

power identified (Harley, 1989). Afterwards, cartographic representations moved forward, adopting approaches more interested in performativity (Cosgrove, 2006), emotions (Craine and Aitken, 2019), cognitive dimension, and narratives (Caquard, 2011; 2015).

These conceptual reflections on mapping add to a series of contributions on the relationship between cartography and literary texts. They focus on a range of aspects: how maps work and their uses in literary contexts (Besse 2017; Rossetto 2014; Perenič 2014); the possibilities of mapping narrated spaces (Piatti 2017); fictional literary spaces as non-correspondent to the 'real' (Stockhammer 2017; Bushell et al. 2021); and counterfactual cartographies aimed at alternate worlds, that is, not completely imaginary worlds (Piatti and Hurni, 2009). Moreover, Giada Peterle and Francesco Visentin (2017) enacted a performative literary geography that explores territorial changes following the implicit mapping of the literary text. Finally, in his literary atlas, Jon Anderson (2025) reconsiders literary geographies as an interdiscipline which goes well beyond the confluence of geography and literature and has the capacity to reimagine our relations with the world.

The contribution of my research to literary geographies consists of a different and more experimental use of literary texts. Once specific elements have been selected from the novels, whether aspects of characters or plot, the textual analysis goes beyond the novel, overcoming the borders of the literary matter. Indeed, as I discuss more in detail in the methodological chapter, certain literary components are extracted from and expanded beyond the novels following a Deleuzian and Guattarian approach. This specific dismantling reading can contribute to further developing literary geographies, widening their horizons analytically and methodologically, and freeing them from more canonical approaches to literary texts.

The spectrum of literary geographies is constantly expanding, involving not only arts- and humanities-related issues but also historical, philosophical, political, methodological, psychological, and epistemological aspects. Such varying themes and conceptual junctions enable the discipline to develop a plurality of dialogues, transforming a subdiscipline into an interdisciplinary hub. In this heterogeneity, however, it is possible to recognise a leitmotiv that resides in a continuously renewed relation with representations and reveals speculative

and methodological connections through non-representational theories. The recurrent and aforementioned opposition between real and fictional, along with its subsequent developments, is an aspect of this broader reflection framework, largely focused on representations and their roles.

1.3. Non-representational theories

As in with textuality and fiction, the reflection on representation touches upon theoretical and methodological aspects that are of substantial importance for this work. They refer to a completely renewed relationship with space and place, which, on the one hand, recognises qualities such as singularity, immanence, movement, becoming, and indeterminacy, and on the other, considers the roles of affects, emotions, and the precognitive dimension more generally. Non-representational theories contest the effectiveness of representational models, based on symbolic representations to which presumed meanings correspond. Attention is drawn to movement, to ongoing life and to the unfolding of events, through a constant inquiry into experience. A direct consequence of this renewed perspective is an interest in those seemingly small and insignificant aspects of everyday routines which can retain the same complexity as more remarkable phenomena (Lathan 2003; Lorimer 2005). Thus, everyday life and places become possible social arenas where relations can be traced and assemblages identified to outline a geography of what happens (Thrift 2008). The focal point of the non-representational approach is the idea of thought-in-action – a recognition that establishes a relational-material understanding of what is social. This implies involvement in the multiplicity of actions and interactions, which may be understood as the background from which thoughts and intentions originate (Anderson and Harrison 2010, p. 7). Because "thought is placed in action and action is placed in the world" (ibid., p. 11), knowledge requires embodied experiences and the researcher's engagement.

According to Nigel Thrift (2008), practices provide the intelligibility of the world. These are intended as productive concatenations, characterised by reproducibility, and are the premise for action. In the taking-place of practices, humans interact within assemblages, consisting of a plurality of material bodies and relations. These configurations are provisional and open,

and do not imply any transcendental meaning. Similarly, the absence of first principles involves a discourse on representations, which do not re-present something preexisting but instead "enact worlds" (Anderson and Harrison 2010, p. 14). Texts and images, therefore, are no longer questioned to reveal some invisible logic of the system but are considered part of the immanent relational configuration. What becomes relevant is their role within the relation – "what representations do" (Anderson 2019, p. 1122). The openness of the context of thought and methodological innovation has significant implications for fieldwork, which has been increasingly characterised by creative methods aimed at grasping life in its unfolding rather than returning a 'representation-simulacrum' of it. This implies a radical change in terms of methodology, shifting the focus to more inventive and imaginative engagements. By seeking other ways of knowing, the non-representational approach has promoted experimentation through performative, "affective, kinaesthetic, and sensuous" practices of research (Vannini 2015a, p. 319).

The creative turn in geography resulted from the discipline's orientation towards practice-based research. This has led to the incorporation of visual art, creative writing, image making, and so on, through considering the ways in which the arts may contribute to and produce geographical thinking (Hawkins 2014a). In this way, creative practices have consistently engaged with places, becoming essential to embodied experiences. Moving beyond the representational use of representations, this approach views any form of rendering as an epistemological tool. Representations are now envisaged as instruments for exploring and experiencing the flow of everyday life and the world, rather than as means to report any definitive or improbable meanings. Therefore, the focus is placed on underrepresented aspects of involvement in the world, whether personal or collective. Moreover, the representation's limit is seen as the space of the encounter with the inaccessible; this leads to considering the prediscursive experience and accounting for the fact that knowledge can start before discourse (Dewsbury 2003; 2010).

The new role of representations responds to the sense of singularity and immanence which permeates entirely non-representational theories. This highlights the issue of the non-representational denomination, where the prefix 'non' has been subject to debate since the beginning. The concern was that the denying, excluding, and limiting function of 'non' was

insufficient to express the depth and range of scientific problems involved. For this reason, a more comprehensive prefix was suggested, and the alternative 'more-than-representational' (Lorimer 2005) was partially adopted by the social scientific community. However, according to Ben Anderson and Paul Harrison (2010), the prefix 'non' should be appreciated precisely for its incompleteness and elusive charge. Avoiding any positive nomination, in fact, enables focus on the 'event', a concept which is central to non-representational theories because it opens up possibilities for thinking about change. Indeed, events have been conceptualised in different ways; for instance, as forms of "continual differing" (ibid., p. 20) which escape systematisation, or as unexpected things which disrupt the organisation of the background. Events are contingent and do not reproduce any *a priori* condition. Moreover, they reorganise the sense of before and after, introducing thinking about the future (Anderson and Harrison 2010).

Non-representational theories empirically recognise the indeterminacy of life and the ephemerality of the world, and explore these dimensions as co-constitutive of the social, with its political and ethical implications. Practising a relational-materialist analysis, they investigate the relationship between permanence and dynamism, giving rise to a constant inquiry into change and its connections with alternative futures. Discussing the impossibility of defining a univocal non-representational methodology, Vannini (2015b) identifies the singularity of this approach in a unique style grounded in deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, and in a different consideration of the "temporality of knowledge" (ibid., p. 12). This implies a new relationship with both data and representations. In the case of the former, a non-representational approach is less focused on what the data indicates than on its use and how it can be transformed. With regard to the latter, interest is oriented towards the transformative potential of representation – to what the representation can become rather than to its meaning. Indeed, researchers who practise this approach are "much less interested in representing a reality that has taken place *before* the act of representation than they are in enacting multiple and diverse potentials of what knowledge can become *afterwards*" (ibid.). The hybrid analysis adopted here fits within this perspective; indeed, both the literary analysis conducted through the Deleuzian lines of flight and the practice of collage, are projected towards transformation rather than evaluation of the initial materials.

The unintentional and precognitive dimension is fully assimilated into non-representational investigation, which takes into consideration the roles of instinct, insight, emotions, and affects, both individually and as significant components of more complex spatiotemporal entities, identified as atmospheres. The debate surrounding these aspects is particularly relevant here because it constitutes a considerable point of intersection between literary and non-representational geographies and allows the exploration, both conceptually and methodologically, of certain invisible features which are integral parts of geography. One important trait of non-representational theories is their discussion of the role of affect, which is generically used to express heterogeneous entities, such as memories and feelings, which can be present or absent. Affects enact what is social, and what is social is affective: indeed, "often through affects relations are interrupted, changed or solidified" (Anderson and Harrison 2010, pp. 16-17). Among the multiplicity of possible affects, negative moods such as alienation, stress, isolation and dread have begun to conquer space within non-representational investigations, a direction which reflects the aforementioned interest in the precognitive dimension. Effectively, in Thrift's words, "consciousness seems to be a very poor thing indeed" and just "an emergent derivative of unconscious" (Thrift 2008, p. 6).

The exploration of affect stresses the importance of the body, which becomes a device to experience feelings and an instrument of knowledge. Nevertheless, this inquiry transcends the human dimension, moving towards other living beings and materiality, also known as 'more-than-human' or 'other-than-human' (Wright et al. 2012; Larsen and Johnson 2016; Noorani and Brigstocke 2018; Marr et al 2022). These aspects emerge clearly when the analysis concerns atmosphere, a commonly used metaphor which can become a sophisticated epistemological tool. Therefore, not only does speculation on representation lead to incorporating the unintentional, precognitive, and affective dimensions, together with positive and negative emotions, into the geographical discourse, but it also engages with an extremely precarious device – atmosphere. The methodological approach proposed by this work builds on the non-representational perspective, primarily to pursue the role of collage as an intrinsic non-representational practice of visualisation, as well as to explore the dimensions mentioned above: affects, emotions, the unintentional and precognitive. Moreover, this research engages with the role of atmosphere both in literary texts and collages. On the one hand, atmosphere may be delivered by novels, as in the case of *The*

Land at the End of the World, which will be discussed in its own dedicated chapter; on the other hand, they can be created through collage and disseminate new meanings. Thus, a focus on atmosphere is opportune.

1.3.1. Atmosphere: a transversal device

Ben Anderson (2009) recognises that atmosphere can blur distinctions between humans, objects, and space, so it is possible to speak in terms of the atmosphere of an epoch, a room, an artwork, or a society. Atmosphere is considered to be a phenomenon which is real but is not tangible. Moreover, the etymology of the word, composed of *atmos* – gas, vapour – and *sphere*, suggests something which 'envelops' and, at the same time, is an indication of spatialisation, or is spatially defining. Scrutinising the relationship with affects, Anderson examines the work of Mikel Dufrenne on the phenomenology of aesthetic experience, which focuses on aesthetic objects and their effects. What emerges from this reflection is that the atmosphere of an aesthetic object reveals a space of intensity which overflows beyond the representational content of the object. Atmosphere, therefore, acquires a "singular affective quality" from which an "intensive space-time" originates (ibid., p. 79).

Furthermore, this space-time is not self-referential but is open to feelings and emotions which can be elicited. Atmospheres, thus, belong to both the ensemble of elements from which they emanate and to the perceiving subject who completes them. They are constitutively unfinished, open and indeterminate, and hold impersonal or personal aspects, as they may be regarded as collective situations or be perceived as extremely subjective. Focusing on atmospheric attunements, Stewart (2011) considers an atmosphere as a force field and a "lived affect – a capacity to affect and to be affected", which confers the "sense of potentiality and event" (ibid., p. 452). Atmospheric attunement is a form of intimacy with the world, which can animate attachment or detachment and create a sense of expectation as if something is going to happen. Indeed, along with ephemerality, vagueness and indeterminacy, this sense of immanence is another recurrent aspect in the analysis of atmosphere.

An interesting related area of debate concerns research methods. Reflecting on such an elusive phenomenon as atmosphere in terms which are not exclusively conceptual can, in fact, force one to anchor speculation in the ambiguous reality of atmospheres, which continuously requires theoretical readjustments as well as novel techniques and investigation strategies. A starting point for analysis is naming, an act whose relevance is in defining an atmosphere as an entity. Despite being "relatively discrete presences" (McCormack 2015, p. 97), atmospheres are irreducible phenomena, neither completely separated from nor determined by the relations that take part in and shape them. An atmosphere exceeds the elements from which it is composed as a singular entity with a singular affective quality (Anderson and Ash 2015, p. 43), a fact which implies a first level of difficulty in defining them. More problematic is the fact that multiple atmospheres may simultaneously coexist. They can remain discrete and recognisable or can transform when new relations between components occur, determining a change of affects. This possibility complicates the analysis, particularly in terms of identifying thresholds and tipping points (Anderson and Ash 2015). Having to do with multiplicity, investigating atmosphere necessitates the use of several perspectives and multiple techniques and methods.

The "affective resonances" evoked by Vannini (2015b, p. 8) are an essential component of atmosphere. In general, affect is embodied by, but not limited to, the body. Rather, it implies the possibility of affecting and being affected by other individuals, human or non-human, or by objects, places and situations. Thus, one fundamental trait of atmosphere is transversality: while diffusing and permeating, atmospheres may traverse and involve different categories. A second relevant trait is that atmospheres are profoundly spatial. Indeed, they cannot be eradicated by space. Furthermore, as their spatiality may concern extraordinarily different levels of scale, it becomes necessary to clearly define the context to which an atmosphere refers – even if, in certain cases, this operation is laborious. Atmospheres simultaneously belong to material and abstract dimensions due to their ambiguous character, which is multisensorial on the one hand and not completely sensible on the other. For this reason, it seems opportune to devise "modes of sensory and affective apprehension" (McCormack 2015, p. 105), cultivate an empathic attitude towards sensing them, and select appropriate conceptual tools for a more analytical understanding. Although atmospheres may be relatively 'palpable' due to the level of 'density' they reach in certain situations, their

indeterminacy remains and thus requires an attempt at definition. Moreover, their synaesthetic nature requires accuracy of language and stimulates exploration of a broad lexical spectrum, which may refer, in turn, to smells, colours, temperatures, emotions, feelings, moods, sonorities, quality of air, and so on, necessitating an interchangeable and transversal lexicon. Becoming familiar with the notions and phenomena of atmosphere is beneficial, both theoretically and methodologically. Atmospheres may in fact become powerful vectors, able to connect different situations belonging to another time and/or space. These singular 'cracks', which occur in the linearity of analysis or investigation, can turn into a passage and function as an opening towards diverse ways of understanding.

Finally, within literary geographies atmosphere has been considered a "pervasive spatial metaphor" and a cultural and environmental product (Hsu 2017, p. 1). With regard to the cultural dimension, the term can be associated with evoked feelings; concerning the environment, it relates more directly to the air and its effects. Hsuan L. Hsu underlines the role of 'atmospheric thinking' in emphasising adjacency and the possible influences that proximity implies. He considers the possibility of literature becoming a helpful way to develop this attitude of thought, in order to negotiate simultaneously between the dimensions of materiality and abstraction. For Hsu, literature maps the 'affective atmosphere' described by Ben Anderson, and can also induce transformations. Moreover, he poses questions whose recurrency, clearly transdisciplinary, highlights the position between atmosphere and its value in epistemological terms. His inquiry revolves around the different aspects of an atmosphere and their interaction, as well as the zone of contact between different atmospheres – all issues which can be found within the current debate on atmosphere within non-representational geography. These aspects interact in my analysis through the consideration of some literary atmospheres that arise from the novels and through the contribution of collage to creating atmospheres.

1.4. Creative geography

This section highlights the main changes that have occurred in creative geography and how they have moved in the directions indicated by non-representational theories. Although

collage is a specific art-based practice which I discuss in more detail in the methodology, a brief section on the cultural inheritance of this disciplinary subfield is suitable for considering the contribution of the visual dimension in the analysis.

The long-lasting relationship between geography and art is rooted in the tradition of landscape and has, over the years, developed through painting, sketching, and photography (Hawkins 2011). This has enabled a rich variety of practices and diverse forms of collaboration between geographers and artists (Foster and Lorimer 2007; Hawkins 2014a). Furthermore, the changes within art itself have expanded its intersections, partially modifying its role. In the twentieth century, the range of artistic media grew and artists started applying innovative practices by using different materials or dematerialising art. Ultimately, art has moved beyond the traditional space of a studio, gallery, or museum, triggering a new relationship with sites (Hawkins 2012; 2014a). These changes have also had an effect on the relationship between geography and art. As Harriet Hawkins highlights, one outcome of this is the recent reorientation of geographers' interest from the landscape paintings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to twentieth-century art (Hawkins 2012). This implies a thematic shift from structured spatial topics, such as villages, towns or natural views, to a more open and dynamic idea of space. Therefore, the engagement of geography with art has also developed over the years, with significant evolution. Far beyond appraising art as a source, or for its descriptive or aesthetic qualities, creative geography identifies art as "constitutive rather than reflective of meaning and experience, productive rather than representative" (Hawkins 2011, p.473). Therefore, geography has begun to consider art as an analytical tool.

The type of analysis promoted by artistic objects and practices is far removed from that defined by the conventional criteria of social science. Indeed, particular attention is paid to affects, emotions, and precognitive and non-conscious dimensions. This is a point in common with the non-representational approach, which regards art as "connective intensity" (Boyd and Edwardes 2019, p. 8). Indeed, not only can art objects explore the non-conscious, but they also extend beyond their physical perimeters, connecting emotionally with the observer. In turn, human thinking is influenced by "affective radiations" and is not necessarily conscious or centred on language (Thrift 2019, pp. vii-viii). Furthermore, by considering that

thinking is also action-oriented and immersed in the space of relations, the possible effects of art may be fully acknowledged. Nina Williams' (2022) non-representational approach pays particular attention to conceptual engagement with creativity, and considers how creative practices make us think differently. Following Deleuze's conception of immanent evaluation as a dynamic and contingent process, she emphasises the "forces of becoming" and the "chaos of aesthetic" which overflow from the space where the artistic event occurs (ibid., p. 341). This evaluation avoids familiar frameworks and transcends rationales, allowing simultaneity; it is speculative, as it experiments with the plurality of sense, and it is resistant, as it counters totalising logics. Moreover, against the supposedly foundational subject of art, Williams (2016) remarks on the vitality of matter. Through a Deleuzian reading of Bergson, she stresses two significant moments intervening when creativity happens: the interval and intuition. The interval allows us to perceive objects or phenomena through discontinuity from "a processual background" (ibid., p. 1556); it is a space of becoming, which precedes representation and reveals the limits of logic and language. On the other hand, intuition is "a form of perception" (ibid., p. 1558) and "an unperceived act", which, in the Deleuzian view, becomes "a practice of exposure at the interval" (ibid., p. 1559). An intuitive disposition exposes us to the agency of matter, reconfiguring our positioning towards a non-anthropocentric understanding of creativity. This has repercussions for creative geography, as creativity is an emergent force among numerous elements and is about interpreting the world.

Contemplating the open-ended nature of places has also led to new directions in mapping. For instance, post-representational mapping appeals for a reconsideration of the role of the map as the intermediary between mental spatial models and the world (Caquard 2015); mapping is seen as a process, and maps are the analytical tools through which to explore the spatial dimension of narratives (Caquard 2011). The post-representational approach investigates the relationship between maps and narratives in a broad sense, by considering novels and their relations with places, as well as the narrative potential of maps themselves. In short, in this processual approach the importance of the narrative is emphasised over the map (Caquard and Cartwright 2014). A further approach creatively employs design to critically interpret the urban dimension. Considering the cityscape as a process of

exploitation and using drawing as a political practice, Günter Gassner interrogates images of London and attempts alternative imaginations of the skyline and city (Gassner 2020; 2021).

Furthermore, in his analysis of fascism and urban violence, Gassner (2022) has also experimented with a form of creative writing that puts different sources, references, and thoughts into dialogue with each other. In this way, he gives shape to a piece that is not completely enclosed by the traditional structure of the social scientific article, but is characterised by continuous movement and questioning. Among recent contributions using a hybrid creative approach it is worth mentioning at least other two cases. The first concerns a geographical experiment, collective and remote, bringing together artists, poets, and scientists to reimagine relationships with rivers through a multimodal practice that explores the potential of collage and poetry. Starting from an initial collage and a preliminary *haiku*, this work collected contributions from several countries and different languages and has identified in collage a medium to facilitate remote co-creative processes (Giannoulatou et al. 2023). The second case regards the creation of a collective environmental zine, a small-circulation self-published magazine made up of texts, images, and other materials. The work reflects on the practices of creative environmentalism and literature activism, and understands the environmental zine as an ecosystem of the textual and the visual, which enables a possible narration of environmental change (Smith et al. 2024).

In some respects, the practice of collage used in this research is close to post-representational mapping, particularly in terms of the roles assigned to emotions, affects, and micro spaces. More specifically, my use of collage also shares certain traits with the sensitive map, an alternative map based on the influence of lived space (Caquard 2015; Olmedo 2021). This form of mapping adopts qualitative participative research methods, and considers emotions, sensitivity, and perception, going beyond mapping conventions. Through narrative support, sensitive maps hold stories and their relationships with places. In my research, the use of art-based practices is intended as an analytical tool and as a further possibility of analysis aimed at exploring the less visible aspects of urban marginality. In common with sensitive mapping, collage adopts a circumstantial relationship with the world, no longer grounded in a representational order, but based on hints and traces that can also be immaterial, such as in the case of memory (Olmedo 2021). Moreover, both forms of

mapping foster a reconsideration of the canon of academic social scientific language. However, while these traits are fully shared with post-representational and sensitive maps, collage assigns a diverse weight to the role of narrative, as we will see shortly when dealing with montage. Indeed, if "space, as lived through the text, exceeds the boundaries of colonialist cartographic ordering" (Krishnan 2017, p. 632), through collage, space visually reveals its multitudes, contradictions, fractures, overlaps, and becoming. This research contributes to creative geography through the analytical encounter between literary text and collage. In this sense, while using art-based methods and adopting a critical analytical perspective, it develops a novel methodological approach based on hybridisation and experimentation. Due to the significance of collage in my work, the following section briefly introduces this technique, focusing on its role in social analysis and its specific use in this research.

1.5. Collage in post-qualitative research

Collage fits into a long, popular trajectory of manipulating images. It emerged as a technique following the birth of photography in the nineteenth century, when the first composed photographs started to appear (Fuão 2011). However, the origin of collage is generally associated with the work of the cubist artists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, who effectively popularised this practice during the twentieth century through *papier colles*, by affixing newspapers, wallpapers, advertising posters, and other materials to painting surfaces. Photography returned to dominance with dadaism, when photomontage was used by betting on the subversive and political potential of the technique – and thus going beyond the cubist approach to one more focused on anti-mimesis. A further evolution occurred with surrealism, when the word 'collage' was created. Surrealist artists switched the focus to language by transforming the meanings of images, aiming to transfigure reality and create an estrangement effect (Larbalestier 1990; Ades 2000; Taylor 2004; Fuão 2011). Collage has long played a critical and analytical role within the dimension of the arts. For example, during the cubist period, artists analysed geometric forms through the decomposition and recomposition of objects, reaching a new level of visual understanding. Moreover, during the dadaist and surrealist seasons, artists challenged the relationship between concept and

image by combining disparate elements and creating unusual associations. For Max Ernst (1970), collage can overcome representation, subvert visual reality, and reveal what is hidden behind appearances.

Nevertheless, the technique of collage has gradually spread to fields other than the artistic one, being adopted for therapeutic uses, educational purposes, and as a methodology in the social sciences. In an educational context, collage can promote participation, provoke thoughts, and elicit forms of learning (Leavy 2015; Tian 2023); in art therapy, the selection and elaboration of images may help work with memories and experiences, and stimulate analysis of emotions and feelings (Leavy 2015; de Camargo et al. 2023). As an art-based inquiry method, collage has recently been practised in social sciences; for example, in the context of Indigenous studies. The potential of this approach concerns not only the participatory dimension but also the decolonial issue; indeed, collage can facilitate multivocal understandings, tuning into the Indigenous emotional and spiritual universe (Yuen 2016).

Reflection on collage as a method of inquiry was carried forward by Butler-Kisber (2008; 2019), who considered this practice within qualitative methodologies, recognising its role in reflection, conceptualisation, and elicitation. Proceeding in a non-linear manner, collage produces ambiguity because it can contemplate opposing visions and offer simultaneous and different perspectives of the same phenomenon (Butler-Kisber and Poldma 2010). Victoria De Rijke (2024) considers collage to be an art form and a research practice, and acknowledges its value within research into inclusivity, interdisciplinarity, analysis, and emersion of what remains still unthought. Poststructuralist and creative geography have also examined collage, particularly focusing on the process of montage, which is at the base of collage, and by relating the concepts of space and place to montage and assemblage. For Marcus Doel (2014), montage is differential in itself as it is more than the sum of its parts, offers a surplus, and never forms a whole. Interrogating places as assemblages, Hawkins (2014b) finds montage to be a means for reflecting on places, particularly on their form, composition, and unfinished nature.

The transition phase of qualitative research and recent post-qualitative outcomes have offered a renewed context, characterised by a series of attempts to break away from

qualitative inquiry that has become conventional and hegemonic (St. Pierre 2024). Candice P. Boyd (2022) has retraced the main stages of post-qualitative reflection in a geographical key, considering as a critical point the 'procedural' aspects of the canonical qualitative research methods with which human geography ended up identifying itself. Instead, a turning point can be recognised in the attitude to pursuing a methodology in becoming, which adapts to the ongoing research and avoids any risks of self-referentiality. Along these post-qualitative lines, collage is considered as a form of analysis by Teri Holbrook and Nicole M. Pourchier (2014). They attempt to uncover the research process through collage and thus reassemble a series of visual and written fragments (such as newspaper clippings, notes, and sketches), "searching for visible traces of what happens when we think through data, theory, words, images, and lived experiences" (ibid., p. 755). This process leads to emersion of aspects generally expelled from research, such as doubt or what cannot be spoken, and to the recognition that "terms such as *data*, *data collection*, and *data analysis* fail to describe what we do when we research … because language is never able to fully capture how we think the world" (ibid., p. 758). The authors, therefore, seek an alternative direction in the awareness that no language can contain what is done when doing analysis.

Holbrook and Pourchier's post-qualitative perspective and their use of collage align with my research. This affinity is due to the consideration given to the indeterminacy of the research process, which often "does not start with a question" but "with a sensation" and "doesn't end when a study is completed ... because the analysis is our lives" (ibid., p. 761). Taking this point seriously implies acknowledging that our thinking is embodied and made up of aspects which we cannot expel from our research despite our attempts to systematise methods and procedures. Collage can facilitate the exploration of those aspects and how they intervene within research, as it embodies the constant movement of folding and unfolding and allows us to visualise thresholds and interstitial spaces between the inside and outside. The role of collage in my work partly builds upon Holbrook and Pourchier's post-qualitative perspective. Nonetheless, rather than aiming at what happens during analysis, it only participates in the analysis as a component of the process; this is to say, the collages realised during my research do not intend to retrace the process of analysis nor discuss themselves, but are instead part of the analysis. This fits within a framework that unavoidably provokes reflection on the process, since collage is always, to a certain extent, meta-collage.

1.6. Postcolonial geography

Since the 1970s, the postcolonial debate has greatly intensified. Thematic diversification within the study area and meta-reflection on its own discourse have enriched this pivotal territory for the humanities and social sciences. While revisiting the Western corpus of knowledge and analysing its ways of thinking, postcolonial approaches went beyond the historical factuality, penetrating the territories of psychology (Fanon 1972; 1996), deconstructing the colonial discourse (Said 1998; 2017; Spivak 1994), considering the neocolonial assets and their new power relations, as well as the forms of resistance against oppression and assimilation, both in North and South (Bhabha 2001), and giving importance to the forms of resistance of the least advantaged, by underlining the significance of the everyday life of subalterns (Ryan 2004). Postcolonial theories' contribution has led to consideration not only of former colonies, but also of different forms of internal colonialism or occupation, as well as certain reshaped features of neoimperialism and ultra-imperialist systems (Sidaway 2000). Moreover, postcolonial metadiscourse has disclosed some critical points, such as the "amnesia on political" which has gradually infiltrated the process of reflection, overlooking discussion on the current conditions of postcolonial nations (ibid., p. 594).

The issue of the postcolonial city plays a significant part in the postcolonial debate, due to the central role of both colonial cities in the colonised countries and the imperial metropolis in the motherland. On the one hand, the colonial city shapes the relationship between coloniser and colonised, operating as "an instrument of colonisation" (Varma 2012, p. 10). On the other, the metropole acts as an engine, defining politics and generating policy. The functioning of a colonial city, as has been established, depends on a bipartite spatial organisation. Historically, the divisions between European and Indigenous sections of cities generated segregational urban planning, marked by buffer zones which separated colonisers from the colonised; this recurring pattern spread through different colonial systems and to different continents. Surviving political upheaval, the system operated in a new form after the colonies became independent, when the place of the coloniser was occupied by local elites (King 2009, p. 2; D'Almeida Topor 1988, p. 26). Frantz Fanon (1972) analysed the schism created by colonialism, a split that moves from space to psyche. Driven by oppression

and violence, the principle of *zonage* is aimed entirely at exclusion and leaves no room for complementarity. Furthermore, this spatial segregation produces psychic fragmentation. Fanon (1996) scrutinised this aspect, analysing the 'amputation' of the original idiom via imposition of the colonial language and 'epidermisation' and incorporation of a sense of inferiority and guilt. Thus, through the colonial spatial organisation of power, colonialism imposes dichotomy on the world (Fanon 1972). On the one hand, the colonised suffer from a double displacement, both spatial and psychological (Varma 2012). On the other, duality pervades ideas about colonial cities.

Over the last few decades, the debate about colonial cities has been enriched by the contribution of native scholars, who have introduced different perspectives, questioning, for instance, the use of dualistic categories and highlighting interconnections (King 2009). Postcolonial cities cross the local, national, and global levels, and are constantly subjected to incursions of Western capitalism in the form of images or commodities (Varma 2012). In recent decades, these cities have been characterised by migration and outsourcing of employment, and have been transformed into places of exclusion, socio-spatial control and fear (England and Simon 2010). Saskia Sassen (2008) identifies global urban networks, which are created by global cities and define spaces of power. As strategic sites for the transnationality of capital and labour, these global cities replace the centre-periphery relation with new relations between different centres. At the same time, other cities are excluded by these networks and become peripheral. Therefore, the categories of centre and periphery, as well as those of centrality and marginality, have moved from the city to the world. While the scale has changed, the substance has remained: peripheral cities are mainly postcolonial. Nonetheless, in certain cases, when characterised by people and information flows, these cities appear as embryonic nodes in a global network (Malaquais 2006).

Postcolonial geography has paid attention to the imperial and postcolonial cities shaped by colonialism, claiming the necessity to also think of postcolonial cities outside of the former colonies. The label of the postcolonial city clearly refers to previous colonial urban territory, whereas the postimperial designation seems more appropriate for the metropole. However, each qualification stresses certain aspects rather than others, shaping the perspectives of analysis (King 2009); therefore, the terms should not be considered neutral. For instance,

although a metropole may be defined as both postimperial and postcolonial, this does not apply to colonial cities. Postcolonial may refer to former imperial metropoles, due to the postcolonial populations that arrived after the empire as well as migrants from the former colonies. Furthermore, though the designation of postcolonial city seems adequate for all former colonised urban territories, the term is an outsider's label and focuses on the colonial past rather than on possible futures.

The postcolonial perspective has expanded in the last few decades, becoming "cross-cultural and cross-temporal" (King 2009, p. 5). This has inspired the perspective adopted within my research, which uses the term postcolonial to define both a formerly colonised African city (Kinshasa) and a European metropole (Lisbon). Both capitals are postcolonial, but in different ways: the latter as a city colonised by Belgium, and the former as a colonising Portuguese metropolis. Concerning Kinshasa, the outsider connotation of the term is fully recognised and accepted due to my perspective as an outsider researcher. Moreover, the stress on the colonial past, implied in the designation, is not only intentional but also arguably essential, as it refers to a legacy that I am interested in observing. Concerning Lisbon, defining it as a postcolonial city is due partly to the large populations that arrived after independence from former colonies, and partly to the imperial obsolescence of the city. Indeed, while the presence of migrants from the former colonies significantly shapes everyday urban life in Lisbon, the empire occasionally reveals itself through commemorative forms or ruins. This unique character of the metropole, suspended between ghosts of the past and attempts at urban modernisation – and marked by double hybridity, spatial and temporal – is more related to its colonies than to the empire; in this sense, the term postcolonial seems to me to define the capital better than postimperial. Therefore, I consider postcolonial cities both the 'colony' and the 'metropolis', and I attempt to observe how the former can manifest interruptions and how the latter holds renewed forms of continuity with the colonial past (Blunt and McEwan 2003; King 2009; Ryan 2004; Chambers and Huggan 2015).

The chosen novels of Bofane and Lobo Antunes are postcolonial literary texts. They are postcolonial both in a strictly temporal sense, as they were written after the decolonisation of the territories to which their narratives refer, and in a broader sense, in terms of content, perspective, structure and style. Indeed, rage, accusation, despair, loss, alienation, caustic

irony, sharp criticism, creative forms of compensation, and a plurality of voices are recurrent traits within both writers' radically different styles. Moreover, the postcolonial city is central in both novels. Indeed, although the colonial histories of the two capitals originate from different systems of power, both texts revolve around the roles played by the cities within those systems. Assuming that the postcolonial condition does not describe a single circumstance, this analysis allows reflection on the different ways to be postcolonial (Sidaway 2000). Once the framework of inquiry is delimited and the distinct postcolonial characteristics of Kinshasa and Lisbon are defined, more theoretical issues are considered, namely the demystification of hierarchy, injustice and oppression; these transcend race, gender, and social class, and operate at different levels of scale, from the individual to the global. Therefore, while keeping the focus on the two cities and their respective colonialisms, the research enquires into the "multidirectional effect of colonial power" and adopts a postcolonial geographical approach aimed at understanding "the spatial dynamics of power, identity, and knowledge extended far beyond any regional limits" (Blunt and McEwan 2003, pp. 4-5).

Furthermore, although the plasticity of the term postcolonial is part of its potential, a certain level of clarity is required when defining the purpose for which it is being applied, case by case. In this respect, the postcolonial geographical approach offers a particularly appropriate perspective from which to observe differences over space and time. Indeed, the postcolonial geographical perspective may reveal continuities that stand out in such diversified scenarios precisely because of its ability to capture singularities. Along with literary geographies and non-representational theories, the postcolonial approach contributes to this research through its deconstructive nature. Postcolonial geography interrogates established orders, questions assumptions, and escapes the familiar; it recontextualises facts and events, reframing the city through different lenses and generating other visions of what is intended as urban. This incessant activity of rethinking, which could be considered the most substantial legacy of postcolonial theory, can inspect ambivalences, identify mechanisms of power, and outline recurrent aspects of dominion and oppression. Above all, it can contribute to the decolonisation of thought, a process which, despite being limitless, should become an essential component of life.

This work introduces a diverse way of observing postcolonial urban marginality, attempting to offer a different view of the postcolonial city. The urban space is no longer perceived as an entire or organic apparatus; instead, fragments provide access to explore non-tangible traits. Whether they are more concrete and social, or more emotional, affective, and unconscious aspects, and regardless of their positive or negative connotations, these traits reveal features of the postcolonial condition through their relationships with the urban space. While modest in comparison with the broad horizons of postcolonial geography, this thesis contributes to the field by delivering a fragmented view of the postcolonial city, made up of splinters which do not recompose any particular image but rather give back a disordered and blurred vision of what postcolonial urban space can be. Following Jazeel's postcolonial critique of urban studies (2021), collage further tries to emphasise singularities by considering those aspects for which our conceptual language is insufficient. Postcolonial urban places are assemblages in themselves, comprised of slivers, changing, unstable, and unfinished; as such, they cannot be contained in a closed form. Prolonging and transforming the issues considered through the active dismantling reading of the novels, I attempt to connect fragments and visualise urban marginality and resistance. Originating from the novels and outside of them, the collage recovers, visually and emotionally, a series of elements resulting from the analysis. In doing so, it facilitates a possible form of resistance aimed at proposing an alternative to the established canons and practices of social scientific discourse. Therefore, collage in itself may be understood as a practice of resistance and decoloniality which proceeds non-linearly, looks for unusual associations, and generates connections to find alternatives for unfolding postcolonial places.

1.7. Decolonial contributions

Both postcolonial and decolonial theories connect to the theoretical framework of my research. I consider these approaches as the double soul of a unique heterogeneous apparatus; indeed, although differentiated, postcolonial and decolonial are not necessarily in conflict. Postcolonial analysis is oriented towards deconstructing how colonial rules were originally established and the forms they take today. Decolonial theory, meanwhile, focuses on the metamorphosis of the colonial past into the present day and the inequalities

produced by renewed colonial practices (Noxolo 2017a; 2017b). Moreover, whereas postcolonial theory is overtly deconstructive, and its debt to Derrida is acknowledged, decolonial studies are more concerned with actions to interrupt coloniality's ramifications. Through the decolonial proactive and future-oriented attitude, it is possible to recognise aspects closer to Deleuzian thought (despite the criticisms advanced against Deleuze, which I will discuss in the next chapter). Lastly, postcolonial and decolonial theoretical approaches also reflect the diverse nature of the novels analysed. While both are examples of postcolonial literary texts, *The Land at the End of the World* by António Lobo Antunes is postcolonial to all intents and purposes, being written immediately after the Angolan colonial war during the tardive Portuguese decolonisation and transmitting a thick anti-colonial atmosphere. In contrast, the more recent *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament* by In Koli Jean Bofane carries an openly decolonial message, primarily embodied by the protagonist's determination to redeem himself.

In thematic terms, African urban marginality may be connected with numerous and different postcolonial and decolonial issues. It can be articulated through the divide operated by colonialism and the processes of othering (Fanon 1972; 1996), the third space of hybridity and ambivalence (Bhabha 2001), or the question of the visibility or hypervisibility of marginalised categories. Among the range of reflections that have enriched the postcolonial and decolonial panorama over the years, I have focused on the modernity-coloniality-decoloniality approach because it offers conceptual tools that are adequate for both the topic of postcolonial urban marginality and the chosen methodology. Investigating the relationship between knowledge and power has become essential to begin thinking of decolonising geography (Esson et al. 2017; Radcliffe 2022). This has led, on the one hand, to a discussion on whiteness (Ahmed 2007; Hamilton 2020; Noxolo 2020) and race (Saldanha 2006); on the other, it has stimulated a debate on the significance of different forms of knowledge (Barker and Pickerill 2020), as decolonising also involves "disturbing the established assumptions, frames and methods" (Sidaway 2000, pp. 606-607).
The decolonial approach, and in particular the focus on modernity-coloniality-decoloniality, sustains the critical dimension of the geography practised while also considering the postcolonial nature and eventual decolonial potential of the novels and the use that analysis makes of them.

1.7.1. The issue of knowledge

The contribution of postcolonial and decolonial studies to the research is primarily based on the reflections initiated by Quijano (2000; 2007; 2008) and Mignolo (2002; 2007; 2009), who identify a link between colonialism, global capitalism, and the universal system of knowledge. This allows me to connect the postcolonial and decolonial debate to my methodological choices and my research's general aim, which focuses on the role of art-based methodology within the discipline. According to Quijano and Mignolo, European colonial domination gave place to a cultural complex defined as European modernity/rationality. Once the colonial political order ended, coloniality remained a general form of world domination and its universal knowledge paradigm (Quijano 2007). Within the vast array of postcolonial and decolonial scenarios, I position my research in this specific frame since dealing with a postcolonial issue, such as marginality in a postcolonial urban context, cannot avoid the questioning of mechanisms of production and reproduction of knowledge. For this purpose, I also draw on some suggestions from Indigenous studies since reflections about the qualitative shift that may be imagined within the discipline also come from this subfield.

For Quijano (2008), race is intertwined with the roles of capital and Eurocentric knowledge. In the first case, race and division of labour have been structurally linked since the moment in which the phenotypic codification of colonised populations corresponded with the global control of labour. Within this scheme, the colonised workers were non-paid or unwaged through being deemed 'inferior' races. Concerning knowledge, the model imported from Europe was the product of a subject-object relation, characterised by a bipartition between reason and nature. Therefore, while the 'subject' holds the reason, the 'external object' is 'nature', leading to considering knowledge regarding propriety (ibid.). Moreover, "Cultural Europeanisation" became an aspiration for all non-European cultures to acquire the same benefits as Europeans (ibid., p. 169).

Mignolo (2009) investigates the question of racism and epistemology, claiming the need for epistemic disobedience, as the "geo-historical and bio-graphic loci of enunciation have been *located* by and through the making and transformation of the colonial matrix of power" (ibid., p. 161). The model of Western imperial knowledge bracketed the body, locating knowledge

exclusively in mind and concealing affects, emotions, and desires (Mignolo 2007). This model still operates through institutions created to reproduce new members and control knowledge-making. For Mignolo, decolonial thinking needs to delink from this paradigm and be grounded in geopolitics and body politics of knowledge to engage in decolonising knowledge from the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo 2009, p. 178). Irreducible colonial difference creates the conditions for what Mignolo defines as "border thinking", an epistemology from a subaltern perspective (Mignolo 2002, p. 71). Colonial difference is an "epistemic location" and "a consequence of the coloniality of power"; it defines the limits of theorising the world, as beyond European epistemology the world becomes unthinkable (ibid., pp. 90-91). This claim for other forms of knowledge connects with the need to explore those aspects of postcolonial urban marginality which belong to the realm of the intangible. The invitation to consider epistemic subalternity suits the research topic. Moreover, Mignolo's request to account for other epistemologies from a subaltern perspective may not only be accepted regarding subaltern "other" cultures, but also concerning subalternity within the Western social scientific discourse. Thus, the possibility of thinking from the colonial difference becomes imperative. Mignolo sees this possibility in another logic, no longer grounded exclusively upon European legacy but upon its regionalisation, to create the conditions for a project of "diversality" (ibid.).

The conception of pluriverse, designed by anthropologist Arturo Escobar (2018), articulates Mignolo's notion of "diversality". The term derives from social movements and decolonial theory and responds to the Zapatista idea of a world where many different worlds fit. Pluriverse refers to the coexistence of multiple and diverse ways of being in the world, by humans and other-than-human entities. Being intertwined with the colonial matrix of power, pluriverse often implies ontological conflicts (Oslender 2019); at the same time, it is an analytical tool to imagine possible recompositions across heterogeneous epistemologies and practices. Most importantly, pluriverse poses a destabilising challenge to modern disciplines, as it questions their authority in defining what is real and cancelling what emerges beyond their range. The alternative is to use their creative potential, by renouncing colonial worldmaking certainties and instead becoming open to negotiation with different practices (de La Cadena and Blaser 2018). The association between knowledge and the colonial matrix of power is an important point in this research that moves between specifically postcolonial

contents, such as colonial and neocolonial conflicts, informal activities, social exclusion and alienation in the postcolonial city, and attempts to explore them through modalities that go beyond the official qualitative approaches within the discipline. In this sense, the decolonial approach is a common thread that links my methodology to the contents covered, particularly in light of marginality and resistance.

1.7.2. Responsibilities

Considering that this work originates from a global North, Western university, and white perspective, it seems opportune to face the discourse on responsibility by recalling some contributions from decolonial studies about the risks incurred by research. Esson et al. (2017) warn about the risks of emphasising decolonising geographical knowledge rather than institution and praxis. This may weaken decoloniality's transformative potential and camouflage the oppressive structures within the discipline, re-centring privileged groups in knowledge production. The invitation is to move from an exclusive focus on epistemology towards a praxis that reveals how forms of violence are normalised and officially approved by institutions. Moreover, decolonial theory risks being domesticated, as Cusicanqui (2012) underlines when describing the "logocentric and nominalistic version" (ibid., p. 102) of decolonial thought which circulates in Western academies, associated with the appropriation of Indigenous ideas from the global South. An Indigenous and non-white presence within institutions would be beneficial to avoid transforming decolonial theory into another instrument of coloniality and speaking not *for* but instead *of* those who are, once again, absent from the discourse (Esson et al. 2017).

The discussion on responsibility connects to the previous points. This is an ambiguous concept, as it may be ascribed and its language adopted without any responsibility being practised (Noxolo et al. 2012). Moreover, it poses a problem of agency when interventions conceal neocolonial acts or are rejected by those who are assumed to benefit from them. In the most extreme cases, even necropolitics may be put in place in the name of responsibility, as Mbembe (2003) illustrates. The responsible postcolonial agent is always contaminated, which is also applicable to academics. For instance, the conditions which allow academics to speak about responsibility are or may have been involved in exploitative relationships. Thus,

for academics, understanding responsibility as practice implies constant acknowledgement and acceptance of this ambiguous and uncomfortable position (Noxolo et al. 2012). Furthermore, removing responsibility from the colonised was precisely one of the outcomes of colonialism. The process of recovery of agency by the colonised is complex and may pass through unexpected refusal or accusation. For this reason, practising responsibility may be demanding; it exposes us to the incomprehensible and to the enigma of the 'other' as a form of refusal to give a definite answer, and as a form of resistance. When this response is addressed towards our practice of responsibility, it may be painful. Ultimately, responsibility should be intended as provisional and contingent on the singularities of the context (ibid.).

The issues of agency and a Eurocentric epistemic canon return in the reflections of Achille Mbembe (2016). His discussions on decolonising the university respond, to a certain extent, to the claims of Noxolo and Cusicanqui about an excessive focus on decolonising knowledge rather than institutions. Mbembe sees the need for a process of decolonisation as a whole, one which regards both knowledge and the university as an institution. From this perspective, decolonising universities implies interrupting the cycle that transforms students into customers of educational commodities. Based on the division between reason and nature, the Western way of knowledge is now hegemonic. Moreover, a global restructuring is in place, closely related to the dynamics of global capitalism, which aims to reproduce the hegemony of transnational elites. Universities contribute to this mechanism when they become institutions that allow privileged groups to reproduce their privilege. In this way, the university participates in the global knowledge market, providing a "skilled labour force" that produces innovation for transnational mobile capital (ibid., p. 37). Despite inequalities of access, the global South wants to participate in global higher education; consequently, educational migration of global elites is ongoing. From Mbembe's perspective, given the circumstances, one possible way to contribute to decolonisation of universities is to manage these intellectual networks; for instance, by periodically recruiting overseas intellectuals to mainland universities (Mbembe 2016). This position reflects Mbembe's attitude to going beyond postcolonial theory by being less interested in the systemic level and more in the action to be taken within a specific situation (Janz 2012). Such an attitude is theorised in his work *On the Postcolony* (Mbembe 2001), where even under conditions of institutional and political violence he points out the creative production of concepts and experiences

adequate to their places, as there are “many postcolonies” made by multiple and often contradictory positions (Janz 2012, p. 28).

Although aspects such as responsibility and agency are included in the question of resistance and, therefore, are part of the analysis, this work’s contribution to such a vast and complex scenario is certainly modest. However, it adds a piece to the great decolonial mosaic by showing how both the focus on the major critical issues of marginality and resistance and the attempt to integrate diverse cognitive approaches and alternative practices into social scientific thought have a political implication that pushes in the directions indicated by the decolonial approach. In this sense, the research explores a novel art-based analytical approach by considering reproduction of Eurocentric knowledge as an outcome of coloniality. In particular, the methodological focus is on the role of non-linear visual tools and on non-narrative, non-logocentric, more unconscious-based research directions.

1.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the debates within the areas of cultural geography from which my work draws most: literary geographies, non-representational theories, creative geographies, and postcolonial and decolonial studies. As the research originates from novels, the first area of interest is literary geographies, which deal with literary texts and adopt a methodology grounded in textual analysis. Despite the various approaches characterising this subdiscipline, textual analysis and reflection on representations can be considered its essential common traits. A second heterogeneous area is non-representational geography, which involves a methodology oriented towards more theoretical analysis or practical forms of engagement. Contesting the effectiveness of representational models, these theories draw attention to ongoing life, indeterminacy, and singularity, promoting a new conception of representation, which becomes significant for its transformative potential. Moreover, non-representational investigation assimilates the unintentional and precognitive dimensions, taking into consideration affects and emotions and introducing atmosphere as a precarious and transversal device that connects situations belonging to different times and spaces and opens diverse ways of understanding. Due to the role of collage in my analysis, this literature

review has focused on creative geography and on the contributions of art-based practices within the discipline. Although this area is also characterised by various methods, the common trait is consideration of art as an analytical tool, productive rather than representative, which is not only in harmony with the non-representational perspective but also meets the postcolonial and decolonial perspective.

In particular, postcolonial approaches deconstruct the colonial discourse and consider power relations and forms of resistance against oppression by revisiting the Western corpus of knowledge; postcolonial geography questions assumptions and recontextualises facts. Moreover, the city plays a significant part in the postcolonial debate due to the central role of both colonial cities and the imperial metropolis. Finally, a further contribution to the research comes from decolonial theory, which considers the world order as an outcome of colonialism and coloniality. The aspect of this reflection that most closely concerns my research relates to the production and reproduction of knowledge; the attempt is to account for other epistemologies, exploring other logics that go beyond the frame of the modern disciplines.

Fitting in with geohumanities, the research benefits from the different areas within cultural geography illustrated above. The work is partly based on literary geography due to the role of the novels and partly on creative geography due to the contribution of collage to the analysis. Moreover, it is entirely driven by a non-representational approach, thus it is grounded in a poststructuralist theoretical framework. Ultimately, the research is inspired by postcolonial and decolonial geographies in terms of the themes investigated and the practice of collage. Indeed, the decolonial approach is a common thread that links collage, and more generally the methodology, to the contents covered, particularly in light of marginality and resistance.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical framework

2.1. Introduction

The theoretical framework of this research refers to the poststructuralist current. Indeed, its creative nature is inspired by the ontological and epistemological shift promoted by poststructuralism within the geographical discipline. In this chapter, I illustrate this framework and try to underline its connection with marginality and resistance and the creative methodology adopted in the research. Within poststructuralism, I identify two turning points in Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. While their thought primarily informs the methodology, it also helps to reframe the issue of urban marginality and marginalisation, blurring its conceptual and social boundaries. Indeed, although the forms of marginality investigated are regarded in their singularity, in my thesis marginality is considered a condition that may occur to and affect everyone, regardless of social class, role, or economic status. This is to say that marginality has multiple facets, which may have to do with conditions of oppression and subordination, but also concern the territories of the psyche and relate to desires or expectations. The analysis of the novels illustrates this multifaceted nature of marginality by extrapolating different cases from literary texts and questioning the possible forms of resistance expressed. At the same time, the Deleuzian perspective reconsiders resistance in non-oppositional terms. Resistance does not define itself in opposition to what it resists but affirms its differential power; in other words, it is not seen as merely coping with or escaping from marginality, but as a proactive force and a transformative action which can trigger new modes of existence. The Deleuzian conception of resistance is rooted in that of difference, which does not operate negatively, defining the distinction between given things, but positively, as a creative force which precedes representations and produces multiplicity. This conception of difference diverges from the Derridean *différance*, which is conceived in terms of absence and produces traces. For

Derrida, something is different because it negates something else, despite this negation being absolute (Roberts and Dewsbury 2021). Indeed, the *différance* emerges through a negative constitution, and it is understandable only in terms of what it is not (Cisney 2018). Therefore, Deleuzian constructivism is different from Derridean deconstruction, with the former being focused on becoming and creativity and the latter on dismantling existing conceptual structures and revealing assumptions. Nonetheless, both offer contributions to this thesis in terms of critiquing binary opposition and resistance to totalising systems of knowledge and power.

This chapter recalls the salient features of poststructuralism and poststructuralist geographies, and discusses the philosophical references which have stimulated and supported the research. It identifies certain key concepts of Derrida, Deleuze, and Guattari's philosophical production, which constitute the keystones of this study, and considers their geographical implications. Subsequently, it considers these theoretical influences in relation to the textual analysis of the novels and their visual implications with regard to collage and resistance.

2.2. Deconstructing centrality: a peripheral thinking

The poststructuralist current inaugurated revision of the theoretical apparatuses that had presided over the production and transmission of knowledge in the modern era (Woodward, Dixon and Jones III 2009; Dixon and Jones III 2004). In particular, structuralism is criticised for its systematicity, which sees events as manifestations of subterranean structures, and its "depth ontology" (Jones III 2013). By contesting the structural dimension of knowledge and questioning the principles that generate dichotomy, univocal meanings and stable concepts, poststructuralism sided against any claims to truth, exhaustiveness, or essentiality. In this way, it made room for relativist positions, restored value to the dimension of emotions and affects, and identified power relations behind the grand narratives of modern science. Moreover, poststructuralism penetrated the social sciences and humanities.

This current of thought does not seek to propose a new ontology, but instead wishes to highlight that ontology is always the outcome of an epistemology. Thus, it results from a socially constructed way of knowing (Woodward, Dixon and Jones 2009). Within the geographical discipline, poststructuralism questions the power relations that fix meanings and grant importance to particular objects, events, or practices, decreeing their centrality compared to others (as in the case of landscape, space, and place) (ibid.). Poststructuralist geographies avoid the "vertical ontotheology"; they would instead follow a "horizontal drift" of modification, and amplify "certain traits which are not primary" (Doel 1999, pp. 30-31). This allows for a continuous reconfiguration in which concepts and frames of reference are open to reinscription. Being everything in becoming, it can be unfolded and recomposed endlessly (ibid.). This is the case for marginality in the postcolonial city, an issue revisited from different angles in this research. Starting from the novels, urban marginality is first unfolded through a Deleuzian approach that pushes certain narrative elements out of their original contexts, reassembling them with others of a different narrative nature; subsequently, the topic is further decomposed and recomposed through associations which belong to the visual dimension and escape the linear discourse.

By adopting deconstruction as a methodology, poststructuralism focuses on the Derridean process of centring, which, understood in a broader sense, is the creation of centres and peripheries. In doing this it is possible to move beyond more apparent oppositional relations and reveal a codependency, as centres live because of peripheries (Dixon and Jones III 2005). Indeed, the process of centring is made possible by excluding the 'other', which becomes the 'constitutive outside', and this codependency is the entry point for deconstruction (Woodward and Jones III 2009). This directly relates to the postcolonial situation of the global South in the context of globalisation, prompting the identification of specific power dynamics in both of the novels analysed. Furthermore, investigating the processes which maintain the centre allows for subversion. This entails identifying particular discourses and their locations (for instance, institutions), as it is then possible to investigate the power which creates centres and margins and to question the interests behind such a divide. Uncovering discursive sites allows new ways of naming and relating to meanings, and may release the transgressive potential of peripheries (Dixon and Jones III 2005). This not only includes peripheral thoughts but also peripheral practices, which this research attempts to integrate

into the geographical discourse. Indeed, it is hoped that this work can suggest a possible way for novel recompositions, rather than a reconstitution of the established order.

Within the poststructuralist current, this project is overtly inspired by the thought of Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari. In their ideas, the research has found a possibility to combine theory and critique with practice. The following section focuses on those aspects of their philosophical production that constitute the nucleus around which the research develops.

2.3. Crossing textualities: Jacques Derrida

In this project, Derrida's thought offers an adequate ground for analysing forms of urban marginality that, although present in novels, are not confined within the literary context. Indeed, the research follows the trace of marginality interrogating different textualities through social scientific literature and collage. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida (1976) identifies a relationship between writing and logocentrism. According to the philosopher, all readings of reality and our knowledge are jeopardised by writing, a second-degree language, constantly referring to a 'voice'. Writing is the mouthpiece of a presumed original word. However, for Derrida, there will never be a whole, living word, but always a text, a 'writing' which precedes the voice and the thought (Sini 2009). Therefore, we are inscribed in a text, an already-happened writing, whose meaning is always postponed, and where there is no unity between expression and meaning, just a differential production process of both. Logocentrism, which is also a form of ethnocentrism, is grounded in this phonetic writing.

In Derridean terms, text is not exclusively an object; it is writing, and textuality is intended as an "endless significant potentiality" (Izzo 1996, p. 17). The production of meanings is an aspect of this limitlessness, which prevents the establishment of borders of a text or a clear identification of its 'inner' and 'outer' (Garritano 2017). All is writing, and as there is no meaning beyond writing, as "there is nothing outside of the text" (Derrida 1976, p. 158). Text, instead, rewrites its borders constantly, embedding the external (Garritano 2017). The reading and interpretation of a text is an "endless dynamic", open to the supplement of its meaning (ibid., p. 56 [translation mine]). The production of sense and the construction of

knowledge are ruled by writing and, more specifically, by 'trace', through which the past returns inexorably to the present in a deferred form, also delivering the present to the future. Therefore, being a deferred past and a not yet future, there is no present, and the unique form of permanence is this "altering repetition", named *différance* (ibid.).

The French neologism of *différance* blends the double meaning of difference in terms of time (to postpone) and space (to be different from), as temporising and spacing (Derrida 1997; 2002). Embodied by trace, which returns in various forms, *différance* rules of thinking, experience, sense, and language. *Différance* is deconstruction, doing and undoing, the transgression of a differed return which forbids the previous, allowing the production of unlimited meanings through iterations and alterations. Ultimately, *différance* is the rule of the text and generates effects in the context in which it occurs (Garritano 2017). Therefore, deconstruction opens the interpretation horizon-wide, configuring a scenario in which any text relates to other texts and contexts. The ideas of an already existent textual inscription of which all is part, as well as the concept of differential production, work in the direction of collage. After opening a visual context, collage explores recurrences and variations. It reinscribes old fragments and includes the external in a new context, creating novel and often unexpected connections. Moreover, the plane of composition remains open and does not coincide with a specific plane of meaning, as it is exposed to a potentially endless number of meanings.

The critique of the notion of structure and the analysis of the process of centring questions Western ontological securities such as essence, cause, origin, and subject, which are seen as epistemological constructs. This also leads to a dismantling of the dualistic and oppositional system upon which Western thought is articulated (Woodward, Dixon and Jones 2009). Instead, *différance* is a process of variance production, and recognising it allows us to deconstruct the ideological assumptions that originate from the process (Lussault 2013). Derrida's thought has had noticeable repercussions in postcolonial and decolonial theories, where concepts such as centring, difference and deconstruction are seminal. In this research, they allow room to decolonise the discourse through which the discipline reproduces itself.

2.3.1. Geography out of context

The Derridean approach has had essential repercussions in geography. The most immediate was to critique the discipline as an organised body of knowledge. In this sense, deconstruction has been used to dismantle and demystify (Doel 2005; Barnett 2020). Nonetheless, behind this, there are interesting articulations to consider. The reflection on context and its conceptualisation appears significant within the discipline and for this research. Through the lens of deconstruction, context becomes a "temporary stabilisation of meanings". Those meanings organise a discourse through the *différance* which is established among them. Moreover, each context comes from other contexts, which in turn are embedded in others. Therefore, deconstruction considers this intertextual character, which allows any context to transform and recontextualise (Dixon and Jones III 2005, pp. 243). This has impacted geography, where context has long been treated as a black box (Barnett 1999).

According to Barnett, the attitude to place ideas or discourses in specific social, historical, political, economic, or regional contexts has made context a principle of explanation and interpretation, which has long guaranteed borders and solid frames. What deconstruction does is open up a space for discussing the conceptualisation of context. This reveals that contexts are marked by acts of linguistic consensus, excluding indeterminacy and transforming norms into facts that remain unquestioned. In this way, context transmits an idea of space as something closed, defined, and static, and it is precisely this spatial regime of conceptualisation that deconstruction contests (ibid.). Deconstruction does not accept given positions but discusses their reasons and identifies the dissimulation which made them possible, revealing that "stability is always relative" (Doel 2005, p. 247). Nonetheless, the value of deconstruction is not only in decoding but also in identifying what is given and what is possible, and in activating concepts that have been questioned (Barnett 2005). Thus, the invitation is to provoke and stimulate, going beyond the theoretical and methodological mechanisms that structure the discipline (Dixon and Jones III 2005). In practising a creative methodology that reworks literary geography and combines it with visual practice, my analysis constitutes an attempt to embrace this invitation.

Questioning the division between text and context, deconstruction frees the text from a reduction to the plane of meaning. The *débordement* of all boundaries transforms text in a differential network; in fact, Derrida does not replace previous concepts with others but supplements the existing, expanding them. The notion of 'iterability' illustrates precisely this continuous transformation of concepts, characterised by differential repetition out of context, dissemination, dispersal, and variance (Barnett 1999; 2005). *Différance* produces spacing and generates repetition without any original context, as a form of dislocation. For Derrida, there is no actual event; any event is inscribed in a displacement movement as soon as it is enunciated. Therefore, on the one hand, any text is always moving in any context, through continuous transformation, and may be rearticulated endlessly. On the other hand, context is no longer a container but a relation between elements, and deconstruction is the creative practice of articulating new connections (Barnett 1999). In the textual analysis adopted, the novels act as differential networks from which all visual and discursive ramifications depart. The migration from one context to another starts with specific textual contents centred on urban marginality or gravitating around its semantic sphere. Then, it develops through a migration of visual fragments, which create new relations in the plane of composition. Even if the space of composition is defined, the new context is, in turn, unstable and entirely open to indeterminacy. In this sense, collage is a way to make *différance* visible.

Considering the context as taken for granted implies an idea of space that distinguishes clearly between inside and outside (ibid.). In contrast, each deconstruction practice is made by inside and outside fluctuations (Rovatti 2005). In this act of resignification, all meanings depend on the temporary stabilisation of the differential movement. Thus, deconstruction gives rise to "situated readings", which recognise contingency and follow the immanent patterns of text (Barnett 2020, p. 191). The traits outlined in Derrida's thought support the nature of this research. The overflow of the text and the opening of context constitute an integral part of the theoretical framework within which the work is located. Moreover, they are the traces of the umpteenth geographical rewriting represented by this work.

Critics of poststructuralism have pointed out a tendency to privilege epistemology over ontology, leading to a 'textualisation' of the world and to becoming stuck on the issue of representation. These critics may have partly contributed to the turns to materiality and

affect, and to the rise of a more materialist poststructuralism inspired by Deleuze and Guattari (Jones III 2013; Thrift 2008). Indeed, while movement and transformation are recurrent features for Deleuze and Guattari, their philosophy focuses on materiality. The extension of those parts of the literary texts considered useful is therefore added to the Derridean opening of context. This allows for further experimentation and room for manoeuvre. The following section discusses these aspects and their assemblage-based approach.

2.4. Becoming: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

For Deleuze, philosophy departs from the history of philosophy as traditionally conceived. Instead, what matters with philosophy now is that thinking can begin without presuppositions, as a speculative thought that relies on counterintuitive, paradoxical and non-ordinary concepts. Philosophy, then, would no longer be an accomplished fact, something which can be told, linear, with a beginning and an end, but rather an act (Ronchi 2015). In this passage from "the paranoia of a State philosopher", who obeys defined forms and values, to "the schizophrenia of nomad thought", philosophy renounces its privileged position and works with other discourses through reciprocal deterritorialisation (Doel 1999, p. 35). The active propensity of Deleuzian philosophy and its impetus towards other discourses constitute essential components of the theoretical framework of this research. Indeed, this thought completely opens the boundaries of the concept of transformation and becoming, theoretically and materially, as we will see later in this chapter. This constitutes a valuable grounding to support the work's creative and hybrid methodology.

Deleuze and Guattari's thought affirms the immanent character of experience and describes a world in which all materiality is in a constant process of becoming, transformation, and differentiation. In this dimension of forces and movement, rather than structured and whole objects, multitudes of partial objects interconnect, creating assemblages (Woodward, Dixon and Jones 2009). Deleuzian philosophy introduces rhizomatic thought. This considers connections possible at any point and through diverse systems of codification, which may belong to different fields and use different regimes of signs (Deleuze and Guattari 2017).

Connections occur through lines of flight, triggering a process of deterritorialisation of the previous rhizomatic formation and reterritorialisation in a new one. The conceptualisation of lines of flight refers to lines of segmentation and movements of escape that contribute to deterritorialising and transforming previously constituted or territorialised entities. In this sense, lines of flight are not only an escape but also a process of transformation, leading to new formations and assemblages, and unleashing creative potential. These lines of flight operate in a rhizomatic manner, as they are not determined or managed by any centrality but can be triggered at any point of any system, structure, or organised entity. In this becoming, a capture of code and an increase in value intervene. Deleuze borrows the biological term of "aparallel evolution", and uses the examples of the wasp and the orchid, or the spillover of the virus, to show that connections may concern entities of different natures (ibid., p. 13).

In the same way, "aparallel evolution" intervenes between the book and the world. Far from being a mere copy of this, the book creates a rhizome with the world, deterritorialises it, and, in turn, is reterritorialised by the world (ibid., p. 14). Ultimately, there is no further division between reality, representation, and subjectivity – namely between the world, the book, and the author. There is an assemblage which connects multiplicities from each and gives place to a new rhizome, a non-hierarchical system without a centre, beginning, or end, always in-between, which is also a form of alliance (ibid., p. 2 and p. 36). The value of assemblages depends on the number of variables (Doel 2009). These, in turn, have to deal with processes and events, which means they have to do with what is happening rather than what has happened. Indeed, an event is not a fact; it names the happening and is in a "regime of extra-territoriality" concerning what is given. Thus, the event has an inexistent last, and art may grasp it (Ronchi 2015, p. 59 [translation mine]). This approach informs the textual analysis practised in the research, which tries to extend specific traits of marginality in the postcolonial city and certain aspects connected with urban marginality outside the novel. In this way, my research generates discourse on the topic, moving through literary narrative, social scientific literature, and the visual practice of collage. Indeed, the analysis is inspired by and constitutes one of the innumerable possible forms of assemblage. In particular, the reading approach applied to the literary texts is inspired by Deleuze's active dismantling reading and originates in identifying lines of flight. I have found some exit points in the

literary texts, all somehow related to marginality, from which I have tried to develop lines of flight. This extension outside of the literary text occurs through social scientific literature and collage. Starting from elements connected or associated with the idea of marginality, therefore, I trigger a process of deterritorialisation of the novel, followed by a rhizomatic exploration and new assemblages.

Deleuzian and Guattarian philosophy is focused on how things work and what can be done with them. It is an active philosophy which explicitly invites experimentation with all forms of materiality, variations, and assemblages. This is precisely the aim of this research: inventing new ways to explore postcolonial urban marginality using literary and visual materials. Therefore, if this work is indebted to Derrida's thought about the setting, the text's opening and the subsequent recontextualisation, it draws equally from Deleuze and Guattari. In particular, the methodological approach used in the textual analysis and illustrated in detail in the corresponding section of the methodological chapter derives from their work.

2.4.1. Material affective geographies

Within poststructuralism, the contribution of Deleuze and Guattari opened a new season, giving rise to a materialist turn. In geography, this was also the result of marked and prolonged attention to the textual dimension, which had led to criticism of poststructuralism, accusing it of textualism. In this respect, the call to rematerialize, therefore, may be seen as a reaction to the cultural turn (Lorimer 2013). In this section, I discuss the return to materiality, driving attention to some aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's thought. Firstly, I will outline the debate on Deleuzian materialism, focusing on matter and affect. Then, I will consider vitalism, its potential, and its implications within my work.

There is a strong interrelation between matter and affect within the Deleuzian perspective. Materiality does not refer to solid matter or to a static state, as matter may differ in typology and degree and is subject to change. In undifferentiated space-time, matter also takes place through figurative or affective effects. These, although generally associated with immaterial qualities, are instead internal to matter (Anderson and Wylie 2009). This affective materialism is an open system where deviation in repetition makes a difference, giving place

to events and changes. Materials, thus, are ongoing phenomena that populate everyday life (Lorimer 2013) and are constituted by different intensities. In this perspective, focusing on affects implies abandoning pregiven categories and spatial analytics. This is the case, for instance, for categories such as class and gender, or an operator such as scale, since these are conceptual tools that try to define an order (Dixon and Straughan 2013). What is required, instead, is to imagine novel relations between the material, perceptual, affective, and discursive (Anderson and Wylie 2009). Deleuzian affective materialism considers immaterial aspects as components of matter. This implies that matter is a process rather than an object.

The thought of Deleuze and Guattari has had a broad resonance in geography, mainly found in non-representational geographies, where interest in the precognitive dimension and affects have been widely discussed (Anderson and Harrison 2010; Thrift 2008). Moreover, the issue of affects is related to the notion of atmosphere. This intangible phenomenon, nonetheless real, overflows from objects and stimulates emotion through a circular interaction with the subject (Anderson and Ash 2015). At the same time, it belongs to both the subject and 'external' elements (Anderson 2009). In this sense, on the one hand, atmosphere blurs any distinction between human beings, objects and space; on the other, it fully participates in the Deleuzian view of materiality, illustrated above. Atmosphere is an essential component in the analysis of *The Land at the End of the World* of António Lobo Antunes, as disconnection from the city and the particular form of urban marginality embodied by the narrator is mainly delivered through atmosphere. This accounts for the distance between narrator and city, presenting Lisbon through urban fragments of an alienated present, alternated with shreds of the city that reemerge from the past.

Deleuze and Guattari's contribution to this research's theoretical framework also comes from their conception of nonorganic life, which considers life beyond the organism. According to this idea, not only does life not coincide with organisms, but organisms imprison life – which instead is a vital impetus. Moreover, the organism entails a mechanism of recognition, as with any idea of unity, which prevents us from thinking about the difference. Therefore, for Deleuze, it is necessary to call into question recognition, as this is the only condition for thinking to happen (Roberts and Dewsbury 2021). Reflection on affective resonances,

atmospheres, and nonorganic life has posed questions of a methodological nature. They relate, for instance, to how to investigate the ability to affect and be affected, what research practices to activate in order to sense them (McCormack 2015), and how to intercept, emphasise and amplify the moments in which life exceeds our capacity for recognition. This requires novel practices in empirical research, which work at the threshold of recognition, promote new sensibilities, and capture the processual nature of the real (Roberts and Dewsbury 2021). This point is critical in my research, since indeterminacy is one aspect that characterises atmosphere and affective resonances. Being by their nature indeterminate, these aspects are not easily identifiable and are difficult to define; they escape the idea of recognition and hinder the criteria of transparency and transmissibility required by social scientific discourse. Instead, they need alternative approaches, different listening systems and experimental practices to be valorised.

Rather than universal truths or generalisation, the Deleuzian approach advocates an immanent experimentalism, which emphasises relations. This vital empiricism affirms the power of relations, which exceed their terms through encounter (Roberts 2019a). If the Derridean notion of textuality has allowed expansion of the ideas of text and context, and has opened them up to infinite possibilities of deferral, Deleuze introduces the chance to make use of, manipulate, alter, and transform materials. Novels, the effects they produce, the relations created by these effects, their transfiguration and the potential for further change are the matters of this research. Textual analysis and collage are possible ways to explore materiality through practice in between words and images.

2.5. Critical and clinical literary implications

The implications of Derridean and Deleuzian thought concern analysis through engagement with both the reading of novels and the practice of collage. After Derrida, context becomes an operator that fixes the relational field of meanings and delivers temporary stabilisation. While context sets the relational domain of meaning, it relies on other contexts and is subject to being transformed. Therefore, there is always the possibility for intertextual levels, which may redefine the relational field for producing new contexts. This aspect directly concerns

the act of reading, as it involves the production of different meanings by the reader (Woodward, Dixon and Jones III 2009, p. 403). The reading of the novels proposed in this work tries to practise not only the opening of the borders of the book, but also the *différance* in the extended sense of textuality. Therefore, on the one hand, the literary context is infringed through intertextuality; on the other, writing is considered a trace that differs from itself and refers to something else. This deferral dynamic also works in the practice of collage, as illustrated in the next section. From a Derridean perspective, literature allows us to think of life as the experience of representation. This does not refer in any way to mimesis, which would instead relegate representation to secondary status. For Derrida, representation is not the modification of something presumed to be original, and everything begins with representation, as the sign intervenes immediately in the perception. Literature occurs where there is a trace, it speaks about something else and, by definition, "is always *in place of*" (Kronic 1999, p. 28). I associate this Derridean vision of literature as textuality, which contextualises experience according to a network of differences, with the Deleuzian conception of rhizome and rhizomatic production of assemblages. Both contribute to delivering an image of literature as a productive and future-oriented force. For Derrida, this is due to the deferral, which implies a relation to otherness and to what is always to come; for Deleuze, it assumes versatile facets through assemblage, leading to more material and experimental uses of texts.

Although literary references are frequent in Deleuze's work, there are also essays explicitly devoted to examining literature. In *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Deleuze 1998), published in France in 1993, Deleuze considers literature as an active force and reflects on it by discussing its functioning and role. In particular, he explores the critical and clinical potential of literature through a collection of essays dedicated to different authors. In Deleuze's view, literary texts interact with the outside because they have the power to identify symptoms and articulate possibilities of health, giving rise to new ways of thinking and being. Here lies literature's potential for transformation, as "writing is a question of becoming" (Deleuze 1998, p. 1). Writing has not to do with recounting memories or fantasies, as in both cases, the excess of reality and the excess of imagination, an Oedipal structure "is projected onto the real or introjected into the imaginary" (ibid., p. 2); instead, literature has to do with vision and fabulation. Despite the singularity of characters, who are "perfectly individuated", their

specificities “elevate them to a vision that carries them off in an indefinite, like a becoming” (ibid., p. 3). Therefore, fabulation is not related to ego projection but to visions and transformations. While “the world is the set of symptoms”, literature is “an enterprise of health” (ibid.) as the writer comes across things “too big for him” (ibid.), and has the capacity to invent “a possibility of life” (ibid., p. 4). Indeed, literature is “a passage of Life that traverses both the liveable and the lived” (Deleuze 1998, p. 1) and the writer is a symptomatologist who reads signs of sickness in culture and promotes remedies; he diagnoses the forces that shape the world and the arrangement of new configurations to encourage new possibilities of life (Bogue 2003). From this perspective, far from being a representation of life, literature is rather seen as a form of life.

For Deleuze, a text is “a small cog in an extra-textual practice”, and it is fundamental to consider “what use it has in the extra-textual practice that prolongs the text” (Deleuze 1973, cited in Smith 1998, p. xvi). However, to determine how to use it, it is essential to understand how it works. Text is an apparatus which produces multiple signs, a “literary machine” constituted by mutually independent elements, pure singularities, devoid of any signification and non-communicating in themselves (Smith 1998, pp. xxii-xxiii). The work of art is to precisely allow these parts to communicate with each other. However, the realised whole becomes a part in itself, no more important than the others. The key to this “experimentalist pragmatics” is to explore what in the text works for the reader, what personal, social and political use a reader can make of its effects and, ultimately, how to use the text in extra-textual practice (Buchanan and Marks 2000, pp. 34-36). This implies a preliminary phase aimed at dismantling the text and determining the matters to focus on, whether inside or outside the text.

Deleuze and Guattari had previously developed the concept of minor language in their essay on Kafka (1986). In this work, they do not consider minor and major as different languages but as different usages of the same one. A minor language, therefore, does not necessarily coincide with a marginalised one but with a minor use of a major one. These variations may act at any linguistic level, pushing the major language towards its limits. Through language, they go beyond the linguistic dimension in the way that they reach an ‘asubjective’ extent through a subjective one. While minor literature is a way of deterritorialising language

through metamorphosis, deviations, and other forms of experimentation, it is also a political form of action, as language is shaped by power, and the minoritarian use of it is counter to the standard usage. Grammatical, syntactic, and semantic variations may lead to "being a foreigner in one's own language" (ibid., p. 101). While writing becomes a form of resistance, minor literature is inherently political, as the personal becomes collective. Indeed, writers intercept and work with symptoms, inventing combinations in language, determining a style, and creating blocks of sensation (affects and percepts). In doing so, they draw new relations between variables and make them function as a whole, producing new modes of existence (Smith 1998, p. iii).

Deleuze and Guattari's conception of literature and use of books provide theoretical and methodological support for this research, as they enable the connection of different matters from inside to outside the novels and vice versa through the identification of 'lines of flight'. This leads to experimenting with a geographical use of literature, which prolongs the text in an extra-textual dimension, practising deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of the matter delivered by novels. Moreover, not only does the active reading of the novels follow the Deleuzian methodological approach, but it also considers the theoretical and political charge of Deleuze and Guattari's vision. With the theme of this research being centred on the forms of marginality in the postcolonial and postimperial city, the conception of minor literature appears to be of relevance regarding resistance and decoloniality.

2.6. Deleuze and the postcolonial

In this section, I briefly focus on the relationship between Deleuze's thought and the postcolonial and decolonial approach in light of the criticisms that were advanced against him and poststructuralism in general. I find this reconnection essential, considering the contribution of poststructuralism in the theoretical framework, the role played by Deleuze's philosophy in the methodology, and the post- and decolonial slant of my work. Moreover, it is also a way to position myself within the chosen theoretical framework and decoloniality.

Criticisms were primarily levelled at Deleuze and Foucault by Spivak (1994), and refer to their presumed failure to recognise the position occupied by privilege due to their silence on significant issues in the contemporary postcolonial debate. This opened a discussion around Deleuze and postcolonialism, aimed at re-establishing the political collocation of the philosopher within this context (Bignall and Patton 2010; Burns and Kaiser 2012). The debate has been mainly focused on the centrality of creative production, which constitutes the ground for Deleuzian postcolonial thought, as "the production of the new is always a political act, a radical step beyond the limits of our present conditions" (Burns and Kaiser 2012, pp. 13-14). Indeed, although Deleuze does not engage directly with postcolonial thinkers or writers, his concepts resonate with postcolonial issues such as oppression and subalternity. It is sufficient to consider the ideas of minoritarian subjectivities and minoritarian languages or the acts of resistance (Bignall and Patton 2010). Braidotti (2006) argues that these criticisms arise from misunderstanding the poststructuralist representation critique and needing to consider the significance of alternative subject positions. According to Braidotti, life is destined to become the subject rather than the object of research (ibid.). Her vision fully reflects Deleuze and Guattari's affirmative thought, directed towards the transformative potential of reality. This transformation is implied in the virtual dimension rooted in the specificity of experience; on the contrary, by denying the virtual, representation merely denies the change and, ultimately, any possibility of redemption.

Nonetheless, regardless of these claims in defence of Deleuzian thought, it seems appropriate to discuss the choice of a white Northern European theoretical apparatus for a work that deals with the postcolonial city and claims to offer a decolonial approach within the discipline. The justification for this choice lies in the belief that the intention to deconstruct the pernicious dynamics of coloniality must primarily address power and the relationship with difference. In this direction, acknowledging the fundamental role of the Southern post- and decolonial literature, discussed in the literature review, does not exclude the validity and legitimacy of a theoretical framework that did not originate in the global South. I chose a perspective focused on deconstructing and overcoming those mechanisms of cancellation of differences – the great presumption behind every form of oppression and marginality. While my interest is linked to colonial and postcolonial power relations, which emerge from the novels analysed, I do not believe that cardinal points are conditions *sine*

qua non to guarantee or negate the validity of a theoretical approach. Instead, I am interested in relating to postcolonial literary texts a way of thinking aimed at deconstruction and transformation, and at addressing the issues of othering and resistance. I have found an answer to this through the chosen framework, despite being white and Northern European.

Inspired by the theoretical panorama illustrated here, this work explores urban marginality in the postcolonial city, considers the decolonial contribution of postcolonial novels and collage, and discusses the role of creativity. Following the Derridean *débordement*, novels become a differential network through the rearticulation and transformation of contents, activated through other written sources and the practice of collage. The textual analysis, oriented to a Deleuzian approach and based on lines of flight, allows incursion from the text outwards and vice versa and is integrated with collage as a form of assemblage of a diverse and non-linear order, rather than a narrative or discursive one. By exploring materiality as intended in a Deleuzian way, this hybrid analysis involves the intangible dimensions of space, attempting to restore the emotional and affective components into the discourse. If the claim from the global South is a reappropriation of their voices and forms of knowledge and a retaking of self-responsibility, as underlined in the previous chapter when discussing the decolonial approach, which responsibility may we assume from the global North within our Western disciplines? I pursue this form of 'responsibility as a practice' by restoring materiality in a Deleuzian sense and reinstating the body in knowledge, along with affects, emotions and desires. On the one hand, there is the subaltern perspective and colonial difference, inherited from the novels; on the other, there is collage's creative potential as a medium to undermine the discipline's solid and sometimes self-referential apparatus. Following de Leeuw and Hunt (2018), I attempt to explore a "geographical praxis that unsettles our authority to theorise what decolonisation means in the place in which we live and work" and, in doing that, allows us to "unsettle ourselves, our departments, and our disciplines" (ibid., p. 10).

Practising other manners of knowledge is a possible approach to decolonising geography, disturbing the discipline by proposing other parameters that do not have to be considered as alternatives to the existing ones but claim their right to exist in the academy. This focus on epistemology does not imply forgetting the centring process of privileged groups, nor the

issues linked to salaries, recruitment praxis, and publishing, which constitute a significant part of the coloniality of the university. Instead, it is a tile in the mosaic of decolonisation aimed at practising a way to challenge the uniqueness of academic knowledge and its discourse. Ultimately, it aims at 'spacing' as an attempt to produce space through *différance*, practising *différance* within the discipline. This implies a consideration of discipline "as a multiplicity" and "disciplinary space as a fabric that can be frayed and reworked in all kinds of ways" (Doel 1999, p. 29). In the last few decades, geography has built on postcolonial approach and gone beyond it through decolonial interventions (Radcliffe 2017). Decolonising the discipline has not only required the questioning of core geographical concepts such as space, place, and scale, delinking them from a universal framework and seeking a plural sense of the world, but it has also called for decentring of research practice, transforming the entire research cycle, from the initial design to ethics, fieldwork, writing, and dissemination of results (Radcliffe 2022). This lengthy process should depart from usual practices and move towards non-familiar territories, seeking and learning from non-dominant forms of understanding, and exploring other manners of investigation and knowledge production. For its part, poststructuralism in general, and more specifically Deleuze, has elaborated new relational possibilities among subjects, where the subject is no longer a unity but is decentred in a multitude. This implies a reciprocal, diffracted responsibility. Indeed, the space of the subject is split between inter- and intra-subjective sites (Rubbick 2007a; 2007b), and subjectivity is rethought through difference, which emerges from contextual aggregations (Simpson 2017). While trying non-representational paths to investigate marginality, this research works on our discipline and otherness, preparing a terrain of knowledge auspiciously more appropriate for future encounters in the current pluriverse.

2.7. Collage and resistance between opacity and silence

In the last section of this theoretical chapter, I would like to focus on the concept of resistance as understood in a transversal way. Rather than dealing with the topic in detail, I underline its constant presence through some theoretical nodes that I consider significant for the research. Therefore, I start from Deleuze's reflection on the diagram, move on to certain geographical outcomes regarding resistance and fragmentation, and then reconnect with the

collage, passing through the surrealist reflection on the image and the Deleuzian concept of exhaustion.

As mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis, for Deleuze and Guattari, resistance is an affirmative and creative force that precedes the process of stratification of power. Deleuze developed a unique vision of resistance driven by desire by reinterpreting the concept of Foucault's diagram (Deleuze 2018). Resistance is a desiring and productive force and a diagram of escape. As elaborated by Deleuze, the concept of a diagram significantly contributes to the discourse on resistance. The diagram is considered a mechanism of power in its ideal form before being actualised in concrete devices or institutions (Collet 2020, p. 386). The diagrammatic dimension is driven by desire and may be described as a preliminary stage to power, which is instead stratified or reterritorialised desire. In the Deleuzian and Guattarian view, it is at this stage that resistance takes place, and not as a counterattack within a stratification (whether an institution, a dispositive, a structure or an assemblage). Resistance being a desiring and productive force, it “lights up a field of visibility” (ibid., p. 395) and articulates a form of minoritarian knowledge. In Deleuze and Guattari’s thought, lines of flight are primary determinations, the cutting edge of creation and deterritorialisation, and movements of deterritorialisation are already forms of resistance (Smith 2016, p. 279). I adopt this interpretation of resistance in the textual analysis of the first novel, *Congo Inc. Bismarck’s Testament*, where the protagonist seems to embody the Deleuzian idea of the diagram differently from other characters or forms of resilience investigated.

Concerning the Deleuzian affirmative philosophy of life and critique of the negative, Roberts and Dewsbury (2021) argue for a better understanding of vitalism in human geography. Indeed, vitalism has mainly been intended to attribute liveliness to different contexts in a way that reduces it to a descriptive framework and limits the political scope of Deleuze’s thought. Instead, Deleuzian vitalism concerns experimental thinking, which involves discovering and happenings as a vital impetus, originally non-representational and out of recognition. Contesting the negative and oppositional framework with an affirmative one implies bypassing transcendent logic and remaining anchored in immanence, and embracing non-organic life rather than the organic and unity. “Deleuze’s affirmative approach seeks to

generate modes of political resistance that explicitly refuse the nihilistic enterprise and its preference for encountering the world through the prism of a transcendent logic. And yet so much of what passes for critical human geography remains beholden to the idea that there can be no resistance without negation and that the conditions of radical change are fundamentally predicated on the logic of negativity" (ibid., p. 1254).

Far from being a depoliticised approach, vitalism has substantial political implications; indeed, a vision grounded on transcendence prevents non-organic vitality, whereas one based on immanence gives place to a form of resistance pervaded by micropolitics. Conceptually, micropolitics refers to power relations at the micro level, which Deleuze and Guattari define as molecular and distinguish from the molar level of macropolitics (Deleuze and Guattari 2017). Micropolitics are connected with sensations, affects, and desires, and are manifested in everyday practices: they come from within situations, are entangled with ways of being and doing, and involve "immanent critique that actively alters conditions of emergence […] [and] engages becoming" (Massumi 2015, p. 71). Nonetheless, they interact with the macro level and are linked with macropolitics, which they can even influence. These molecular movements can become a space of resistance and lead to social transformation: "The potentials produced at the micropolitical level feed up, climbing the slope that macropolitics descends. Micropolitical and macropolitical go together" (ibid., p. 81).

Art is a form of micropolitical practice. It operates at the molecular level of sensations and affects and can generate new ways of feeling and being. As micropolitical processes can create lines of flight, escaping dominant systems through the creation of new possibilities, art can generate new sensibilities through challenging dominant perceptions. It operates at a pre-conscious and pre-representative molecular level, which precedes the organisation of thought. In this way, it transforms our sensory experiences through micro-interventions that can lead to more extensive experiences. "Micropolitics is what makes the unimaginable practicable. It's the potential that makes possible" (ibid., p. 82); art, in turn, "engenders unprecedented, unforeseen and unthinkable qualities of being" (Guattari 1995, p. 106). Collage fits into this framework as an artistic micropolitical practice capable of activating new sensibilities, opening fields of resistance, and triggering different ways of seeing. This is due not only to its artistic inherence, but also to the very nature of collage, which is intrinsically

non-representational, as illustrated in the methodological chapter. While it dismantles and reassembles figures and concepts, collage never completely gives in to forms of reterritorialisation but rather incorporates openness and becoming, triggering further possible reconfigurations and reconceptualisations and unleashing its micropolitical potential.

Geographical echoes of this vision of resistance in human geography focus on the condition of resistance in becoming. Once the entanglement with power is recognised, attention is paid to avoiding predetermined forms of resistance (Hughes 2020). Instead, resistance is investigated as an emerging practice, not only in its occurrence but also in its potential. To be specific, this potential is difficult to identify and grasp as it is not distinct, but something intertwined with a plurality of forces in a given situation. This makes resistance's potentiality "always already present" (ibid., p. 1151), reiterating Foucault's vision regarding the possibility of resistance in any power relation. Resistance is multiple and open to other subjects, materials, temporalities, and spaces. Moreover, although the intention of the subject is a necessary condition, the relationship between intentions and outcomes is not linear but mediated by forces and materials. In this sense, resistance implies zones of ambiguity and unknowability. As Sarah Hughes states, "disruption of certainty is political" (ibid., p. 1155), and it may be productive to connect this aspect of ambiguity with the Derridean conception of monolingualism (2004). Successfully expressed in the known sentence, "I have only one language, and it is not mine" (ibid., p. 7 [translation mine]), monolingualism recognises in every language *shibboleth*, zones of untranslatability and unknowability that make it 'the language of the other' even when it is one's own. This reveals a non-belonging of the subject who speaks and a form of original alienation; indeed, as much as language makes singularities communicable, otherness re-emerges. Nonetheless, the most intriguing aspect of this thought is that it is precisely in untranslatability, incoherence, and inadequacy that Derrida sees the openness to the other. Therefore, it would appear to be that original alienation, that primordial wound, is the fissure from which to observe resistance in relation to marginality and marginalisation.

The discourse on resistance is also connected to reflections on singularity and fragments. Tariq Jazeel (2019) considers singularity an "ethical imperative for decolonising geographical

knowledge." For Jazeel, alterity is different from diversity because it does not derive from us, and is in itself a form of resistance to theoretical and conceptual containment. Singularities manifest themselves as forms of discontinuity from our conceptual system, belonging to other epistemic systems, and reveal their untranslatability. Moreover, they recall different forms of knowledge, which can be opposed to contemporary academic attitudes and structure. Taking charge of the conceptual value of the fragment is one of the tactics through which Jazeel deals with singularity; indeed, evoking plurality and the impossibility of any exhaustive containment, the fragment is "an invitation to pause and stay with difference" (ibid., p. 14). McFarlane (2021) considers fragments to be "a form of expression … of the damaged present" (ibid., p. 107). Fragments may be of different natures, such as material or related to knowledge; in any case, they are always marginalised from the dominant culture and, often, a product of violence. Nonetheless, the residual may become vital and political, as McFarlane illustrates through different case studies from the global South and global North. Indeed, he recognises a verbal value in the fragment, making it more than an object. Fragments have transformative and generative potential as they can assemble, producing new uses and meanings. Through juxtapositions in different contexts, they create new relations and prompt alternative ways of thinking, which are unavoidably political. This is because the fragments approach invites renouncement of any pretensions of totality, coherence, unity, or control. Instead, the fragment is a tool with revolutionary potential, as it can undermine the 'totalitarian' nature and disciplinary attitude of Western knowledge, which proceeds 'disciplinarily'.

From the modernity-coloniality perspective, understanding is a form of coloniality when intended exclusively in terms of rationality and, thus, logocentrism. In this direction, the margins of unsaid knowledge may be viewed as other forms of knowledge that are not subjected to our normative apparatus system. This is an approach that may be uncomfortable for social science, whose criteria are rooted in clarity, transparency, reproducibility, and transmissibility. However, the attempt to work with certain zones of silence may help to find a way to make social science and non-logocentric knowledge processes communicate and avoid oppositional relationships. My research tries to do this through collage, an art-based practice which has been chosen to investigate visually the elements emerging from the novels. Collage embraces the non-representational idea that

there is no unique way of knowing, and acknowledges the role of the non-conscious, emotions, and affects in the process of knowledge. Being intrinsically non-mimetic, it eludes recognition criteria, aiming at novel and unusual constructions rather than the reproduction of objects or facts. Indeed, by putting together elements from different contexts, collage emphasises the process of becoming; in doing so, it also highlights the open-ended nature of places.

Derridean deconstruction and Deleuzian and Guattarian assemblage theory are congenial to collage. Indeed, this embodies the practices of decontextualisation and intertextuality, with the opening of a context and the eventual reinscription to other planes of meaning. Moreover, as in rhizomatic formations, there are also semiotic hubs in collage, which are connected through diverse codifications and mobilise different regimes of signs. By incorporating materials from everyday life, such as newspaper articles, photographs, fragments of text, cartographic remnants, and other documents, this technique intensifies the sense of the city's multiplicity, movement, and indeterminacy. Working with association of fragments without aiming at any sense of entirety, collage can make transformation visible or evoke change through visualisation. Indeed, fragments escape any established order and define new provisional configurations through assemblage. This, in turn, multiplies and amplifies meanings, reproducing differences. Due to this multiformity and continuous generation of meanings, assemblage is a constant deferral of explanation (Cresswell 2019).

The multidimensionality of postcolonial urban space is not only given by the diverse materials but also by the diverse nature of the connections established, which may refer to aspects of the present and past and simultaneously belong to physical or psychic features. Concerning the forms of social and individual urban marginality being investigated, collage is an adequate means to explore the areas of shadow, the unspeakable, and to refer to further opacities – those aspects not necessarily prone to clarification and elucidation. Moreover, it is worth underlining that the multiplying effect of collage is unpredictable because the connections originating from it may vary from one observer to another, going beyond those created by the collagist. Focusing on this aspect of opacity is worthwhile as it constitutes the intrinsic value of collage in the analysis. Indeed, the collage can dialogue with those dimensions that escape the principle of non-contradiction and make room for differences to coexist. I,

therefore, make Glissant's thoughts my own when he states that "opacities can coexist, converge, weaving fabrics whose true understanding would be based on the weaving of this weft and not on the nature of the components" (Glissant 2007, p. 202). At the same time, I follow Hughes' call to think about other materials through the lens of resistance (2020).

When referring to urban marginality, postcolonial conditions, power relations and psychological dynamics, we should consider the unsaid and silence within our knowledge production system. These may concern social or individual issues and belong to the factual, relational, and interpretive dimensions. Moreover, they cannot be considered in themselves because they may avoid being defined and even named. In collage, I found a possible way to deal with those aspects, which Glissant (2007) defines as "non-reducible". Indeed, collage's intrinsic capacity to escape the rules of visual composition, such as perspective and proportions, destabilises the spatial character of the discourse and subverts spatial signification, instead making room for spacings, which is to say a multitude of different spaces, in constant transformation. While investigating postcolonial urban marginality, I intend to deal with those opaque components; moreover, following Hughes, I identify possible lines of resistance precisely in those areas of unknowability and ambiguity. However, any practice of difference entails opacity and silence if it is not devoted to recognising what is already known, but to accepting what differs. In this direction, collage embodies both the deferral dynamic, introduced by Derrida, and the sense of becoming and transformation, incorporated by assemblage and illustrated by Deleuze and Guattari.

Finally, I would like to briefly focus on the reflection on image, which was delivered by surrealism between the 1920s and 1940s, that is, between the first surrealist manifesto in 1924 and the exile into which the Nazi regime forced the movement. Indeed, it is noteworthy that surrealist reflection had already offered insights into some of the directions that would be pursued by poststructuralist and non-representational theories several decades later. Furthermore, surrealism makes collage a privileged tool of expression, which is why it seemed appropriate to mention some considerations regarding the role of the image in this theoretical section. For surrealists, an image is an event, something happening, and it is "unpredictable and thus totally significant" (Murat 2013, p. 78 [translation mine]). The image is at the same time a revelation and an enigma: "It appears in a context that was waiting for,

as an answer to a non-asked question" (ibid. [translation mine]). These few words condense the power of the surrealist image, which excludes any analogical relationship with the word and does not replace any term or meaning but covers a much broader field. The surrealist image is not a simulacrum; being intuitive, it is non-systematic and non-manageable. There is no room for comparison in surrealism, as comparison moves from the known to the known and thus illustrates a word that is already similar to our ideas (Reverdy cited in Murat 2013). Instead, surrealists are interested in the suspension of relationship with reality, obtained through a logic of contradiction, spatial and conceptual inversions, unbalance, and hallucinations (Breton 1973); this suspension is in itself generative. More interestingly, image is what we do with it: it can be, for instance, a break or a bridge. In the case of collage, I would add that it can be both at once. Furthermore, in the last century, between the two world wars, the surrealists had already spoken of assemblage and described it in terms of "expressive contortions" (Murat 2013, p. 83 [translation mine]).

I conclude this section with Deleuze's (1998) reflection on exhaustion, as it allows me to reconnect to both resistance and the potential of the image. As I will illustrate later in the analysis (5.2.3.), exhaustion refers to a condition in which the subject "can no longer possibilise" (ibid., p. 152) and implies exhaustion of the possibility of language, space, and action. Nonetheless, according to Pelbart (2015), exhaustion may define the passage from catastrophe to creation; indeed, it creates a new possible as the actualisation of the virtual rather than as a given possible. In the same essay, Deleuze explores some pieces of Samuel Beckett and speculates on language. Within this, he identifies what he calls 'language III', which operates with images and space. For Deleuze, space still belongs to the category of possibility because it makes the occurrence of an event possible. Instead, the image can detach from the object to become a process in itself, a possible event. This image is not defined by its content or form but by its "internal tension" (Deleuze 1998, p. 159). Image is a deflagration of energy, and its energy is dissipative. It can exhaust all possibilities and is the first step towards the exhaustion of space. The exhausted image goes beyond any idea of representation, coincides with the extreme limit of possibility, and is projected towards the void and the silence. This generates a rupture, and creation can happen. Therefore, the exhausted image can grasp the real without mediation in this only apparently negative state. Although Deleuze's reflections on exhaustion are not aimed at collage, his speculation on the

potential of the image comes close to what I recognise as the power of collage and its role in the analysis. This dimension of rupture in continuity or established order, through which creativity may operate, contributes to responding to geohumanities' claims regarding alternative ways of producing knowledge.

2.8. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the research's theoretical framework, which was identified in poststructuralism and specifically in Derrida, Deleuze, and Guattari. It focused on certain key concepts of their philosophical production and underlined the connections within the analysis. I first emphasised the peripheral thinking offered by deconstruction and its role in questioning the power relations that fix meanings. Operating through decontextualisation and recontextualisation, deconstruction highlights the process of centring and othering. Derrida critiques the notion of structure and epistemological constructs such as essence, cause, origin, and subject. Moreover, he considers writing and textuality products of *différance*, a process of constant signification and deferring. In geography, this has led to reconsidering the context as a relation, something no longer fixed but unstable and subject to reconfiguration.

Subsequently, the chapter focused on Deleuze and Guattari, illustrating their rhizomatic thought. It considered connections to be possible at any point and through diverse codification systems, creating assemblages and triggering processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. I discussed the roles of lines of flight and their contribution to my analysis; affective materialism, which appraises the immaterial aspects as components of matter; the geographical implications of this thought within the non-representational theories; Deleuze's work on literary texts and his philosophy within the postcolonial frame.

The poststructuralist approach allows for reframing the issue of urban marginality and resistance, blurring its conceptual and social boundaries. In this direction, it takes charge of reflection on resistance in geography. The chapter considered these theoretical influences in relation to textual analysis of the novels and their visual implications. For this purpose, it

focused on fragments and singularity, reconnecting the discussion on resistance to the potential of the image and the role of collage in the production of knowledge.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodological aspects of my work, illustrating the processes that led to the analysis. Starting from the novels *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament* by In Koli Jean Bofane and *The Land at the End of the World* by António Lobo Antunes, the research investigates marginality and resistance in the postcolonial city through a methodological approach which considers the decolonial potential of creative practices within the discipline. While considering literary writing as a trace for further investigations, I practise a geographical reading that goes beyond the boundaries of the novel, through social scientific literature and engagement with collage. Therefore, my methodology develops through literary textual and visual analysis. The intertwining between them allows for experimentation with a hybrid method, which has theoretical implications in the Derridean concept of textuality and in Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage theory. Indeed, while this chapter is primarily focused on illustrating a method openly inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, I consider the literary text a form of textuality in the Derridean sense, which overflows and refers to something else, transforming itself into a differential network.

The novelty of this methodology concerns the union of literary texts and collage, which work together analytically. More specifically, I adopt a geographical reading of the novels, focusing on marginality and resistance in the postcolonial city. In this reading, I observe marginality and resistance within a frame that refers to relations with or in the city, identifying the elements to be considered as exit points that can lead out of the novel. These may originate from the story, characters, or literary atmospheres, and become lines of flight – thematic segments which I prolong and explore through social scientific literature and visual analysis, triggering an active dismantling reading of the novels. During this process, the lines of flight

transform and the literary elements previously identified are rearticulated and visually reassembled in new formations through collage. Textual analysis and visual exploration are components of the same process: novels are the precondition for the analysis by offering specific exit points; lines of flight originate from these points, going beyond the literary text through social scientific literature and visual connections before merging in collage. While the research deterritorialises the novels by following these lines of flight and deepening their thematic segments through social scientific literature, the practice of collage goes further by breaking with the narrative register and giving rise to other possible connections of a non-linear nature. Indeed, both the novels and social scientific literature remain tied to a narrative dimension regardless of their stylistic feature, whereas collage evades this dimension as it communicates non-linearly.

The innovative contribution of this methodology is to test an alternative way to explore the relationship between the narrative and visual dimensions in geography. Indeed, this approach experiences the transition from a narrative and logos-based register, even when literary, to one that considers a different use of the image, not documentary and non-representational, which seems to belong to a poetic rather than a discursive dimension and is characterised by silence rather than by words. The advantage of this is that it presents a more open vision of space. While recovering dimensions such as empathy, silence, and serendipity, the contribution of the visual component allows us to rework and create atmospheres. Moreover, the method and the analysis are not distinct moments of the research; there is not segmentation but fluidity between them, as they contaminate each other and proceed together. This aspect may help us to reflect on the nature of the research process and consider less institutionalised ways to undertake it; for instance, outside of the canonical apparatus of qualitative methods. Finally, on the one hand, this methodology can contribute to geohumanities and cultural geography by exploring 'more-than-visual' relationships between materials and geographical thought; on the other, it builds a bridge between literary, postcolonial, non-representational, and creative geography, and all subfields of the discipline which may be affected by the transition within qualitative methodologies. As discussed in the literature review, this transition questions the dominion of traditional qualitative research methods and finds a more appropriate way to investigate contemporary life and cultural issues in art-based practices.

This methodology differs from other visual art-based approaches. Generally, when these approaches are employed alongside literary texts, they are not used as part of the analysis but in addition to it; their role is to interpret, if not represent, the literary texts, thereby re-establishing the secondary place of the image compared to writing. Differently, in my research, collage is not intended to be applied to the literary text or the textual analysis but is melted into the analytical process. Potentially, the contribution of both novels and collage to the geographic discourse could occur at any phase of the research (De Rijke 2024): for instance, during data collection, promoting participation and acquiring unpredictable qualitative data; during the analysis, establishing a novel relationship with the components that assemble the issues identified; and in the phase of dissemination, enhancing communication through a more empathic register, as well as emphasising the open nature of the research. In this work, I focus on the analytical potential of collage. This chapter first considers the research questions and the materials employed, then turns to the themes investigated and the method. Finally, it reflects on positionality by interrogating the relationship between subjectivity and research.

3.2. Research questions, materials and methodological choices

The research started by considering a set of main queries which have driven the interrogation of the interrelated topics of urban marginality and resistance, as well as the method and contribution to the discipline. Firstly, I wondered what marginalities and eventual forms of resistance emerged from the novels, and how they were connected to the postcolonial condition. Subsequently, the query moved to the method: which forms of literary textual analysis and non-representational visualisation could be practised to explore these forms of marginality and resistance, particularly when considering the less tangible aspects of marginality in postcolonial cities? Moreover, how can we identify a method that respects the transferability principle and guarantees the possibility of its transformation? Indeed, considering the risk of essentialisation, I wondered about the possibility of sketching an approach that, on the one hand, could be repurposed based on its main features and, on the other, guaranteed flexible criteria that allowed it to transform and readjust. In this sense,

the poststructuralist theoretical framework ensures the necessary support, as it is grounded in principles such as non-representational, becoming, singularity, fragments, and other traits that emphasise transformation and change over radicalisation and stasis. Finally, a last research question concerned how this hybrid methodology could contribute to research in geohumanities and cultural geography.

The materials used in the research belong to textual and visual sources. Starting from the novels, the study moved towards more social and cultural aspects by investigating the social scientific literature related to the selected issues. The choice of novels was driven by their focus on marginality in the postcolonial city. Indeed, both illustrate cases of urban marginality and allow us to consider its possible multiform nature. Marginality in the city is considered from two different perspectives, one connected with the urban environment and social system, and the other ascribable to the psychic sphere, yet revealed through the relationship with the city. In *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament* the characters are primarily marginals and convey multiple themes that intertwine in the capital. In this way, they contribute to rendering certain fundamental aspects of Kinshasa's urban life and Congo's condition in relation to the global situation. In *The Land at the End of the World* the urban marginalisation experienced by the narrator does not relate to class or economic conditions; instead, it is a form of alienation due to colonial war and trauma. The city is almost absent, although it is the geographical core of both novels. Kinshasa is sporadically depicted and appears through flashes as if it were impossible to capture the megalopolis; Lisbon, instead, emerges through the narrator's altered relationship with his native place.

Novels were considered as a source for gathering and analysing qualitative data. The information on marginality was collected, and the focus on space was aimed at "the experience of being in space" (Kneale 2003, p. 46). This experience refers to diverse ways of living in a marginal condition. On the one hand, it means living in marginal places, which may be peripheries or specific points of the city; on the other, being marginal may happen regardless of the physical location occupied, and it is instead a feeling of detachment from the place. In both cases, these types of data differ from more canonical qualitative data, as they also refer to intangible aspects, such as emotions, trauma, rejection, resilience, strategy, and creativity, which intervene in the relationship with the city. In *Congo Inc. Bismarck's*

Testament, marginality assumes social traits and is clearly recognisable, for instance, in street children and informal activities. Moreover, it is inscribed into the territory due to the colonial organisation of the urban space, which reproduces a pattern of bipartition and creates an imbalance, such as in the case of internal rural-urban migrations. Contrastingly, in *The Land at the End of the World*, the insane relationship with the city reveals a diverse form of marginality. Although more impalpable and elusive, this way of being marginal strongly characterises the vision of the postcolonial urban space, perceived through alterations and deformations as inhospitable and untruthful.

The threads mentioned above have been explored through textual analysis and collage. Visual exploration integrated further qualitative traits into the analysis, participating in a process that moved from novels to collages and vice versa. Inspired by non-representational theory, collage was considered in terms of process rather than outcomes, being seen as co-constitutive of analysis. Photographs were significant in the first analysis, although different paper materials, such as textual and cartographic clippings, were also used. For instance, along with photographs, the collages concerning Kinshasa used maps and textual scraps, isolating their fragments and relocating or locating them from scratch. The pictures of the city came mainly from personal stock and previous travels to the Congolese capital, therefore these collages also deal with personal memory, emotions, and affects, and have challenged my mental visual archive of Kinshasa. This is true also in the second analysis concerning Lisbon. Indeed, although I did not engage with a personal photographic stock, Lisbon is a city where I had occasion to live and where I often return. In this case, the collages were realised with various materials, mostly from everyday life, such as stamps or fragments of letters and postcards. Through this technique, visualisation was used in an attempt to further explore the diverse qualities of marginality. The visual information delivered by images, photographic or not, was considered further data and incorporated into the analysis.

I recognise Lisbon and Kinshasa as pivotal places in my personal story; as mentioned above, they are also linked to my research in experiential terms. I spent more than a year in Lisbon, about 25 years ago. The urban atmosphere was still imbued with the colonial experience, and the imagery was deeply rooted in the epic of geographical discoveries, which oozed from the architectural and urban elements and the cultural repertoire, primarily literary and musical.

About 30 years after the fall of Salazar's regime, and while Angola was heading towards the end of its long civil war, in Lisbon it was easy to come across witnesses of that intense historical period. Veterans of the colonial war and *retornados* could be met casually in a bar, as could the protagonists of the revolution of 25 April, while significant immigration from the former colonies contributed to characterising the urban environment. All this was mixed with more localist attitudes, especially in popular *bairros*, and nascent mass tourism that would swamp the capital in the following two decades. This hybridity also concerned the territorial layout and aesthetic aspects: widespread obsolescence was accompanied by significant architectural elements or more recent and modern urbanisation, and small retailers coexisted with large chain stores. Lisbon was a modern city in the making, with one foot still entirely planted in the past. What made this experience even more precious was its bond with the writing of Lobo Antunes, which constituted the city's inner voice in a certain sense. I have never stopped returning to Lisbon; my postcolonial imagination was forged there, along with an interest in Sub-Saharan Africa, migration, and encounters. Moreover, in Lisbon, my sensitivity was activated by the forms of marginalisation that I would attempt to investigate afterwards.

A few years later, after spending my previous travels in the Democratic Republic of Congo, I started studying the urban development of Kinshasa for my doctorate. For this purpose, I settled in the capital for about a year. My base was a room in a popular city neighbourhood, in the headquarters of a local non-profit organisation committed to the social reinsertion of street children. Each morning at dawn, the entrance to my room would be covered with vegetables piled up and ready for sale. When I left the dormitory, a group of teenagers, girls and boys, would be gathered outside the organisation's office, waiting to leave the city and go to work in the fields. At dawn the following day, they would have returned with other vegetables to sell. This routine guaranteed, over time, the social reintegration of these minors rescued from the streets of Kinshasa. During the week, I did research at the Institute of Geography, the National Library and the *Bureau d'Études et D'Aménagement Urbains*, or I walked in the surrounding neighbourhoods observing informal activities. At weekends, I went with the group of teenagers to the village of Ngandapio, where the non-profit organisation owned the fields and trained them in horticulture. This not only allowed these adolescents to earn a small income, but also kept them away from the frenetic pace of the capital.

My stay in Kinshasa was split between two different contexts. On the one hand, the city outside was endless, chaotic, complex, and noisy; in these intraurban movements, it was common to glimpse other street children or child workers. On the other hand, the village and rural life, the routine and slow activities, maintained an apparently pre-urban atmosphere. Although I have accumulated numerous diary pages, I have never engaged directly with the 'lived' Kinshasa, convinced that forms of writing other than the academic one would have been needed to communicate it. Nonetheless, this experiential dimension has had an impact on this thesis.

Although distant in time, both Lisbon and Kinshasa have continued to work in my memory and unconscious, for instance by resonating with certain literary passages and surfacing visually, in vivid images, or emotionally, in terms of atmospheres. Both experiences have certainly influenced the analysis; however, this aspect would need to be investigated separately, as it may constitute a research object in itself. I will briefly return to my own experience in Kinshasa in the conclusion, touching upon street children and the role of photographs. I took the decision to leave that brief reflection until the final part of this thesis to respect its evolution, since it arose almost at the end of the work.

While I discuss the technical aspects of collage later in this chapter, I would like to address some more general methodological issues at this point. On the one hand, these concern the reasons why I turned to collage, and thus what I consider to be its contribution to the analysis; on the other, I deal with the ways of reporting this process and, as far as possible, describe it. The choice of collage is linked to recognising its potential to elicit emotional or cognitive connections, generate new meanings, and create atmospheres. The first point is related to a reflexive use of collage; by focusing on an issue, collage operates intuitively, breaking the linearity of thoughts, and this feeling-based work can reveal unexpected connections (Butler-Kisber 2008; Butler-Kisber and Poldma 2010). Nonetheless, elicitation may lead to new understanding and conceptualisation (Butler-Kisber 2010). Concerning atmosphere, it is worth underlining that there is no direct relationship with the literary atmospheres of the novels, as collage proceeds by expansion and not in a representational way. The atmospheres it generates, therefore, are completely new, and although they may

retain connections with the literary matter, they also can go far beyond it. I highlight these aspects throughout the analytical chapters when discussing the collages realised. Here, it may be sufficient to mention that the multivocal and non-linear nature of collage (Butler-Kisber 2008; 2019) allows the researcher to "let the thinking process become lateral, visual, material, tactile, spatial" (de Rijke 2024, p. 308). This art-based practice allowed me to consider aspects that may escape a logos-centred discourse, and recognise not only the unsaid as a form of knowledge but also the capacity of collage to promote the development of the not yet thought. This is in harmony with the non-representational view that there is not just one form of knowledge, but that emotions, affects, and the non-conscious participate in the complex process of knowing the world. In this way, collage escapes the entirety, evokes change, emphasises becoming by making transformation visible, and embodies indeterminacy.

Although a large part of the collage-making process is unconscious, during the practice of collage it is possible to recognise certain visual choices and connections triggered by serendipity. However, it is more difficult to describe or report them, particularly considering the process of reciprocity between collage and analysis. Indeed, while it is possible to observe the elements of the composition and their relations, it is rather tricky to identify *where* they impacted the analysis and *how* they contributed to it. How can we put it into words when the sense of working through collage is to go beyond, and to some degree, escape words? While I discuss collage and its function in a more general and comprehensive way later in this chapter, a modest attempt in the direction mentioned above is made in the analytical chapters, where I illustrate the compositions realised throughout the analysis and try to integrate into the discourse the discussion on their components, functions, and possible meanings that arise. Explaining the inexplicable seems to be a contradiction, considering that the inexplicable is precisely what collage would, in a certain sense, probe. However, this challenge is necessary in a work that aims to include non-rational codes into social scientific discourse. At least, the non-contradiction principle is not collage's issue. On the other hand, in the analysis of urban marginality in Lisbon (chapter 5), I chose to insert extra images into the text without attempting any justification, precisely to emphasise the power of the images and their capacity to explode in the directions indicated by Deleuze (1998), at the same time amplifying and dissipating meanings. In this case, they are 'scraps';

that is, images manipulated or simply taken into consideration at first, sometimes used in the drafts of the collages, but then excluded from the composition. Thus, in chapter 5, I tried both to bring to light some of the possible mechanisms through which collage works, generating connections, and to test the 'pure' power of the images disseminated in the text.

3.3. Urban marginality and resistance inside and outside the novel

While urban marginality is the central theme of the analysis, resistance comes from it. This is not in terms of opposition, as a reaction to marginality, but rather the possibility of escaping the condition of marginality or the process of marginalisation in itself. This work questions urban marginality, starting with the novels; it attempts to investigate the possible forms of marginality presented in literary texts by analysing characters, the story, and atmospheres, and by exploring the social scientific literature on the identified issues. In *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament*, marginality is shaped in different typologies, relatively easily identifiable, which refer to specific characters or, more generally, to a social condition. Among these typologies, street children and informal activities were selected as cases that are particularly representative of Kinshasa. In *The Land at the End of the World*, marginality appears instead as a state of mind, ascribable to detachment from Lisbon. The city has become alien after the experience of the colonial war, and this sense of alienation, which pervades the novel, can be interpreted as another possible form of exclusion. The typologies of urban marginality considered were connected with their respective postcolonial conditions. This is the case with the urban shape of Kinshasa or more pernicious legacies of colonialism, such as the social phenomena of abandoned children and the spread of informal activities, both consequences of a structural socioeconomic order deeply torn by war and neocolonial relations with the global North. With regard to Lisbon, a connection with the postcolonial condition was established with the colonial war against the Angolan liberation movements and the Portuguese cultural background. Not only do traumatic experiences affect the existential state of the protagonist, but they also give rise to a highly critical discourse on Portuguese colonial endeavours.

Once certain forms of marginality were identified, the analysis considered the possibility of resistance. The Deleuzian concepts of diagram and exhaustion are central to investigating the different cases presented by the novels. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, the diagram is a mechanism of power in its ideal form before it is actualised in a device or institution. This makes resistance proactive and productive rather than oppositional. Resistance is driven by desire and may be considered a line of flight in itself, which allows one to escape a given context, transforming a condition into a force. This makes it different from resilience, survival, or various forms of counterattack, as these are adaptive or oppositional forces (Deleuze 2018; Collet 2020). Otherwise, exhaustion defines a condition marked by the impossibility of action or even speech; however, it is precisely from this void of possibility that the creation of the new can occur.

After exploring the selected lines of flight, resistance and marginality were considered in the analysis. While the conceptual tool of the diagram facilitated identification of a specific type of resistance in Bofane's novel, exhaustion was adopted to analyse the novel of Lobo Antunes. Furthermore, marginality and resistance were also read from different perspectives to illustrate the diverse aspects that emerged from the analysis. In *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament*, there are the cases, for instance, of bell hooks on margins (1989), Cohen on deviance (2004), and Janeway on the weak (1975). In the analysis of *The Land at the End of the World*, I investigated marginalisation by testing geographical concepts such as placelessness and topophobia (Relph 1976a; 1976b), trying to revisit them in light of the theoretical framework, before picking up from a Lacanian perspective on trauma. These angles afforded a better understanding of marginality, resistance, and their articulations, and emphasised the Deleuzian diagram and exhaustion.

3.4. Literary studies: critical approaches, theories and the focus on space

Before introducing the method I have adopted and illustrating the analysis of literary texts conducted through the lines of flight, I discuss the main approaches to literary analysis and how literary studies, after the spatial turn, have analysed space and places in novels. This allows me, on the one hand, to identify the traits that my textual analysis shares with specific

literary approaches; on the other, it highlights the differences and the novelty of my methodology, which implies a versatile and unstable idea of place resulting from the elaborations that have taken place over the last decades within cultural geography, and particularly the non-representational.

While interacting with the framework of literary theories, literary criticism approaches define practices of study and interpretation of texts. In broad terms, these approaches can be author-focused, text-focused, context-focused, or reader-focused. In author-focused criticism, analysis is centred on the author's biography; thus, relevant experiences and personal beliefs become significant elements in understanding the literary work. In the text-focused approach, interest is primarily in the text; in this case, the analysis may pay attention to structure, meaning, and form, and thus focus on story, characters, language, or other textual elements. For instance, the close reading technique involves a detailed analysis of the elements of a text, which may consider lexicon, syntax, specific literary passages, or the use of words. While the text-focused approach keeps the text at the centre of the analysis, context-focused criticism is open to historical, socio-cultural, political, and economic circumstances external to the literary product. Finally, reader-focused criticism is oriented to the reader's response (Fish 1967; 1973); this means that it can consider her memory, language, and beliefs, and investigate where and how the interaction with the text occurs.

As mentioned above, these approaches interact with different theoretical perspectives. For example, text-focused criticism responds better to formalism and structuralism due to their attention to the technical and formal aspects of the text, that is to say, its linguistic and narrative structure and functioning. In particular, structuralist approaches address structural textual elements, such as patterns or binary oppositions, and consider them essential in organising narratives and meanings. This is the case for narratology, which addresses the voice, focalisation, and narrative level to understand how a story is told (Genette, 2006). Conversely, deconstructionism and, more generally, poststructuralism overturn this setting by challenging binary articulations, revealing the instability of language and opening up texts to multiple interpretations. This has given rise to other theoretical currents whose influences have largely overtaken literary studies and affected the social sciences. This is the case for postcolonial theory, critical race theory, feminist, and gender and queer criticisms, which

address specific articulations of power dynamics; these theoretical perspectives are appropriate for both text-centred and context-centred approaches. Finally, other significant currents of literary theory are Marxist, focusing on society and class relations, and psychoanalytic, investigating the author's or character's hidden or repressed reasons. It is also worth underlining that, while the work of some intellectuals falls within a model of critical analysis or theoretical approach, as in the cases of Edward Said (1998; 2017), Homi Bhabha (2001) or Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1994; 2006) regarding postcolonial theory, others are placed between different currents or, more simply, do not allow us to identify a defined affiliation due to the versatility of their work. One example of this is the analysis of literary fragments conducted by Roland Barthes (1974), who identified units to explore the multiple meanings within a text. In a technical sense, this can be included in close reading and a text-centred critical analysis but cannot be defined as structuralist, considering the focus on textual plurality.

While I theoretically discussed the poststructuralist positioning of my research in the previous chapter, my method distances itself from the literary text analysis approaches described above. First, mine is not an analysis *of* the literary text but an analysis *through* the literary text; it uses novels by dismantling them and prolonging thematic segments outside of them; therefore, my analysis does not remain trapped inside the author's intentions or the text, but opens it up and moves outside of the literary context. This differs from a context-oriented approach, which remains linked to the contents of the literary product; instead, it regards the decontextualisation and recontextualisation of fragments extracted from the novel. Moreover, while my methodology gives broad agency to the reader, both in the selection of fragments and in their prolongment through lines of flight, my analysis cannot be considered reader-focused because the interaction between the reader and novel is not the object of the investigation. Second, technically, literary textual analysis is only one aspect of my method, and it is not separate from the visual one; they interact constantly, hybridising with social scientific literature, which also contributed to the lines of flight.

Following the spatial turn, literary studies have analysed space and places in novels, giving rise to practices and approaches that can be included within the body of spatial literary studies and literary geographies. To position my methodology further, I refer to the three

main approaches through which literary studies analyse and explore space: Franco Moretti's novel mapping, geocriticism, and geopoetics. In contrast to a close reading of the text, Moretti (1997) introduces the 'distant reading' method. This approach has allowed him to analyse a large number of literary texts and to map their geographical settings. Using quantitative data and cartography, he identifies spatial patterns and examines socio-geographical issues, the relationship between genre and localisation, and the circulation of literary texts. Within literary studies, not only did Moretti's work give prominence to spatial thinking, but it was also the first to consider literary works in spatial terms. In contrast, geopoetics can be understood as a practice that uses poetry, and more generally, creative expression, to explore connection with space. In this approach, engagement with the place can be cultural, social, sensory, or emotional, and is considered essential. Geopoetics is based on an existential and philosophical perspective that expresses both the centrality of the earth and the need for artistic expression to achieve a real connection with the environment (Collot 2014; White 2004). Finally, geocriticism is an analytical approach grounded in comparative literary studies that investigates the representations of place, focusing on how literary places are constructed and their influence on real and imagined geographies (Westphal 2007; 2011). Through this relationship, geocriticism introduces into literary studies an interest in so-called 'real' places, also drawing from different disciplines (such as geography, sociology and urban studies) and developing an interdisciplinary approach.

My methodology differs from these literary critical strands. Indeed, although it shares with geopoetics an interest in art-based practice, my approach refers to a different conception of place. The relationship with artistic production promoted by geopoetics refers to an idea of place seen as a whole, regardless of the size of the spatial section and thus of the scale. Furthermore, geopoetics' efforts are directed towards the natural environment, the landscape, or the earth, and respond to a need for reconnection with nature and expression rather than an analytical need. In geocriticism, my approach recognises an interest in what is external to the literary text, but does not consider it sufficiently projected towards the outside. Indeed, geocriticism focuses on spatial representations, both in terms of how they are made and their effects; in this way, it remains anchored to the textual level. I attempt to open the literary text and escape from its borders by navigating through thematic paths that develop, often becoming entangled, along the way. The interdisciplinary approach I adopt is

not functional for analysing the places represented in the literary text but for exploring other textualities outside the text. Specifically, I put together literary, social scientific, and collage writings. The term writing is understood in the Derridian sense: as a trace that can constantly be reinterpreted beyond the author's intentions, and as a deferral which constantly refers to something else without fixing meanings.

Finally, I believe that distance from literary criticism approaches comes from the uniqueness of the reflection on space within the geographical discipline rather than from methodological originality. This means that even a heterogeneous and dynamic perspective such as geocriticism, which works on multifocalisation and considers the multidimensionality of literary space, remains to some extent trapped in the dimension of the 'literary', not so much because of any intrinsic limits to the approach itself but rather due to the different aims of literary and geographical knowledge. This difference is discussed by Hones (2018), whose observations concerning the relationship between these two disciplinary areas also shed light on the debate about whether literary geographies belong to the field of literary studies or geography, and on the underground disciplinary field battle.

3.5. An ongoing method

This section considers the method adopted, explains the reasons behind the choice, and illustrates how the textual analysis and collage were conducted. Although textual analysis and the practice of collage are illustrated separately in this section, they need to be considered as part of a unique process, as I mentioned earlier and will reiterate throughout this section. The preliminary questions about the typologies of marginality and the possibility of resistance which emerge from the novels drove the choices of lines of flight. In the section on collage, I discuss the research questions concerning which forms of non-representational approaches could be imagined, and the contribution of collage within the discipline. Ultimately, the research question concerning the identification of a possible transferable method, at the same time able to change and readjust, is discussed in the conclusion of the thesis. At that point I also reconsider the research in its entirety, and try to project my theoretical and methodological approach into the future and onto different case studies.

3.5.1. Active dismantling reading

As mentioned above, the choice of method for textual analysis was driven by a specific research question about forms of urban marginality in the postcolonial city. From this, attention moved to the literary dimension and what is outside the text. Therefore, whilst the novels were the starting point for my analysis, the investigation went beyond the literary texts by exploring other conceptual and visual territories. To do that, certain components were extracted from the literary texts and expanded through social scientific literature. The work of Deleuze and Guattari on art in general, and more specifically on literature, provided methodological support for the research. Deleuze considers thinking as an act of creation, which actualises itself in different fields of experience, such as philosophy, science, politics, and arts, and recognises any creative act as political. Whether a philosophical concept or an artistic aggregate, creation offers a novel perspective, transforming sensibility and the relationship with reality. Art gives place to 'becomings' and can change our thinking even more than philosophy, as it allows us to experience multiple levels of the intensity of life. Concerning literary texts, once the functioning of the literary machine is analysed, Deleuze and Guattari focus their interest on the effects a text may produce. These effects refer not exclusively to the ideas and feelings experienced through the reading, but also to changes in the reader's perspective, approach, or behaviour. Moreover, these changes may connect to other known forces, such as social or political, and contribute to work against the adverse effects of systems of coercion, oppression, control, or influence (Buchanan and Marks 2000). From this perspective, "reading a text is a productive use of the literary machine, that extracts from the text its revolutionary force" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p. 106).

The work of Deleuze and Guattari has provided theoretical and methodological support for this research, with the aim of identifying and practising possible connections between different matters. Their contribution enabled further reading, focused on dismantling the novels and determining the elements which claim attention. The identification and selection of these elements generated 'lines of flight', from inside to outside the novels. This entailed experimenting with geographical use of the texts, prolonging them in an extra-textual dimension. These lines of flight contributed to dismantling the novels; they disrupt the narrative flow, generating thematic segments which exit the literary text and develop

autonomously through social scientific literature. This gave rise to other narratives that changed through encounters with visual analysis and merged into the collage. Therefore, an attempt was made to practise deterritorialisation and consequent reterritorialisation of the matter delivered by the novels – whether coming from characters, facts, thematic content, or style. Indeed, lines of flight have also been identified in "more minute components", such as words or images generated by specific use of language (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, p. 7 and p. 48).

Differing from the concept of theme, which is more common in the analysis of literary texts, lines of flight are characterised by the fact that they are not determined intrinsically by the textual matter and its disposition; instead, identification and selection of lines of flight belongs uniquely to the reader. Although they may coincide with a theme, lines of flight are neither necessarily evident nor offered by the narrative in itself but exclusively decided by the interests of the scholar, and they can be found even in small elements, within a narrative fragment or within less narrative literary aspects. Therefore, through active dismantling reading, geographical analysis may move beyond the book rather than be trapped within the text. In my research, this was made possible by exploring sources that refer, on the one hand, to the factual dimension of the selected aspects and, on the other, to the political or even existential sphere by going out and constantly reconnecting to the novels.

The active dismantling reading seems significant, especially considering the postcolonial nature of both novels and cities investigated. In this sense, prolonging the texts in an extra-textual dimension facilitated not only the exploration of specific socio-geographical issues and a better understanding of their postcolonial roots, but also enabled those issues to be revisited in light of the decolonial potential of the novels. Indeed, this potential was investigated through the Deleuzian concepts of diagram and exhaustion, and through social scientific literature produced by decolonial studies. Therefore, on the one hand, the lines of flight enabled reflection on urban marginality and the factual forms of survival in the postcolonial city; on the other, resistance was considered more comprehensively in terms of decoloniality (Quijano 2002; 2007; Mignolo 2002; 2007; 2009; Radcliffe 2022). While this last point approaches the Deleuzian idea of resistance, it also refers to the epistemic dimension (Lander 2000; Walsh 2014).

Decoloniality has been connected to the role and importance of literary texts and creative approaches in social and cultural geography. This also draws attention to the current debate on the political dimension within geohumanities and on the political role of creativity itself (Marston and De Leeuw 2013; Hawkins 2014a; 2019; Madge 2014; Hawkins et al. 2015; de Leeuw and Hawkins 2017), which Deleuze and Guattari reiterate throughout their works. Indeed, not only may novels convey alternative visions of the past and present and suggest possibilities for the future, but they also imply the value of going beyond the boundaries of social scientific and academic paradigms. These paradigms coincide with a Western-centric idea of knowledge, which has primarily shaped modernity and postmodernity, and, for this reason, postcolonial literature may offer a significant contribution to decolonising the discipline (Borghi 2020; Radcliffe 2022). This process is long and complex and cannot be accomplished through a single act, but rather through a plurality of acts. Moreover, it concerns the integration of voices coming not only from contexts that are not necessarily Western, but also from contexts that are not necessarily academic. This point will be revisited after the discussion on collage and its contribution to the analysis.

All the lines of flight in the analysis here concern marginality, directly or as implications. They originate from the story, characters, or literary atmospheres determined by style. This means that the points from which the lines of flight depart can be extrapolated from the characters and events, as in the analysis of Bofane's novel, or from a specific use of writing. Therefore, the role of style is relevant, not only because it contributes to inventing a minor use of language as expressed by Deleuze and Guattari and participates in the discourse on resistance, but also because it can be a factor in identifying a line of flight, as in the case of Lobo Antunes' novel. Indeed, atmospheres also fit into textual analysis; they can originate from novels as literary atmospheres generated by style before developing through collage. This is evident in *The Land at the End of the World*, as will be illustrated in the specific analytical chapter.

3.5.2. Textual analysis of the novels

The lines of flight revolve around the question of marginality and open up a path to answering the research question on the possible forms of marginality in the novels; this primarily determined their choice. Nonetheless, positionality also played a role in selecting

the lines of flight, particularly with regard to the analysis of urban marginality in Kinshasa. This is due to my previous experiences in the capital; indeed, I could not conceive of the city outside these lines of flight, which I consider essential urban features in everyday life. The lines of flight identified in the novel *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament* relate directly to the city. They are concerned with the organisation of urban space, the social issue of street children, and informal activities. I consider street children and informal activities to be the quintessence of marginality in Kinshasa and the urban asset as one of the engines contributing to fuelling them. In Bofane's writing, marginality emerges less from style and more explicitly from storytelling, facts, and characters. Indeed, through these literary components, the author renders an encounter of different marginalities and imagines possibilities of redemption or resistance.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, a character is not something unified but a "polyvalent assemblage of which the solitary individual is only a part" (1986, p. 85). In commenting on this passage, Buchanan and Mark (2000, p. 43) underline the nature of a character, defining it as "a condensation of forces and relations … which involves not only psychic forces but also social ones". This is precisely what occurs in *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament*, where the personal dimension of characters opens up towards an apersonal, collective scale, representing a universal condition of marginality. Moreover, characters imply Kinshasa as they move towards or into the city, which has been intended as a text and a palimpsest in which a multiplicity of writings overlap. In this sense, the engagement with postcolonial novels has also offered proof of the multivocality of knowledge, constructed through narrative structure and form (Noxolo and Preziuso 2013).

Therefore, a first level of textual analysis considered the chosen lines of flight alongside the novel and linked these to the Congolese urban environment. An initial investigation into the urban geography of Kinshasa identified the urban space, where the designated social facts take shape in everyday life, as the first line of flight. The scrutinised social scientific literature is mostly geographic, and refers to the major monographs and other kinds of contributions related to the Congolese capital (De Maximy 1984; Pain 1984; Lelo Nzuzi 2008). The second line of flight related to street children was examined alongside the social scientific literature and the research of Filip De Boeck. These works allowed an in-depth exploration of the

universe of street children and its connection with the adaptation of traditional sorcery in the urban environment. Bofane's urban parable has been deterritorialised through incursions into what De Boeck has defined as "the invisible city" (De Boeck and Plissart 2005, p. 158). Overlaid with the visible one, this city of the "second world" is made possible by a change in the collective consciousness and imagination, whereby "childhood becomes the place of identity where the fractures of an Africa in transition manifest themselves" (ibid.). Thus, the original storytelling has been amplified by enlarging and deepening the figure of the street children. This process tries to disclose the size of the phenomena in a manner that is not purely quantitative and does not limit the phenomena by surrendering to humanitarian rhetoric.

De Boeck's research has also investigated the social role of informality in the capital, which in my analysis is the third line of flight. It focuses on those praxes aimed at 'suturing' lacks and gaps, living together and closing wounds (De Boeck and Baloji 2016; Baloji and De Boeck 2018). The significance of these practices is in transforming quite common conditions of marginality due to widespread scarcity of infrastructure into unexpected possibilities, alternatives, and connections. This way of life, which largely reflects the postcolonial condition, sometimes transcends it, trying to achieve a more liveable future (Baloji and De Boeck 2018). De Boeck pays great attention to places in both cases, street children and informal practices. His work significantly contributed to identifying specific sites, such as urban kitchen gardens, buildings, graveyards and markets, where the investigated dynamics take shape. This allowed further expansion of the preliminary mind map, which emerged from novels and geographic literature on Kinshasa, and enabled the creation of an overlapping mind cartography of the capital, highlighting the places of pervasive marginality, informal practices, and those where street children live or operate.

In *The Land at the End of the World*, Lisbon appears in multiform ways as a place of the present and the past, childhood, and memory. This lost city only comes into view in splinters; nonetheless, even in its apparent latency, it is always present, constantly revealed by the narrator's lack of relationship with the urban space. Lisbon is the city of both departure for and return from war and is defined, in turn, as an unrecognisable or absurd city. It embodies the narrator's spatial disorientation and reflects a more all-embracing disorientation. The

Portuguese capital thus becomes a space of loss, inconceivable without colonialism, where no return is possible precisely because of colonialism. I analysed the novel through an active dismantling reading activated by three lines of flight: the detachment from Lisbon, the colonial dimension of knowledge, and the war in Angola. They were extracted from the novel in order to be analytically investigated in terms of their implications and relations with imagery. The main line of flight points at urban marginalisation by focusing on the narrator's alienated relationship with Lisbon. The other two lines of flight are the colonial dimension of knowledge and the colonial war: both revolve around and are implications of the first. Therefore, through the social scientific literature, two thematic segments focused on the Portuguese colonial imagery and Angolan conflict were developed.

Urban detachment is considered a spatial manifestation of the trauma triggered by the war in Angola, and this singular form of urban marginality experienced by the narrator was also investigated through the lens of Lacanian trauma and the Deleuzian concept of exhaustion. As trauma engenders urban alienation, it also generates an awareness of the illusory nature of colonial imagery and knowledge production apparatus. In turn, as illustrated in the theoretical chapter, exhaustion describes the condition of the one who has exhausted all possibilities and renounced any goal, need, or meaning (Deleuze 1998). When the possible is exhausted, language is no longer the same as before, it cannot be combined with words or voices but can only proceed in images and spaces (ibid.). This key concept has been a helpful lens not only for observing the existential condition of the narrator and the relationship with his city, but also for considering the author's style. Indeed, Lobo Antunes' writing is intended as a case of minor language, created to give voice to the trauma and discomfort brought by colonialism through specific uses of images and spaces. Using selected literary critics, my analysis focused on themes, rhetoric, and the linguistic and stylistic use of space, which accounts for the intrinsic bond between the self and places, precisely where the city emerges. Nonetheless, Peter Pál Pelbart's interpretation of the concept of exhaustion contributed to the analysis of resistance; in the condition of exhaustion, he identifies the passage from catastrophe to creation and a precondition for creating the possible.

The textual analysis was combined with Edouardo Lourenço's essays (2006; 2019). Together with other literature, these allowed the line of flight on the role of Portuguese imagery to be

extended. Considering colonial territories as part of the Portuguese mindset, Lourenço analyses the cultural images Portugal has produced about itself, putting Portuguese literature at the core of his investigation, both as cultural reservoir and laboratory. In doing so, he identifies an asymmetry between collective imagination and national reality and develops the concepts of 'hypertrophy of imagination' and 'Portuguese hyper-identity'. These make possible the dreamlike consistency of an obsolete empire, leading to its traumatic collapse. In Lourenço's thought, the history of Portugal is a series of denied traumas; one of these is the censored colonial war, which remains latent within society (Vecchi and Russo 2019). His reflection, therefore, returns us to the line of flight concerning the Angolan conflict, which was developed through social scientific literature and retraces the salient moments that led from the escalation of the conflict to decolonisation.

Lourenço's perspective facilitates a dialogue with the novel's themes, expanding nodes such as society's failure to engage in a mourning process. This has also been reconnected to the diagnostic potential of the literary texts identified by Deleuze, which intercepts symptoms and, in doing so, traces new possibilities of life directly or indirectly. Finally, it is worth underlining that the textual analysis described here proceeded alongside the visual one, that is, hand in hand with creating the collages. This happened in an experimental way during the first analysis in relation to the case study centred on Bofane's novel, and more spontaneously in the second one centred on Lobo Antunes' novel. I attribute this difference to the familiarity developed by practising. Indeed, the challenge of devising a possible method for working creatively with words and images and integrating the implicit into a social scientific tradition intended to be explicit by statute required several attempts, mostly with mediocre outcomes. Nonetheless, this gave rise to a practice and a routine, which, somehow, have become an outcome in themselves.

3.5.3. Visual exploration: creative geohumanities and collage

As mentioned in the previous sections, collage has been part of the analysis since the beginning; therefore, it is not intended as an addition nor an arrival point but as a further possibility of investigation. Since visual exploration occurred alongside the analysis, it became an integral part of the process and the influence of novels and collage has been reciprocal. In

this section, I first deal generally with the value of collage by reflecting on montage and juxtaposition, then I consider the role of collage-making in my work, and finally, I illustrate in its technical aspects the procedure that led to the creation of the collages that contributed to the analysis. Precisely because of the analytical role assumed by collage in the research, the compositions included in this thesis and their illustrations are incorporated into the analytical chapters.

An overarching reason behind the choice of collage as the medium for visual exploration in my research lies in its profound implications for the concept of space. Collage implies montage: the former refers to material composition, while the latter concerns reorganising the fragments within a new setting. The montage phase may be preliminary, simultaneous, or even occur after the collage; indeed, with chance and serendipity being integral components of the process, it is fairly common that further connections appear after the material composition, keeping the montage productive. Not only does montage concern the organisation of fragments within the collage's visual and conceptual space, but it also considers our relationship with places. The experience of places is an effect of montage, as places are constructed by a selection of parts cut from the totality (Sharp and Smith, 2014). Therefore, montage creates assemblages in both the lived experience of places and the space of the composition.

Since it is grounded in montage, an essential component of our relationship with the world, collage seems to be an appropriate medium for visual exploration in research. Indeed, the role of montage in the creative technique of collage, as well as in our relationship with places, reveals the profound interconnection between space and place, which Marcus Doel has synthesised using the neologism “splace” (Doel 2014, p. 7). Collage escapes the rationalisation of space operated by the geometry of perspective, and creates other depths not necessarily managed by orthogonality. However, while this is quite evident in the physical act of collaging, the same cannot be said for the action of montage. Even if montage and collage are indivisible components of a unique process (generally defined as collage in this paper) and their agency is mutual, it is worth clarifying conceptually the role of montage in our engagement with places. Montage brings together sources of diverse nature, which can be theoretical or personal, and elaborates them “in the form of place-writing” that matches

contemporary reflections on the “complex spatialities and materialities of places” (Hawkins 2014b, p. 55). Along with spatialities, montage also reshapes temporality, layering, and overlapping past and present. All of these aspects convey a surplus of articulation and sense (Doel 2014). Moreover, they contribute to blurring the division of space and place, making it evident that neither is possible without the other.

Tim Cresswell (2019) considers places as assemblages and works on place-writing. Looking for an appropriate way to gather the qualities of places, he explores the possibility of non-linear writing and pays importance to juxtaposition, parataxis, and montage. Recalling, among others, the works of Georges Perec (1989) and Walter Benjamin (2010a; 2010b), Cresswell shows how these techniques create a horizontal discourse, which is non-syntactical and unrelated to the rules of causality and logic. In the montage, the domain of spatial coincidence replaces that of the narrative. Montage offers multiple ways of knowing through manifold connections, and these connections are not governed by linearity, but implied by spatial contiguity. In this respect, even though collage is a visual practice, it is close to Cresswell’s conception of place-writing, because all possible relations between figures or fragments transcend the narrative dimension and are rather implied by a spatial arrangement. Thinking in a non-linear way, collage may arouse questions rather than make statements; it operates for juxtapositions and difference; it defamiliarises elements and creates unusual relations, promoting serendipity and unpredictability; reducing conscious control, it opens up wider areas of examination and possibilities of expression. Moreover, collage does not originate from any plans; rather, it finds its way into making (De Rijke 2024). Situated before language (ibid.), it belongs to a non-narrative register, allowing for the intertwining of layers of meanings (Leavy 2015). Ultimately, it cannot be easily explained by words.

In this research, collage has contributed to an open and dynamic visualisation of places. Bringing together different photographic, cartographic, documentary, and textual materials, it was used in an attempt to emphasise a sense of place grounded in fragmentation, multiplicity, incompleteness, and becoming. As mentioned earlier, the visual investigation proceeded with an active dismantling reading of the novels, and the influence between collage and textual analysis was reciprocal. Although the diverse nature of the novels led to

different results, each collage conveys a multifaceted image of the investigated issues. Indeed, on the one hand, these forms of visualisation are intertwined with the aspects revealed through the active dismantling reading; on the other, they evolved autonomously, opening themselves up to further possibilities of meaning. The integration of textual analysis and collage transformed the components extended together with the social scientific literature. This deterritorialised the novels and their narratives and gave rise to visual recompositions assembled through other 'logos'. From the textual analysis, the collage also collected and integrated insights and minute components that would sound descriptive or irrelevant in the social scientific discourse; however, these components contribute to that discourse through unexpected associations and variable connections. Indeed, collage incorporates the *différance*, opening to new planes of composition and constantly deferring the process of signification.

The collage work was mainly conducted both analogically and digitally. In the first instance, the selected materials were cut out and manipulated manually: this largely concerned the aforementioned cartographic fragments, newspaper clippings, and textual extracts. Subsequently, the analogical components were elaborated digitally together with photographs. Working by hand established a 'more-than-visual' relationship with the materials, transforming images, text, and names of places into tangible objects that could be cut, ripped, placed, moved, and relocated, and travelling into figures through touch and smell. This contributed to developing a novel relationship with the components of the investigation, less grounded in rational principles than in sensorial and affective ones, as touch reduces distance and creates familiarity with handled elements. In contrast, working digitally offered further visual effects, such as transparency through overlapping, or the possibility of expanding or reducing the sizes of the components. This entailed changes in positioning and relations, and thus meanings, which analogically cannot arise.

The collages arising from Bofane's novel were realised with cartographic clippings, photographic materials, newspaper sections, and fragments of labels. Certain elements were created from scratch. These collages elaborated visual components that refer to informal activities, housing, street children, the forest, the river, and the colonial past. Activities, movements, and rural and urban elements were blended, along with cartographic fragments,

which had been altered and decontextualised. Such is the case, for instance, for the map of the country in figure 3, which was filled with a collage of urban places extracted from a city plan, or for the legend coming from a different cartographic context. The overlapping of the present and colonial past is pervasive, as is the river, which crosses space and time. An attempt was made to convey multiplicity, confusion, a sense of suspension, the trans-scalar relationships among places, and the presence of informal activities. Cartographic and photographic materials, newspaper clippings, and extracts from the novel were also used in the collages which arose from the analysis linked to *The Land at the End of the World*. In this case, the images came partly from a personal stock of photographs and partly from books, stamps, banknotes, postcards, maps, and old pictures, some of which were found in a local flea market in Lisbon. The visual elements are fragments mainly related to national history and, more generally, to Portuguese colonialism. They refer, for instance, to Portuguese imagery linked to geographical discoveries, the territorial occupation of Africa, and the Angolan war. In this case, an attempt was made to work on atmosphere by creating a sense of suspension, disorientation, and strangeness. Being made by "affective qualities that are autonomous from the bodies that they emerge from" (Anderson 2009, p. 80), atmosphere was an essential tool to explore, conceptually and visually, the aspects which refer to a borderline relationship with the city. In particular, this refers to what is behind the lines of flight of detachment that my analysis attempted to unveil.

All collages were intended as an ongoing process rather than a result. Therefore, not only are they not considered artistic products in any way, but they are not even outcomes, since their peculiarity of being in progress and open to change is part of a process. This sense of becoming has largely been pursued in the choice of collage as a possible means of mapping what is less visible and ambiguous, and it has contributed most to the exploration of urban marginality from a different perspective. In this way, collages remain an unfinished exploration, since "montage never entirely forms a whole" (Doel 2014, p. 10). Furthermore, the methodology described entails certain political and epistemological implications. Creative arts have already been seen as a new way of doing politics (Thrift 2019), and a political potential has been identified within creative geography, invoking the construction of a "creative-critical geographic knowledge" (de Leeuw and Hawkins 2017, p. 318). Not only does this political dimension concern the content analysed, but it also involves the research

approach and modalities of knowledge. Literary textual analysis, and to a greater extent collage experimentations, lie outside the established working practice, as the assumed "viscosity" of art contrasts with "academic transparency" (Foster and Lorimer 2007, p. 428). This point has acquired relevance, particularly in light of the theoretical reflection on resistance. While the collage composition realised throughout this research will be described in more detail in the respective analytical chapters, the political and epistemological implications will be further discussed in the conclusion.

3.6. Positionality

To articulate my positionality in this research, I started with the preliminary question of why investigate urban marginality. Considering this question as the matrix of the whole process, I recognise that it is both subjective and personal. Indeed, my interest in marginality as a component of life is the extra-scientific factor which triggered this research. Therefore, making explicit the reasons for my interest in the topic can be a first step to introducing other ontological, epistemological, and political assumptions. If the individual component inspired the research, all of these components have, in turn, influenced it.

My condition as a white Western person is not only a recognised privilege but also one of the premises which has made this research possible. Moreover, I have been privileged to experience marginalisation within this condition rather than another. These experiences relate to my origins as a member of a non-wealthy family, my growing up in the inland countryside, the provincial connotations of my socio-cultural belonging and behaviour, and my Southern Italian accent – a discriminating factor still active in my country. Therefore, on the one hand, my position as a white Western woman has protected me from the most pernicious aspects and injurious consequences which marginalisation entails; on the other hand, aspects of this condition provided me with the possibility to experience and develop an interest in the dynamics of exclusion. As explained in the introduction, I understand marginality as multifunctional and multiscale; it can appear or hide in numerous forms and is not necessarily limited to economic or social status. Therefore, I have disassembled marginality as an omni-comprehensive concept in smaller components, selected and

explored through the lines of flight, to focus on singular forms of marginality and to consider the possibilities of resistance involved. My prior research experiences have also influenced these choices. On the one hand, they led me to investigate part of Lobo Antunes' literary production and develop an interest in the sense of loss caused by colonialism, which pervades his works; on the other, my past travels and fieldwork in Kinshasa provided an invaluable opportunity to consider aspects of marginality not easily describable or analysable through the canonical qualitative research methods. When specific issues, such as street children or psychological detachment, are discussed in social scientific terms, they are unavoidably objectified. Therefore, I have attempted to consider them beyond the social scientific discourse through a creative perspective, ranging from literary texts to the visual dimension, to offer a diverse insight into urban marginality.

A combination of factors has shaped my positionality and influenced my choices and research approach. I consider the ontological, epistemological, and political assumptions that intervene in the research (Holmes 2020). In particular, my ontological assumptions refer to the importance assigned to the indeterminacy and ephemerality of the world, as unavoidable but explorable dimensions of social and cultural life. Accepting that life is an assemblage of events that tend to escape systematisation does not mean renouncing understanding of them; rather, it means abandoning the idea of objective and all-encompassing knowledge. This implies engagement with aspects still not easily convenient in the academic context, such as emotion, affect, insight, empathy, instinct, and, more generally, the unintentional and precognitive dimensions. My ontological assumptions have thus found in Derrida, Deleuze, and Guattari's thought and non-representational theories the most suitable conceptual tools for analysis. My epistemological assumptions refer to decolonial theory. These determined the selection of novels and influenced my analysis, for instance, by focusing on the possible forms of resistance or redemption from colonialism or coloniality. The decolonial perspective also guided my methodology; for instance, in considering the colonial origins of the modernity-rationality axiom and the consequent paradigm of knowledge, universal and still operational. Indeed, with regard to epistemological decolonisation, I refer not only to the need to free intercultural relations from coloniality (Quijano 2007; Mignolo 2009), but also to the necessity of recognising the value of various forms of non-academic or non-scientific knowledge and of incorporating them into the social

scientific discourse (Walsh 2014; Borghi 2020). In terms of non-academic or non-scientific forms of knowledge, I am concerned with both the intercultural and the intracultural; in my research, the former relates to the novel by Bofane, which offers a non-Western perspective, and the latter to the practice of collage. This does not mean renouncing rationality, but rather renouncing the attitude which considers rationality as the only legitimate form of knowledge. It also implies rejecting the certainty of knowledge and enunciation, and considering indeterminacy (Borghi 2020). In this sense, my epistemological and ontological assumptions determined the methodological decision to integrate the textual analysis of the novels and collage. Finally, the feminist perspective inspired me to consider marginality with regard to intersectionality (Crenshaw and Bonis 2005; Davis 2008; Hopkins 2019). Indeed, as mentioned above, marginality is a category which I understand as a shared and common condition generated by the coloniality of power, although shaped in singular forms.

Repercussions for research also emerge from my political stance, which is overtly anti-fascist. On the one hand, this stance fuels a propensity to celebrate disadvantaged rather than advantaged categories. Over the years, this attitude has been constantly reinvigorated, not only by my research background and fieldwork concerning urban territoriality in the Democratic Republic of Congo and African migrants in Southern Italy, but also by my work as a teacher in state primary schools and as a volunteer Italian teacher supporting refugees arriving from Lampedusa. In this sense, my anti-fascist position oriented the choice of topic – not so much in terms of marginality as in terms of resistance. On the other hand, considering anti-fascism in a broader and all-encompassing sense entails an overlap with my ontological assumptions, rejecting the idea of totalising forms of knowledge and embracing the purpose of a pluriversal world, in which the places of enunciation can be multiple (Escobar 2018; Borghi 2020). I consider the postcolonial urban frame as the essential and inescapable context of our current and likely future life on the planet. Thus, I decided to investigate marginality and the possible configuration of the relationships between privilege, exclusion, power and knowledge at this pivotal juncture of the postcolonial age.

Furthermore, other traits of positionality also warrant attention. The first relates to the fact that, although this research has not involved fieldwork, it raises similar issues to other kinds of research. Specifically, these include my role as an outsider researcher concerning the

subject matter and any effects my previous experiences in Kinshasa and Lisbon may have had on the reading of the books (for instance, by influencing my analysis through memory, affect, or emotion). As I mentioned earlier, these experiences played a role in the choices of lines of flight. This is explicit in the analysis of urban marginality in the Congolese capital, where the lines of flight refer directly to the city's urban and socioeconomic features. Furthermore, attempting to combine a visual dimension with the aspects of marginality that I decided to investigate, particularly with street children, triggered a selective process that was not completely conscious. I consider this issue in the conclusion, as it emerged at the end of my analysis. Personal engagement is less evident in the case of Lisbon; however, the focus on the pervasiveness of the colonial apparatus stems in part from my personal experiences of the city, which is imbued with colonial culture. Although this aspect can concern any colonial city, I believe that, in the Portuguese case, mixing colonialism with the epic of discoveries is a risk that is always lurking. Indeed, as with other fascisms, the magnificence of the past had a relevant role during Salazarism. Through manifesting a condition of detachment and discomfort and trying to talk about the war in Angola, *The Land at the End of the World* by Lobo Antunes touches this point acutely.

The remaining trait of positionality that warrants attention refers to the place in which research has been conducted and considers the "where of research" as an "active participant in the construction of knowledge" (Anderson et al. 2010, p. 598). In this respect, one factor that strongly conditioned my research is the English language. Although it is unfeasible to cover the full array of implications that writing in a foreign language entails, I would like to consider at least the following two key points. The first refers to the intrinsic qualities of English, which constantly compel non-native speakers to refine and essentialise their thinking. English played a fundamental role in this research, acting as a grid to organise content; in other words, it frequently functioned as a barrier, resolutely opposing any drifts or fallacies in thinking. However, being immersed in a linguistic context that still maintains large margins of unfamiliarity and forcefully manifests its distance also meant seriously coming to terms with the incomprehensible and, paradoxically, giving up precisely that intelligibility that the language requires. This 'daily paradox' fitted well with the practice of collage, a practice which was not limited to this research but continued almost daily, touching on the most disparate aspects to the point of becoming another way of observing

the world. The second point refers to the fact that the English language embodies privilege. Doing research in English means using the language which dominates the worlds of science and communication. It facilitates access to social scientific literature worldwide, which could not have been explored otherwise. This is tied to another aspect, which concerns the place of research more directly and refers to the vast Anglo-Saxon geographical heritage regarding literary geographies, postcolonial geography, non-representational theories, feminist geography, and other critical approaches. In this respect, the place of research and its language constitute the conditions for discourse and power.

To conclude, I recall Gillian Rose's observations when underlining that indeterminacy also concerns any attempts to make positionality explicit (Rose 1997). Indeed, many factors remain beyond the researcher's control, and even reflective commitment cannot achieve complete transparency. Rose criticises the concept of transparent reflexivity, arguing that making the researcher's position clear and the research process visible are insufficient because several powers are at work. Once identified, these powers open "uncertainty" and "fractured spaces" (ibid., p. 316), where the separation between inside and outside is not neatly defined and cannot be articulated clearly. However, other kinds of reflexivity are possible, which seek to highlight gaps and contradictions. Rose's suggestion is to be aware that, although situated knowledge is only an attempt, it is necessary. However, while this entails dismissing the idea of full knowledge, it does not mean a renouncement of monitoring the research process nor of situating and reflecting on our positionality.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the methodology chosen for investigating urban marginality in the postcolonial city. It focused on each aspect of the method, comprised of textual analysis inspired by Deleuze and Guattari and the practice of collage. The selection of the novels was based on the different forms of urban marginality found within them, and their textual analysis was driven by the active dismantling reading, which first identified a series of lines of flight and then explored them through social scientific literature and collage. These lines of flight incorporated specific aspects of urban marginality that I consider significant for

understanding the condition of marginality in the city, both in its social and psychological nature. In Bofane's novel, I understand street children and informal activities as the quintessence of marginality in Kinshasa, and the urban asset as the engine that contributes to fuelling them. In Lobo Antunes' novel, the condition of detachment from the place, the Portuguese colonial cultural heritage, and the Angolan War were the lines of flight chosen to explore a psychological condition of marginality. The Deleuzian concepts of resistance and exhaustion also supported my analysis of the diverse cases identified in the novels.

Collage enabled visual investigation of the elements emerging from the active dismantling reading of the novels. It created a sense of place characterised by fragmentation, multiplicity, and incompleteness through juxtaposition and overlapping, emphasising the places' becoming and open-endedness. Moreover, collage is grounded in the process of montage, which this research considers as a way of knowing and an essential component of our relationship with the world. Situated before language, collage promotes serendipity and unpredictability, offering multiple reading possibilities. The passage from the narrative and logos-based register of the novels to a register characterised by figures is the innovation of this hybrid method, which participates in the transition of qualitative research, looking for new ways to investigate the challenges of contemporary life. Collage is also understood as a practice of decoloniality, which proceeds non-linearly, generating unexpected connections and bringing to the discipline alternative ways to explore the postcolonial world.

CHAPTER 4

Escaping Bismarck: decolonial visions between forest and city

4.1. Introduction

This chapter explores urban marginality in Kinshasa through a textual analysis of the novel *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament* by In Koli Jean Bofane (2018), and through collage. As illustrated in the methodological chapter, I begin my analysis with a geographical reading of the novel focused on marginality in the postcolonial city. This allows me to identify specific exit points from the literary text, which I extend beyond the novel's boundaries through lines of flight, before proceeding with the social scientific literature and collage. While exploring these forms of marginality, I also discuss the possibilities of resistance. This analysis does not lead to a conventionally defined result, but rather to an exploration of marginality from different angles. It also leads to reformulating the idea of resistance, which is not only recognised as a possibility within marginality but is also identified in unsuspected forms. This differs from the analysis conducted within a standard literature review. I make use of the social scientific literature to extend the lines of flight identified, and contributing to our knowledge of the social facts investigated by creating a discourse from the different literary, social scientific, and visual materials. Furthermore, although they take very different forms, the literary text and the collages are both based on emotional and visual components, which create connections of a non-linear order and participate in the analysis no less than the social scientific literature. This gives rise to a unique perspective, which is unstable or non-objective from a traditional social scientific point of view but is open to capturing less resonant aspects of both marginality and resistance.

The chapter first focuses on the story and characters, and then on the river and forest. While the former are crucial because the subsequently examined lines of flight on urban marginality originate from them, the latter are also essential spatial components of the novel and the

capital's present and past life. Therefore, after a synopsis of the literary text, I consider the Equatorial forest and the Congo River and investigate their roles and relations. Specifically, the novel describes the forest in its traditional opposition to the city, as they are poles of tension originating from colonialism and embodied by the protagonist; the river, instead, is seen as an aggregation of multiple forces connected to both the present and the colonial past. Moreover, the forest and river are powerful intertextual elements that recall Joseph Conrad's work on Congo. I consider these spatial elements as essential to the functioning of the novel and the country's everyday life, as well as inescapable components of the imagery of Congo. Ultimately, they also return visually in the last collage, as I illustrate at the end of this chapter.

After discussing these macro elements of the novel, I focus on the three lines of flight which were identified to explore marginality: urban space, street children, and informal activities. To establish these thematic segments, I selected specific exit points in the literary text. Starting from these points, the lines of flight extend, prolonging and transfiguring the narrative materials through social scientific literature and collage. In the first line of flight, I discuss the city's spatial organisation, the role of the city centre, colonial dichotomies, urban expansion, and the function of the capital within the country. In the lines of flight on street children and informal activities, I investigate the characteristics of these social facts, considering their diffusion and social impact and exploring them visually through collage.

In line with the perspective of creative geography outlined by Harriet Hawkins (2014a), the art-based approach practised in this chapter is aimed neither at a visual description of the analytical content nor at an aesthetic product. Instead, I pay attention to the process as a visual explorative practice and intend the artistic medium to operate as a privileged channel that can connect with sensory, emotional, affective, and imaginative dimensions. The compositions realised from this process appear in the section on informal activities and at the end of the chapter. In the first two cases, I leverage the collage's thematic link with the line of flight of informal activities and, in particular, with the literary exit point identified in relation to informal water sellers; in the second case, since the collage is more comprehensive, I place it in its own dedicated section explaining the composition and procedure in detail. However, while positioning the visual outcomes is an organisational

choice, collage participates throughout the analysis. Indeed, the selection of images, the creation of fragments, and their reconfiguration merge with the dismantling reading of the novel and contribute to shaping the entire analytical process.

After the sections on the lines of flight, I explore resistance building primarily based on the Deleuzian re-interpretation of Foucault's concept of diagram. Deleuze considers resistance a desiring and productive force, and I associate this diagram of flight with the protagonist. I first relate this perspective to the other elements discussed through the lines of flight, namely Kinshasa's urban space, street children, and informal activities. Subsequently, I focus on the decolonial potential of the novel as a further form of resistance; I include style in this discourse and devote a section to discussing it. The chapter ends by discussing the final composition and the role of collage in the analysis. In particular, this illustrates the process, focusing on the choices made when selecting the materials, and attempts to explain these choices alongside their possible and non-univocal effects.

4.2. Story and characters

While Madhu Krishnan and Penny Cartwright (2024) consider In Koli Jean Bofane to be one of the most recent postcolonial scholars, and underline his interest in themes such as neoliberalism, globalisation, and neocolonialism, Jack Taylor (2024) places *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament* within African migration narratives, a corpus of literary works in which migration is used to frame other social and political matters. Indeed, Taylor's analysis of the novel focuses on social and political issues, such as conflicts, racism, and dispossession, which are some of the neocolonial aspects enacted by Bofane's writing. Instead of focusing on these major themes, I outline the novel's synopsis in this section, highlighting the main plot points and the characters that articulate the story. Indeed, as mentioned previously, the lines of flight through which my analysis proceeds originate from the story and the characters.

This almost urban tale begins at the periphery of the globalised world, in the middle of the Equatorial forest. The protagonist is Isookanga, a Twa pygmy who lives in the village of Ekanga, inhabited by the tribe of Ekonda Twa, in the Congolese province of Equator. Despite

being the nephew of the head of the village and a candidate for the same role, Isookanga hates the forest and tradition, dreams of modernity, and wants to be a globaliser; for these reasons, he decides to leave the village and go to the capital to realise his neoliberal ideals. The protagonist first embarks on a trip to Mbandaka on the banks of the Congo River; once in Mbandaka, he takes a tugboat to Kinshasa. After 3 weeks, the tugboat reaches the port of the capital, where he ends up homeless in the central market. In the city centre, Isookanga meets other characters: first and foremost, a group of street children who live in the market, representative of the broad spectrum of street children, a social category which describes orphans, child soldiers, and children accused of sorcery. They are led by Shasha, an adolescent from Kivu who reached Kinshasa after escaping a slaughter in her village and who now works as a prostitute in the capital.

Isookanga also meets Zhang Xia, a Chinese former worker in a mineral extraction company, who was framed by his boss, involved in land grabbing. Finding himself in Kinshasa with no job or money, Zhang Xia started living on the street and working as a street vendor of water sachets, an everyday job in the capital, and the protagonist decides to collaborate in this street business with him. Other characters intertwine in the story with their life trajectories, complicating the urban scenario and introducing further themes and places. Among these characters are Bizimungu and Adeito, a former warlord and one of his rape victims who became his wife; Mirnas, a member of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) who is involved in arms and resource trafficking; and Chiara Argento, a United Nations investigator, based in New York, who is working on a report about an obscure incident in Kivu involving both Bizimungu and Mirnas.

Due to the deceit of his superior, Zhang Xia is eventually arrested and repatriated for embezzlement of public funds. However, before this, he gave Isookanga a CD-ROM from his former company, which had ended up in his hands by chance. It contained a detailed map of the resources of the subsoil of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Disappointed by the aggressiveness of the neocolonial city, the protagonist begins to imagine an unforeseen future, and the novel ends with the image of a tugboat going upriver. Isookanga returns to the forest with a map, a paradigm of white knowledge and the power of the global North, in

his hands. The protagonist's return comes from a change in his vision of the city, progress, and life; nevertheless, this is made possible only after experiencing urban life in the capital.

Characters are an essential narrative element in the novel, as they embody places and stories belonging to a different space and time, and trace the geography and history of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Through the plot, the entanglement among characters reveals the interconnection of topics and social issues, and their involvement at different temporal and spatial scales. While neocolonialism, globalisation, war, and dispossession are the omnipresent themes underlying the story, a series of topics are bound to them, such as the rural-urban dynamic, the dominion of multinational corporations, the conflicts in the eastern areas, mineral exploitation, and corruption. Therefore, Kinshasa becomes a hub where several threads converge, following themes that move between present and past, and from local to national to international spatial dimensions.

Although all these places are part of the literary geography of the novel, the analysis focuses primarily on the city. However, before discussing the urban space of Kinshasa through the first line of flight, I also consider the forest and river in terms of their narrative and colonial function and their relationship with the capital. Indeed, on the one hand, the narrative establishes a connection between Kinshasa and these elements; on the other hand, they play a role in the colonial discourse, which I attempt to emphasise. Narratively, the city is introduced in opposition to the forest, village, and tradition, and it responds to Isookanga's desire for modernity; this contrast is based on a preexisting colonial dichotomy. On the other hand, the river is a powerful connector, a communication and transport route allowing exchanges between the forest and the capital; in this case, I consider its function of connecting not only the forest to the city but also the past to the present. Although they are not lines of flight and do not contribute directly to exploring urban marginality, the forest and river are nonetheless significant in framing the story and analysing it; their presence and weight become evident in the last collage.

4.3. Colonial dichotomies: the forest

> Only the contours of the huts were now visible. They followed one another here and there in gloomy clustered groups along the red dirt road, making up the village of Ekanga where the Batwa lived … Once darkness was complete all around, the immense majestic mass of forest would soon appear to be encroaching and then be perceived as an unmanageable, dangerous vise by some, as a protective and loving mother by others. It just depended; it couldn't be controlled. (Bofane 2018, p. 9)

As mentioned above, the forest-city dichotomy is a colonial legacy, deriving from a tendency to see the city in opposition to the village, which is deemed a "state of nature" (Devisch 1995, p. 600). This pattern returns in colonial spatial images, characterised by oppositional terms such as high-low or centre-periphery, and it is embodied by the colonial city, divided into *ville*, the white city, and *cité*, the African section. *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament* is mainly framed in terms of opposition between forest and city, which creates tension throughout the novel by contrasting different cultural universes and visions of life. Through Isookanga's eyes, the forest is presented as a space of backwardness and superstition, bounded by tradition and trapped within restricted rural horizons. These socio-cultural attributes are concentrated in the character of Lomama, the protagonist's uncle and village chief, who firmly condemns modernity and mistrusts technology, seeing it as a curse.

> And then he was going to think about what he needed to put in place to get to Kinshasa; there, at least, he and his friends talked about network and no network, about USB ports, and compatible interfaces. There, at least, virtual shadows didn't scare wary, retrograde old men who could prevent a serious youth from moving ahead in life as he should. (Bofane 2018, p. 5)

Isookanga's disaffection with his environment is accentuated by physical and behavioural traits which emphasise his difference, marginalising him within his community: he is taller than the average pygmy, as his mother had relationships outside her ethnic group; he lives with significant discomfort due to his uncircumcised condition, which has hampered his desire to date Ekonda girls; he should have already provided for a family of his own, as any peer in the village would. The protagonist is a subject who diverges from the norm and acts as a transgressor, dreaming and playing his idea of the city. Despite being surrounded by the

forest, Isookanga lives worldwide, evoked by concrete elements such as the chain and pendant with the rhinestone initials of New York or the t-shirt depicting an image of the black American rapper Snoop Dogg. Moreover, he navigates the virtual space of an online game called Raging Trade, centred on the all-against-all battle for natural resources. In this doubly fictional space Isookanga is 'Congo Bololo' – a name which comes from a traditional, medicinal plant – and must fight with violent stakeholders, such as Skulls and Bones Mining Fields, Kannibal Dawa, Uranium and Security, American Diggers, and the Goldberg and Gils Atomic Project.

While staging the land grabbing of multinational corporations, this virtual space blurs the boundaries between the local and global dimensions by underlining their complex implications; moreover, it acquires the function of a metafictional space, crossing the fictional boundaries within the fiction. Indeed, Isookanga's metadiegetic comments about Raging Trade explain the game's strategies, alliances, use of arms, and violence (Shang Ndi 2020, p. 62). The avatar Congo Bololo is a narrative tool of overturning, able to transform a pygmy, assumed to be one of the lowest in the human power hierarchy, into a stakeholder who acts strategically and participates in global partition.

Raging Trade is also a narrative stratagem through which the space of the forest may be transformed into a potential point of power and control in a global battle. While globalisation renews, transforms, and spreads the old colonial robbery economy worldwide, the recurrence of the online game throughout the novel acts as a signpost, warming to the possibility that even those at the bottom can participate in global partition. In this way, the literary place of the forest is, on the one hand, a place in contrast with the city and with progress; yet, on the other hand, it may matter as much as any other place on the earth precisely because of progress. To a certain extent, this works as an anticipation of the course of the story delivered by the novel, in which the initial dichotomy between the forest and city turns out to be more of a colonial assumption than a fact.

4.4. The river of progress

Within the novel, the Congo River is significant not only as a spatial element connecting the forest and the city, but also as an essential element of colonialism and the country's everyday life, as it aggregates forces linked to both the colonial past and the postcolonial present. Moreover, the river may activate an intertextual reading level (Hones 2014), echoing other literary works on the Congo. In this section, I illustrate how these aspects interact.

> The hydraulic scandal surrounded Isookanga on every side; he could go on preparing his forecasts, but the river had a date with the ocean, and what the Pygmy internationalist was thinking was of no concern to it at all. It was already flowing when the world was created. It had quite naturally seen one or two Ramses come by, the candace Amanishakheto, Manikongo Afonso I, Shaka Zulu, Leopold II, Hitler, Nkumu Botuli In Koli, Ben Bella, Lumumba, Nasser, Che Guevara, JFK, Mao, Mobutu, as well as the valiant M'zee Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who knew that he was only passing through. In the distance a sinking floating island, set off against the dusk's orange and dark red light, outstripped the line of barges and vanished around a bend like a ghost: the same one that the steamer of Captain Teodor Korzeniowski, who later took the name Joseph Conrad, had rounded as he plunged into the heart of darkness. (Bofane 2018, pp. 18-19)

Isookanga's journey from Mbandaka to the capital partly retraces Henry Morton Stanley's second mission, between 1876 and 1877, when he explored the Congo River section by section to reach the ocean. Some years later, in 1881, Stanley established a station on the pool, where the river became non-navigable. The Stanley Pool place was renamed Léopoldville in 1882, and Kinshasa by Mobutu Sese Seko in 1966 (Muketa 2008, p. 53). Therefore, the trajectory followed by the protagonists echoes the travels that led to the foundation of the capital and the establishment of the colonial system, giving place to what would have first become the personal possession of King Leopold II and then the Belgian Congo.

During the colonial period, urbanisation was integral to an economy based on the exploitation and export of raw materials, and urban centres were built in mining areas or at strategic communication points. This created peripheral urbanisation in the Democratic

Republic of Congo – defined as a "useful ring" by Jean-Claude Bruneau and Thierry Simon (1991). Colonial design led to an outward-oriented space, still functioning today, reinforced by segmented communication routes composed of river, road, and railway junctions. Within this peripheral system of nodes, Kinshasa is today the most critical point, as in the absence of the colonial production apparatus that generated the road system and guaranteed its functioning, most flows converge towards the capital. Mbandaka-Kinshasa is one of the colonial segments through which ivory, rubber, wood and palm oil were transported; today it is one of the few tracts of the Congo River still navigable. Therefore, by going downriver, the protagonist follows a direction which seems to be overdetermined by history and geography, as if there were no other way than that defined by the past, and that all those who look for a different future are obliged to follow that course.

The protagonist's journey also retraces less epic and more common rural migrations towards the capital, both temporary and permanent. The tugboat transporting Isookanga to Kinshasa is a pluriverse associated with the human constellation along the river, as it gathers what it meets while crossing the country. Moreover, it creates a concrete link to the city, anticipating the human variety and complexity of the capital, constituted to a large extent by rural migrants. Bofane lingers on the tugboat, which he defines as a "floating city" (Bofane 2018, p. 17). By putting emblematic categories in this symbolic, shared space – such as exotic product traders, migrants, refugees, warriors, intellectuals, and miners on the run – the writing captures Kinshasa's chaotic and heterogeneous nature. Indeed, these journeys are essential not only for those who move towards Kinshasa but also for the city's functioning in terms of supply, livelihood, and exchange with the hinterland, as Mbandaka is the only hub connecting the innumerable villages in the vast depths of the forest to the capital.

> There were thousands of people covering every inch of the deck. Merchandise of all kinds to supply the capital was strewn about and dangling from parts of the vessel: bunches of plantains, stocks of dried fish, live goats, various sorts of game, sacks of coal and manioc, exotic birds, palm oil in PVC barrels, and near the bow a captive monkey with a cord around his neck. People were milling about: shopkeeping mothers, rural emigrants, Mongo streetwalkers from the Mongando clan, hair stylists, aspiring law and math professors, talisman vendors, runaway minors, discharged intellectuals, two Maï-Maï who had broken with their group, men and

> women of the cloth, war refugees, and more… People were holding forth in every language the river siphoned off along its course, and even beyond. One shouldn't merely use a lot of verbiage on the boat: there shouldn't be a lack of ingenuity either, among other qualities, for that will assure daily sustenance or, for some, will offer the possibility of a free beer near a steaming pot, to make one feel a little like a millionaire on a catamaran. (Bofane 2018, p. 18)

As previously mentioned, the river may also activate further readings at an intertextual level. For instance, recalling the short story of the same name by Joseph Conrad (1979), Kinshasa becomes an inverted 'outpost of progress'. In Conrad's tale, the outpost of progress is a trading post located in the forest's heart. Ironically, the title refers to the assumption that civilisation follows trade – an assumption made by the trading company for which the characters work – and reflects a colonialist vision. Similarly, being a window to globalisation, Kinshasa appears to Isookanga as an avenue for modernisation and development. Moreover, the protagonist's desire for success also recalls the yearning for ivory described in *Heart of Darkness* (1978), despite the direction of Isookanga's journey being opposite to Conrad's and the treasure chased by the protagonist not being the same. The recurrent association of Kinshasa with progress in opposition to the forest and the inescapable presence of the river echo the Conradian legacy and the references to colonialism.

4.5. First line of flight: Kinshasa's urban space

According to Deleuze and Guattari, text is a 'literary machine' which creates multiple signs, and the act of reading is a productive use of this machine, which extracts the force of the text (Deleuze and Guattari 1986). Adopting this approach, I consider specific literary text passages as possible exit points from which a line of flight may originate. In this section, I identify the first line of flight in the capital's urban space, and make social scientific literature communicate with the novel. This leads to a reading that, on the one hand, goes beyond the literary text and, on the other, does not remain within the social scientific literature on the selected topic but instead circulates between both and interacts with the collage. Furthermore, as I explain in the methodological chapter, the departure from the novel occurs regardless of the thematically relevant aspects intrinsic to the literary text. Therefore, this

reading exercises a degree of arbitrariness in choosing the lines of flight and proceeding through the social scientific literature and visual exploration of the topic. Collage intervenes at every level of analysis, especially as montage; that is to say, there is no direct correspondence with a line of flight, and even when a collage does not take shape in a specific composition, it works with the montage of fragments through constant reassembling. Therefore, although this line of flight relating to urban space does not materialise in a composition, the visual exploration that originates from it circulates within the other collages. The movement that gives rise to this line of flight and the others is a legacy of the Derridian conception of textuality. Indeed, I consider the exit points identified in the literary text as traces inscribed in a writing that has already happened and is projected towards an open act of signification. The literary text overflows like any form of textuality, constantly referring to something else and becoming a differential network.

The novel refers to Kinshasa through a few key places that are functional to the story, such as the port of Kingabwa, the station, the central market, and certain peripheral areas. After the hybrid space of the port, which is a meeting point between the forest and the city, Kinshasa emerges through the eyes of the protagonist, manifesting itself as a vigorous urban apparatus in evident contrast with the woodland. Isookanga's perspective drives the reading of the capital, invalidating the common idea of the African city as a place lacking infrastructure, services, and commodities. Kinshasa is busy, vibrant, modern, and has its appeal.

> Stepping out of a taxi-bus in front of the central train station, Isookanga couldn't get over it. In the village, when he'd typed "Kinshasa" in Google's long rectangle, he had seen many marvels, but what was displayed before him surpassed everything. Seeing the Boulevard du 30-Juin stretching out in front of his eyes, Isookanga was sure it could incorporate all of Wafania, Monkoto, and Basankusu combined, and perhaps even Boende. The buildings lining it were even more stately than the trees of the forest. A huge throng was scurrying along, and the young Ekonda fell in with them … "Avenue de la Libération! Libération!" A taxi-bus came charging down. Hanging on to the open door and thumping it with his fist, the conductor shouted, "Avenue de la Libération! Libération!" Isookanga rushed forward to find a spot, but that wasn't easy for someone with no experience in the sport. Faced with the swarm of

> passengers that pounced on the vehicle, he didn't get very far because of his small stature; still he managed to squeeze between a muscular soldier and the impressive décolleté of a mother who, judging by the dust that covered her from head to toe, was probably selling manioc flour at the market. (Bofane 2018, p. 21)

Identifying a possible line of flight in the capital's urban geography through active dismantling reading of the novel allows me to observe the tensions originating in the story from an extra-textual perspective. These tensions refer to the influence of the past on urban morphology and everyday dynamics. I consider the general configuration of urban space and its internal and external functioning, focusing on the role of the city centre, colonial dichotomies, urban expansion, and the position of the capital within the country. Kinshasa's urban geography still expresses a morphology of colonial power and seems to reaffirm the legacy of a postcolonial city. Indeed, colonial urban space is shaped by dichotomy and mirrors the oppositional and divisive nature of colonialism (Coquery-Vidrovitch, C. 1988). Like most colonial cities, the capital's design is determined by a bipartite space organised into European and African sections. The northern areas, slightly raised above the plain and overlooking the pool, were the places of administrative and economic colonial power. The progressive expansion of the European area eastwards was matched by African settlements in the south, on the flood plains: these future *cités* were inhabited by African workers and often built on ancient Bantu villages (De Saint Moulin 1971; De Maximy 1984; Lumenga-Neso Kiobe 1995; Lelo Nzuzi 2008). The principle of zoning maps out the urban landscape, defines the industrial area, and creates a buffer zone between the European and African residential districts. The result is an urban plan based on segregation, organised into an industrial area, a European centre, a neutral zone, and Indigenous downtowns.

One of the municipalities belonging to the old colonial European centre is Gombe, also known as *centre-ville*, because it functions as a city centre in modern Kinshasa. Gombe plays a leading role as an administrative and commercial hub, as well as a financial district and business centre. Banks, offices, companies, diplomatic and political activity, and educational and cultural institutions are all concentrated in this area. For these reasons, it hosts exclusive residential zones with high-standard accommodation. Being connected to the arterial routes through the rest of the city, Gombe is characterised by heavy traffic in the morning and

evening, as a significant proportion of Kinshasa's inhabitants converge on the district, even from the farthest peripheries (Flouriot *et al*. 1975). In the years following independence, the segregationist barriers created by Belgium collapsed; Congolese started to move into the white sections of the capital, with the new governing and wealthy classes being the ones to occupy these areas.

As in other African cities, the growth of urban space in the post-independence era was exponential. The rural population, who abandoned their villages in search of employment in the capital, increased the size and urban fabric of the city until it covered the entire plain. These sections of spontaneous occupation began to develop along the two main roads, westwards and eastwards, then progressively moved away from the roads, penetrating rural areas. Semi-rural neighbourhoods spread without access to the road network, generating hybrid spaces that do not yet belong either to the city or to villages. They are recognisable by their significant size, occupation of sandy and erosive lands, lack of infrastructure, significant presence of rural populations from other Congolese provinces, low socioeconomic status of the people who settle there, and the irregularity of the houses, which are often unfinished and built purely to ensure occupation of the land. These spatial aspects are scattered throughout the collages, where they appear singularly, as in the compositions included in the section on informal activities, or together in a more complex overview, as in the last collage of this chapter where all the elements discussed converge.

After 1960 and independence, not only physical urban division but also dichotomy was embraced: the city centre became the place of white progress and Western emancipatory ideals, whereas the rest of the city belonged to the categories of village, forest, and ritual practices, and was inhabited by rural migrants (Devisch 1995). Therefore, socioeconomic segregation replaced colonial racial segregation, and the partitioning of space remained. Kinshasa's road network still converges on the former European centre and, despite serving areas built before 1960, has not been connected to post-independence urban sections, which are largely inaccessible to vehicles (Pain 1984; Godard 1985; Mwanza wa Mwanza 1995; 1997; BEAU 2003). This leads to a clear opposition between the centripetal force exerted by the city centre and the majority of urban settlements. Moreover, this attractive capacity of the city centre mirrors the role of Kinshasa within the country, which was

determined by a colonial urbanisation and communication system primarily projected onto the capital.

Through Isookanga's desire for the city, the literary machine created by Bofane emphasises these forces. The protagonist fully imbibes colonial dichotomies, which shape his idea of the city as an engine of modernity, progress, culture, production, and success, in opposition to the backwardness of forest, village and tradition. The novel stages the capital as a magnet, which attracts tensions, determines directions, and condenses energies, and focuses on the city centre as an area of further flow attraction within the capital. However, while the literary machine navigates these oppositional relations, it makes them unstable, and the dual space vision proves insufficient to think about the relationship between the centre and marginality. Indeed, interestingly, Bofane chooses the central market to introduce his subaltern characters and to focus on marginality, despite the centrality of the market within the urban configuration.

The central market, known as the *Grand Marché*, is the main urban place in the novel, a further hub located in the city's core: a centre of the centre. Its large buffer zone contains overcrowded alleys, and disparate imported merchandise is sold in the numerous stands. Fake clothing brands dazzle all around, and everyone trades something. The market is also the functional core of the story, as it is in this central and partly globalised place that Isookanga's parable arises. Alongside products, the area is rendered through movement and noise; above all, the voices of the water vendors characterise Kinshasa's soundscape. The protagonist buys a small plastic packet of water from a street vendor before stopping in an informal street restaurant to order chicken with beans and rice. In the late afternoon, sellers start closing stands and returning to the peripheral neighbourhoods of the city. This is when beggars pick up the scraps, and the street children come out. Several aspects converge in the market: the dimension of globality, as the market is the crucial point of trade and connection; informal activities scattered all over the area, whether fixed or itinerant; commuters' daily routines, moving from the far peripheries to the city centre and vice versa; the presence of marginalised categories, and, last among them, the street children.

> Without knowing it, he was heading for Camp Lufungula. Wandering off, the canvas bag with the computer on his shoulder, he followed the flow of people and came to Avenue Kato. Near the Great Market, he turned in to overcrowded streets with stores displaying items imported directly from Dubai and China. Especially textiles. Famous-label clothes were abundantly represented among these – Gucci, Vuitton, Adidas, Emporio Armani, they were all there ... Toward the end of the afternoon the market women started to pack up their goods and return to the outlying districts where they lived. The needy were gathering abandoned products that were unfit for sale. Isookanga noticed many children among them, undoubtedly street urchins. The sun began to set and then it was night. The Great Market consisted of a dozen or so pavilions whose hexagonal roofs were shaped like gigantic flowers on cement stems. Isookanga walked through a labyrinth of deserted tables and, a little to the side, found a corner where he could sleep. He took out the blanket he'd brought, wrapped himself up, and tried to fall asleep as shadows glided through the night and cries rang out in the darkness. A moment later Isookanga was dozing off. (Bofane 2018, pp. 26-27)

In his investigation into street children, anthropologist Filip De Boeck identified certain points of the capital where they live (De Boeck and Plissart 2005). These places are not permanent, as various factors may force the shégué to move, such as police actions that follow specific crimes, social events, or urban restyling operations. However, these strategic sites are usually re-inhabited, as they offer certain characteristics which make them ideal refuges for street children; for instance, administrative or transit spaces are anonymous enough to be considered safe. Among these typologies is the central market, also renamed *Pékin* or *Mozambique* by *shégué*. The central market is a place of opportunities; for this reason, street children call it *trou d'argen*t, a hole of money, or *Tshikapa*, a reference to the diamond city located in the province of Kasai. According to De Boeck, some street children live on the roofs of market pavilions, a privileged and raised location called *Golgota*, or *planet*. During the day, they try to create a life, undertaking little commissions for traders or customers, begging, or stealing. In the evening, when the market becomes empty, they gather to cook food with a bit of charcoal or wash under a gutter (ibid.). Other spaces are the cemetery of Gombe, certain transit hubs such as the roundabout of Victoire, the square in front of the central station, the 20 May Stadium, and a series of public buildings that, due to the deterioration of the state, are neglected or not controlled during the night, such as the post office. Through Isookanga's journey from the forest to the capital and the presence of street children in the

central market, the novel brings the margins to the centre. However, subsequently, the centre moves towards the margins through the protagonist's return. While I will discuss this point in the section on resistance, building upon bell hooks' reflections and Deleuze's conception of the diagram, the mixture between centre and periphery, forest and city, visually dominates the collage at the end of this chapter, blending with elements of De Boeck's investigation and the other lines of flight. The analysis of marginality and resistance involves the deconstruction of the process of centring that, as Derrida points out, creates the margins. Indeed, it is only through this deconstruction that the transgressive potential of the peripheries can be released (Dixon and Jones III 2005).

4.6. Second line of flight: street children

In this section, I identify a second line of flight in street children, whose presence is central to both the novel and the capital. This social phenomenon is first considered more generally and then contextualised within the Democratic Republic of Congo by exploring specific traits such as, for instance, the cases of children accused of sorcery. Therefore, like in the previous line of flight, I investigate this particular form of urban marginality through social scientific literature and collage, going beyond the novel and making these different languages interact. The analysis dismantles the literary text, decontextualising specific characters from the literary frame and exploring the phenomenon through extra-textual connections, such as social reports and urban anthropological research. This incursion into different texts activates a deterritorialisation of the novel. At the same time, the elements, images, associations, and thoughts arise and, as fragments of different natures, start combining visually through collage.

> It wasn't by accident but by necessity that the street children had made the Great Market their stronghold. First of all, they had to eat and the place was the city's granary. Then, too, they could earn a little money by helping regular customers carry their shopping on their heads in cardboard boxes. Other activities consisted of black-market sales, watching cars, petty theft, or even pickpocketing. Sometimes they also managed to work for an intelligence service, monitoring and tailing subversive individuals. They could report on citizens. During the day, the

> kids ran around the market, alone or in groups. They were recognizable by their looks, the kind you don't mess with. Frailty was inconceivable, to the point where the little ones created an ironclad arrogance in an attempt to build a wall around themselves. Or else they had the look of infinite sadness because—as the Kinshasans said—they were living *na kati ya système ya lifelo* [in the system of the hell]. They had remarkable physiques. Their lives of insecurity had dried up their muscles, making them as hard and gnarled as rope. There were no chubby children among them. They lived from day to day, clinging by tooth and nail to life and the asphalt. (Bofane 2018, pp. 50-51)

Street children are essential characters in the novel. They act as a group, creating a collective organism, though a marginalised one. This collective character is emphasised in the episode of the revolt following the killing of one of them by the police. Nonetheless, street children are also presented individually, and their stories highlight the multiple reasons that led to this form of marginalisation. First of all, conflicts, which generate war orphans and child soldiers and fuel urban poverty, account for recurring conditions that affect childhood in the Democratic Republic of Congo while connecting to other relevant national and international geopolitics issues. The first encounter between Isookanga and the street children happens in the central market. The protagonist finds a corner to sleep in, but he is soon woken by a group of provocative children, intrigued by the contrast between his adult aspect and small size. The arrival of Shasha, an adolescent girl who seems to be the group's leader, re-establishes a balance. She shares her place with him, close to the market administration buildings, where other bodies lie on cardboard. Shasha explains to Isookanga that all the children he sees there are street children, and the central market at night is not a good place for foreigners.

4.6.1. Typologies, causes and origins of the phenomenon

The expression 'street children' refers generically to children and adolescents for whom the street is a habitual abode. As with all socially constructed categories, it cannot represent the heterogeneity of the real phenomenon, and it includes a variety of cases spread worldwide. Since the 1980s, the term has been used to identify both children who work on the street but have another place to sleep, and those who live on the street without parents or relatives to take care of them (Connolly and Ennew 1996; Lenoble-Bart 1996; Ennew and Swart-Kruger

2003; Young, 2003; 2004). In both cases, the street is the focal point in their lives. Nonetheless, there are significant differences between children *on* the street, who have a place to sleep, and children *of* the street, who live permanently in the street. The former can find informal small jobs more easily, by transforming themselves into shoeshine boys, porters, vendors of small batches of goods, or by doing sporadic domestic work. These activities are common in Kinshasa, making children visible and dispersed throughout the city, from the centre to the peri-urban areas. Instead, children *of* the street are an almost invisible component of the population, inhabiting specific portions of the urban agglomeration, and they are predominantly nocturnal in their activities. While children *of* the street are exposed to greater danger than children *on* the street, the latter have a higher probability of ending up living permanently in the street than other children. Indeed, child labour obliges children to spend most of the day on the street, revealing the socioeconomic instability of the family and the absence of any preconditions which permit the child to go to school. Moreover, the absence of basic education makes them easily exploited by adults (Human Rights Council 2012). Having outlined this difference within such a heterogeneous category, the term *street children*, from now on, is used exclusively to refer to children *of* the street, so as to focus on the typology of the novel.

The phenomenon of street children is associated with various recurrent traits, such as lack of accurate data and certain causes which generate or increase cases. These causes are generally recognised as push and pull factors. Among the push factors are economic poverty, family breakdown, discrimination and social exclusion, domestic violence, conflicts, forced displacements, HIV/AIDS, and other diseases (Young and Barret 2001; Bordonaro 2012). The pull factors through which the street becomes attractive are economic independence, spatial freedom, and desire for adventure or belonging to a gang. Moreover, rapid urbanisation is considered the precondition for the occurrence of street children, as it gives place to the coexistence of wealthy sections of the population alongside slums and poverty and may generate ambiguous social space (Mitton and Adbullah 2021). Children who live on the street can experience various forms of abuse and trauma, caused by different actors, including those who are supposed to protect them. Although diverse characteristics depend on context, public opinion and discourse tend to stereotype them, swinging between the two poles of victimisation and criminalisation (Bordonaro and Payne 2012, pp. 335). Victimisation

is quite common in the narrative of those charities, NGOs and agencies, both governmental and non-governmental, that work to resolve the issue or to reduce its impact; criminalisation, in contrast, consists of blaming and ranges from the ordinary, connected with illegality or criminality, to certain specific cultural aspects, powerfully anchored in the geographical context, as in the case of a sorcery accusation.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, this phenomenon has been evident since the 1990s. Some of the causes mentioned above have shaped the destiny of many children in Congolese towns and cities. Along with the rapid process of urbanisation, poverty, unemployment, the progressive deterioration of state services, the number of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS and various conflicts, the fragmentation of the traditional structures of support, and the cost of education have increased the circumstances in which children end up on the street. Despite the absence of reliable numbers, in 2006 there were estimated to be 30,000 street children in Kinshasa. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, they are known as *shégué* – after a popular song by Papa Wemba, *Kaokoko Korobo* – a nickname which comes from the contraction of Che Guevara, and highlights their independent spirit (Human Rights Watch 2006). They constitute an 'urban subclass', organised into groups with an internal hierarchy, leaders, and a common slang Lingala-based in the capital and Swahili-based in other urban areas such as Kisangani and Lumumbashi. In 2006, when the Human Rights Watch report was published, there were already second and third generations of *shégué*, the 'offspring' of street children who were born on the street.

4.6.2. Abuses and sorcery

Within the Congolese socioeconomic, political, and cultural situation, not only do *shégué* have to face physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, but they also have to learn how to navigate their condition of marginality to make a living. This means developing skills, practising activities, and even exploiting the very same abusive conditions they have to suffer in order to earn money. Amongst the reported abuses, there are those committed by police and soldiers, who may threaten or beat *shégué* for money or information, obliging them to confess to fake crimes to obtain a bribe. Police and soldiers may also recruit the children to commit robbery or to create disorder at political demonstrations. Moreover, civilians often

exploit street children, using them as vendors, porters, and cleaners, as well as for more compromising jobs, related to prostitution or drugs. *Shégué* also face sexual abuse, which may come from the police, military, or civilians, as well as from older street children. Sexual abuse more frequently affects girls, although boys are not immune. Moreover, abused boys are doubly stigmatised, as homosexual relations are taboo in the country. Girls often trade sex for money or protection; indeed, within groups, control is exerted through threat, intimidation, and abuse, and newly arrived children undergo a period called 'baptism' (De Boeck and Plissart 2005; Human Rights Watch 2006; Rurevo and Bourdillon 2003). Furthermore, the aspects mentioned above often intertwine. For instance, sexual abuse contributes to the transmission of HIV, increasing cases of AIDS; the disease, in turn, can lead to accusations of sorcery. Finally, prostitution is an unescapable means of survival among female street children, who may be as young as 5 or 6 years old. In his research, De Boeck considers this praxis' organisation and stabilisation. Indeed, children see their bodies as warehouses or merchandise, able to produce money. Within the group, they are distinguished by age or physical and aesthetic qualities; generally, the youngest work as 'assistants' to the older ones. "Over the years, street children have become one of the familiar aspects of urban life, not exclusively in Gombe, but in all neighbourhoods of this huge city capital, whether they gather around a stadium, under bridges, along the rails or riverbanks, in sheds or cardboard boxes" (De Boeck and Plissart 2005, p. 168 [translation mine]).

As mentioned above, the spread of HIV and the AIDS epidemic have also played a role in increasing the numbers of orphans. In these cases, children may have been orphaned and also be sick themselves, thus suffering social exclusion on two levels. Moreover, due to the belief that a curse causes the disease, social exclusion may be exacerbated further by the guilt attributed to the child. This connects with the most complex aspect of the street children phenomenon: the association with sorcery. When economic or health problems affect a family, sorcery is considered the cause and is attributed to one of the children, who becomes a *ndoki*, the Lingala term commonly used to identify a sorcerer. This leads to the child being treated differently on a daily basis, receiving reduced portions of food and experiencing mistrust and progressive forms of exclusion. The so-called 'Churches of Revival' play a significant role in this. These Pentecostal and charismatic churches practise a religious

syncretism, mixing traditional rituality with elements of Christianity. Since the 1990s, they have spread throughout the country, particularly in the city, and exorcisms have become an important part of their business. Children are often forced by their families to accept the accusation of sorcery; their confession is then considered as evidence, and the accused child can be taken to the church to undergo a deliverance ceremony, which may be brutal, characterised by abusive practices aimed at purifying children and purging the evil. The child may stay in isolation for days, without food and water, be beaten, or forced to drink salt water. After the exorcism, the child may return home, but any problematic situation will be seen as proof that the issue has not been resolved, and she will likely be progressively pushed away (Human Rights Watch 2006).

Filip De Boeck has highlighted a powerful change in collective imagination. Disrupted by modernity, collective imagination has lost its capacity of 'doubling' to create the 'second world' and manage otherness. This loss has led to a progressive lack of distinction between unreal and reality, and to their consequent fusion. Childhood is the place where this fracture is particularly evident; thus, the link between children and sorcery sheds light on a deep transformation in the family, which has experienced the effects of war and poverty (De Boeck and Plissart 2005). In the novel, one victim of this is Modogo, an alleged child sorcerer whose family was frightened of the incomprehensible sentences he often repeated after watching foreign language films. Before becoming a street child, Modogo had been taken to a local church and underwent an exorcism.

> At home, destitution and insecurity had chosen to take refuge and—the pastor avowed—Modogo's activities were primarily responsible for that. The little boy's life had become untenable. One day he got on a bus in Selembao, where he lived, and didn't get off until the final stop: the Great Market. That was several months ago. When he was still living at home with his parents, he had thought he was the only kid like that. Arriving where he was now, he came to understand that he was sorely mistaken: countless child witches were haunting the Kinshasans. (Bofane 2018, p. 53)

The First and Second Congo Wars, as well as the subsequent ongoing conflicts in the eastern provinces, have multiplied the number of street children in the last few decades, generating

orphans and displacing populations. This is the case for Shasha, the adolescent girl depicted by Bofane to introduce the *shégué* of Kinshasa. Shasha came from Kivu after escaping the slaughter of her village; several pages are devoted to her story, describing her journey through the forest with two younger brothers, just one of whom would survive. Furthermore, conflicts create child soldiers (Seymour 2012; Honwana 2000), who may join other street children in the city. This is what happens to Omari Double-Blade, a former child soldier who is a *shayeur* during the day, selling ties and fake DVDs to make a living.

4.7. Third line of flight: the informal city

I identify a further line of flight in the informal activities within Kinshasa, and extend it using the social scientific literature and the reflections of Filip De Boeck. Associating informal activities with marginality is not entirely correct; indeed, far from occupying a marginal space or representing a minority, these activities are spread throughout the city and are prevalent in the economic and social life of the capital. However, they are not in a dominant position in terms of market power, and this is the trait that interests my analysis; indeed, millions of inhabitants who could not otherwise provide for basic needs depend on the existence of informal activities.

Being an essential part of the capital, the informal urban landscape is frequently evoked in the novel, and informal activities immediately characterise the city: the voices of water vendors across the street, the presence of unofficial restaurants, women who sell food in corners, and *shayeurs*, dealing in a multitude of different products, take part in the narration of the city throughout the story. However, the most eloquent case is the encounter between the protagonist and the character of Zhang Xia, a street seller of water sachets. Yearning to dive into the business and convinced of the endless possibilities offered by the city and globalisation, Isookanga thinks of a way to improve the taste of water. After researching online for inspiration, he creates a sweetener to give water a natural flavour and creates a red sticker with a white cross resembling the Swiss flag to symbolise freshness and pureness. In a country affected by all sorts of micro-organisms and contaminations, this would encourage customers to buy supposedly reliable water.

Not only does the writer present informal activities as an obvious component of urban life, but he also develops further connections through them. Indeed, characters are assemblages in themselves, and Bofane's sarcastic vision captures diverse aspects in a single scene. Through Isookanga's eagerness for success, the author focuses on the mechanisms of multinational corporations and markets. Although never mentioned, the allusion to one of the best known bottled waters sold in Kinshasa is understood: it corresponds to the case of 'Swissta', the badge of which responds to the sticker described in the novel. Furthermore, looking at the most highly promoted water brands in the capital, names like 'Alpine', 'Eden', and 'Canadian' come up, all of which seem to follow the market logic of Isookanga. Moreover, while outlining the pervasiveness of neocapitalist power, Bofane imagines the possibility of appropriating its codes, giving shape to a marginal room for manoeuvre.

> Isookanga studied the man beside him who'd said his name was Zhang Xia. The polystyrene box apparently contained nothing but small bags filled with water. True, it was fresher than what he had been drinking before … The young Chinese offered an essential, sought-after product, especially at this time of day, when the rays of the sun, with the dust as their prism, burned skin and neurons in a jumble that encompassed a concert of car horns, an unrelenting crush, and the stale smell of station wagon diesel, which was worth twelve hundred dollars a barrel on the Shanghai stock exchange just then. (Bofane 2018, pp. 42-43 and 45)

The informal sector is a multidimensional concept (Perry et al. 2007), heterogeneous and not always easy to distinguish. The activities within this spectrum concern trade and services, particularly transport, and have in common a spontaneous organisation, which is due to the incapacity of the state to cover the needs of the population. According to the World Bank *Global Economic Prospect* 2019, in emerging markets and developing economies (EMDEs), informal employment stands at about 70%, and in certain countries of Sub-Saharan Africa may even be over 90% (World Bank 2019, p. 129). Studies on the informal sector are mainly focused on the economic aspects and the potential for capacity building, identifying recurrent negative traits, and the importance of these activities in maintaining the functioning of the urban apparatus. In particular, among the less promising aspects of the informal sector are its contributions to urban congestion, the absence of revenue for the

state, low levels of productivity and wages, and the non-exportability of goods which, instead, are redistributed from one point to another in the country and the city. Nonetheless, the importance of informal activities is linked to their capacity to provide for the essential needs of the urban African population and constitute the basis of their livelihoods.

Informal activities are manifested in the fragmentation of urban space. In the informal spaces of the global South, it is possible to trace space as a social product and intercept the differential space discussed by Lefebvre (1991), which is generated by practices that enable differences. This discloses dimensions such as those of 'third space' (Bhabha 2001) and spatial heterogeneity and simultaneity (Massey 2005), making differential lived spaces a distinct outcome from that produced in theory, and revealing their positive potential (Bower 2017; Aceska et al. 2019). For McFarlane (2021), fragmentation implies the production of margins created relationally; nonetheless, he recognises that the city's future is linked to the generative potential of fragments. In his work, he also practises fragments through vignettes, a possible form of expression which he defines as the "damaged present", where the 'whole' is seen as "a kind of impossibility" (ibid., p. 107).

Fragmentation is a recurrent aspect in the urban life of Kinshasa, which consists of a multitude of informal activities involving any kind of trade or services, both permanent and itinerant (Lyenda 2001; 2005; Simatele and Etambakonga 2015; De Herdt and Marivoet 2018). Permanent vending points are generally strategically located in the neighbourhood and offer different typologies of products, such as tomato sauce, bars of soap, dried milk, or peanuts. Generally, they are sold in small quantities to meet the purchasing capacity of the population. Street restaurants also belong to permanent informal activities; they offer basic foods such as rice, beans, vegetables, and dried fish and meat at affordable prices. In contrast, ambulant informal activities involve both vending of food (such as sweets, boiled eggs, ice cream, yoghurts, water sachets, bread, or fruit) and services (such as porters, shoeshiners, barbers, and sellers of oil for lamps). Further informal activities are related to urban kitchen gardens (Mianda, 1996), the collection of domestic rubbish, or stone breaking, a job distributed along specific urban sections of the Congo River and often done by children (Lukeso, 2005).

Since the last decade of Mobutu's regime, and particularly after the lootings of 1991 and 1993, the Congolese middle class has gradually disappeared. One consequence of this absence is that the concept of "urban poor" now concerns the majority of inhabitants (De Boeck, 2015, p. 148). Given this premise, De Boeck focuses on social life in Kinshasa and identifies a characteristic pace in everyday urban life, which he names 'syncopation'. This pace consists of a series of *staccato*, interruptions, or 'amputations' at any level of life, from the material to the linguistic or behavioural. For instance, this applies to the inadequate water supply and intermittent electricity, which continuously obliges dwellers to interrupt their daily activities. Extreme economic precariousness profoundly affects opportunities and even changes language, as new attitudes need new words. Poverty "modifies the rhythm of life and language. It syncopates the temporality of one's day … by constantly generating time- and energy-consuming deviations and suspensions and thereby limiting and reducing one's options on all immediate practical levels of everyday life". Moreover, not only are lack and absence common conditions in Kinshasa, but disruptions are also random, and may occur at any moment. For this reason, inhabitants have to learn how to connect with the rhythm of urban life to assess opportunities and make decisions quickly (De Boeck, 2015, p. 147).

De Boeck works around the Lingala word *libulu*, a recurrent term in Kinshasa, which means 'hole', but also started to indicate scarcity, both materially and figuratively. In the first case, *libulu* refers to erosions, breakdowns of tools or appliances, remains of infrastructure; in the second, it suggests all that belongs to the informal economy (De Boeck and Baloji 2016; Baloji and De Boeck, 2018). One interesting aspect of this analysis is that although scarcity delineates the limits of the possible in the city, it also generates other possibilities (ibid.). Thus, the hole contains opportunities for suturing, creating junctions, and generating alternatives. This implies a collective dimension, as inhabitants have to move in search of solutions, share information and means, and create networks. In the act of suturing, the collective life of Kinshasa emerges, along with its interactivity and sociability. While people move due to scarcity, for instance, in search of light to read or fuel to make a generator work, many new activities also become possible because of this lack (De Boeck 2015). Therefore, while syncopation is the unpredictable pace of the city, it is also a possible urban logic which allows inhabitants to unravel a text that is otherwise incomprehensible. Indeed, over the last

four decades, informality has made the daily functioning of the second-biggest city in Sub-Saharan Africa possible.

The following collages arise mainly from the reflection on the informal activities and the water issue, which constitutes the novel's exit point from which the line of flight concerning the informal sector originates. Nonetheless, they also derive from the elements met in the other lines of flight. In my work, I consider collage as one of the possible ways to practise deconstruction by rearticulating new connections (Barnett 1999). The original contexts from which the fragments come and the new one in which the fragments are reconfigured didactically reveal the Derridian idea of context as a relation. At the same time, they are forms of assemblage which arise from the literary text and participate in the lines of flight.

The first composition [Fig. 1] uses photo clippings, a map fragment, and a scrap from a water bottle label. The collage gives a surreal vision of different aspects of the city: street trading; the lack of running water, especially in peripheral areas; dilapidation of pipes, subject to frequent breakages and water leaks; and extreme poverty, unhygienic conditions, and waste. I used a photo of a Swissta water bottle, the most popular brand in the capital, collecting a fragment of the imagery aroused by the novel and related to the protagonist's engagement with the informal water trade. This image dominates the compositional framework and cynically dialogues with the issues of scarcity and the environment. I have recontextualised a scrap of label from a global North water bottle by placing it on a pile of urban garbage; this generates irony due to the contrast with the scrap's message, which boasts about recycling. All of the pictures come from Kinshasa's daily life. I also used a fragment of a map of Kimbanseke, one of the capital's largest and most remote eastern peripheries, to emphasise the long-distance walking of peddlers, and added spurts of colour in the background to echo the frequency of breakages and constant presence of water leaks.

The materials used in collage primarily come from photographic sources. In general, photographs can be considered parts of a discourse related to memory, with their function mainly being documentary. However, it is worth remembering that a photograph is already a

Fig. 1 – *Eau pire* [left photo of man courtesy Jacques Kabongo; other photos by the author]

fragment, resulting from a view selected by a photographer; by being extracted from the external context by sight it becomes an autonomous visual discourse object (Fuão 2011). By operating with these fragments, collage makes new uses of them and allows further creative visual exploration. This operation starts with cutting, isolating further fragments from their initial photographic frames and interrupting the original narrative. The fragments 'liberated' from the original figure acquire new life and meaning as they participate in other relations and define new contexts of sense. At this moment, a choice intervenes; indeed, the cut opens a hole, creating an empty space, a place of possibility (ibid.). By working with the remaining contours and emptiness, collage explores interior and depth and, in doing so, creates a channel with affects, emotions, and imagination. As a form of visualisation that is intrinsically non-representational, collage emphasises movement, relations, encounters, and source elements from the precognitive and affective spheres. In this respect, it may refer to that "visceral knowledge" recalled by non-representational theories which is not aimed at totalising explanations (Boyd and Edwardes 2019, p. 3), but has the potential to illuminate the field of investigation, acting as a further explorative force. Indeed, making collages implies a more intimate relationship with images and triggers a process of critical observation and interrogation. This intimate relationship is similar, to a certain extent, to the card map drawing described by Larsen (2024). However, as in collage the connection with images is further amplified by manipulation and alteration, the interrogation may occur at a level which is barely conscious and be revealed only afterwards through the composition.

The second composition [Fig. 2] is a two-piece collage composed exclusively of a photograph and a further fragment from the same water bottle label used in the previous collage. The child in the photo is one of the numerous shoeshiners who walk the streets of the capital, searching for customers who want their shoes, dirtied by the dusty or muddy streets of the capital, to be cleaned. This job is mainly done by children or young adults; they cross the city with just a few clothes and two small plastic bottles, one with a mixture of water and soap and the other with a product for polishing. The fragment from the water bottle label is recontextualised in the frame of the art of making do and children's labour. The message that praises environmental commitment and aid to Africa is ridiculed by both the foreground figure and the impoverished environment in the background. The former incorporates an atavistic practice of recycling and mastery in making do, that does not wait for the promises

Fig. 2 – *Plastic aids* [photo courtesy Jacques Kabongo]

of the global North. The background reveals an urban environment in which lack and the dimension of the extemporaneous predominate. Although they may be less aesthetic, two-piece collages are particularly didactic in showing the association power of images. Indeed, two fragments from different contexts, recontextualised in a compositional framework, are sufficient to touch on various different issues – not only and not necessarily those discussed here, but also all of those that the observer can extract.

The aforementioned 'visceral knowledge', which originates in the precognitive dimension and is at the base of the creative process, may be stimulated by emotional and affective qualities. Meanwhile, the elements and their combination refer to a non-representational perspective which accounts for life and how it takes place through movements, encounters, and intensities (Lorimer 2005); the non-ordinary disposition emphasises these traits, suggesting further connections and activating the imagination. Following a non-representational approach, space in a collage is visualised as a process constituted through interaction, and the reading of the composition is based on the relations between elements rather than on the meaning. Embracing the singularities of life without attempting to contain them, a non-representational perspective recalls the impossibility of a complete explanation of the world due to its precariousness. Within this frame, space is a fluid and limitless composition in constant becoming (Boyd and Edwardes 2019). Thus, the collage is a starting point for a possibly diverse discourse, which, moving through the novel and the lines of flight investigated, explores the realm of the visual and non-narrative.

4.8. On resistance

Having investigated the urban marginality in Kinshasa through the lines of flight, this section focuses on resistance, considering the Deleuzian elaboration of the concept. As I discuss shortly in the first part of this section, the novel's protagonist seems to embody the idea of resistance in a Deleuzian sense, making him different from the other characters. Indeed, although various subalterns carry out personal revolutions or find ways to redeem themselves, Isookanga's change of perspective, which triggers the unexpected turning point of the story, condenses the decolonial sense of the novel. Bofane creates space to imagine

something that would not have otherwise been considered, opening conceptual possibilities. At the same time, style contributes to the discourse by manifesting another face of resistance, that of sarcasm and irony, which, even in the gravity of events, can open a path to countering power and calling the truth by name. I discuss this in the second part of this section.

4.8.1. Going up the river

Textual analysis has identified a form of resistance close to the Deleuzian idea developed in his reflection on the diagram. In this first part, I discuss it while considering the power of those who live at the bottom of society. I first reflect on the margins as places of resistance (hooks 1989), on deviance (Cohen 2004), and on the weak (Janeway 1975), connecting them to the elements discussed in the lines of flight, such as Kinshasa's urban space, street children and informal activities. Subsequently, I reflect on the decolonial potential of the novel, considering it as a further form of resistance. Indeed, the analysis of the literary text highlights minor lines of becoming and forms of minoritarian knowledge. I briefly reconnect these to the roles of the forest and river, and consider their narrative functions.

Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament emphasises the marginal existence of most characters, while other traits emerge without being brought to the foreground. For instance, war, violence, and corruption do not appear resoundingly but are implied within the inhabitants' daily lives; as such, they are incorporated into the characters. All of these elements converge in the city, making Kinshasa, and particularly its city centre, the place where marginality and its macro causes meet. The centripetal nature of the capital is also reaffirmed in a transcalar sense. While Kinshasa becomes a point of national convergence, the city centre acts similarly within the capital. Therefore, at first glance, the novel transmits an image of the capital mirroring the same forces that rule Kinshasa's urban materiality and factuality, as described in the section on the city's urban space and investigated through the first line of flight.

The literary focus on marginality in Kinshasa allows me to emphasise the relationship between margins and centre and to connect it with resistance. As mentioned previously, this relationship is crucial in the novel and is made explicit through a strong dichotomy between

forest and city, natural and urban. This contrast is manifested in Isookanga's desire to reach the capital and it is continuously restated through his yearning to participate in globalisation. The protagonist's eagerness for the city, modernity, progress, and globalisation echoes the neurotic desire of the black man to be white, transposing Fanon's (1996) insight into a modern key, which sees capitalism as the unavoidable destiny of the postcolonial world. However, the story overcomes this dichotomy, disclosing the possibility of a more nuanced power dynamic; this becomes evident at the end of the novel, when the protagonist comes into possession of a map of resources and his perspective on the future changes.

> … he had nothing in his head but the vast dark green surfaces that, unobtrusively, contained gold-bearing layers beneath thick vegetation but looked like nothing special … With the disk that contained the map of minerals, Isookanga was truly going to occupy his place as chief—as soon as his uncle would let him take over, obviously. It turned out that going to the city had been useful: it had allowed him to find out that he wouldn't merely reign over kambala and pangolin but over more down-to-earth values as well, the kind that were easily attributed to any monarch with a bit of glamor. Why not to him—Isookanga Lolango Djokisa, young Ekonda and an internationalist besides? (Bofane 2018, p. 189)

At this turning point, which first concerns a mindset change, the novel deconstructs the colonial assumption of dichotomy by producing difference and reversing binarism (St. Pierre 2024). Isookanga's journey is one of empowerment, which starts by moving from the margins to the centre but ends in the opposite direction. This is due to the protagonist's disillusionment with progress, his discovery of overlooked aspects of globalisation, such as corruption and exploitation, and his fortuitous encounter with the resource map. Kinshasa lies between these two movements and dominates the story's timeframe, becoming a laboratory of encounters and awareness for the protagonist. Indeed, not only do all the relevant events happen in the city centre, but marginality also occurs in the heart of the colonial city, currently the core of the global urban dimension. Moreover, in this place of political, administrative and economic power, Isookanga acquires critical consciousness. As in the oppressed liberation process described by Freire (2002), he starts to identify the structures of oppression, recognises his own agency, and acts to make change happen.

Thinking about space and position and exploring their connections within the concepts of place, identity, power, and desire, bell hooks (1989) defines marginal space as "much more than a site of deprivation"; it is rather "a site of radical possibility, a space of resistance" (ibid. 1989, p. 20). The conception of margins as a place of resistance requires us to rethink marginality, which is no longer seen as a transitory condition aimed at the centre; instead, marginality is a place to inhabit and trust, as it fuels capacity for resistance. From the margins, it is possible to look "from the outside in and from the inside out" (ibid.), becoming aware, understanding both the margins and the centre and acknowledging that the latter needs the former. For this reason, the margins must be a choice. This "site of radical openness" (ibid., p. 19) is always at risk, and a critical presence as disturbance and disruption must be continually renewed. Bell hooks focuses on the need to preserve the condition of marginality even once the centre has been reached. This means working from the centre to keep the marginality in the centre. Although Isookanga moves away from his original marginal space to reach the centre and participate in the globalisation game, he nonetheless continues to inhabit the margins. First, this happens unknowingly and without an alternative; subsequently, the protagonist acquires the tools to imagine the margins as places of resistance and "radical perspective … to imagine alternatives" (ibid. p. 20). These tools are material, as in the case of the map of Congo's subsoil, but also technological, conceptual, and strategic, as all connect knowledge to empowerment. In this sense, the novel follows bell hooks' lesson on the potential of margins as places of resistance, which Isookanga learns by navigating the margins of the city centre of Kinshasa.

Bell hooks' perspective may align with Cathy J. Cohen's (2004) conception of deviance, considered as a complex of behaviours in contrast to a dominant normalised concept of family, desire, sex, and behaviour. For Cohen, deviant choices are not necessarily driven by explicit political motivations; instead, they are aimed at pursuing basic goals such as pleasure, recognition, and autonomy. However, focusing on deviant practices reveals the power of those at the bottom to counter the assumptions that sustain and normalise social inequality. In Cohen's insight, deviance holds a transformative potential which is often ignored, whereas it could produce a counter-normative vision and become politicised resistance. This last aspect requires a fundamental passage from essential or spontaneous objectives towards politically conscious acts.

Seen from this perspective, Isookanga first seems driven by individual expectations, primarily focused on his desire for autonomy, and without any political intention. However, approaching the end, he acquires awareness and transforms what the mainstream might consider deviant behaviour into a more conscious vision of the future. The protagonist of the novel embodies deviance at different levels. In the context of his village, he is a deviant as he is uncircumcised, taller than the standard pygmy, unmarried, not interested in tradition, and oriented towards modernity. In the city, as well as being a pygmy, he is deviant in the sense of being a homeless person. Bofane's insistence on physical attributes is a way to ridicule any form of racism without denying diversities, but rather by underlining the materiality of the human body and phenotype as a complex architecture of difference which should not be repressed by discourse (Saldanha 2006). Instead, physical diversity reveals that discrimination may play multiple cards. Even when physical, diversity is not a geometrical issue nor a mere question of size or scale; conversely, being culturally constructed, it acts in the forest as it does in the capital.

As discussed in the theoretical chapter, for Deleuze resistance is a productive force driven by desire. He considers the diagrammatic dimension as a preliminary stage to power, before any stratification or institutionalisation. Therefore, resistance precedes reterritorialisation rather than being a form of counterattack within a given structure (Collet 2020). Moreover, not being an oppositional but rather a desiring and productive force, it belongs to the realm of becoming and may realise the possible. As mentioned above, the novel's protagonist embodies this conception of resistance. Indeed, although he is a member of an ethnic minority, a pygmy who arrived from the forest, racialised and homeless, he implements rhizomatic strategies, articulates a minor knowledge, and follows lines of escaping and becoming. Isookanga's desire precedes power because it evades it. In this way, it seems to illustrate the Deleuzian idea of resistance, conceptualised as a line of flight in itself.

This makes resistance different from the forms of resilience, survival, or counterattack staged in the novel. For instance, there is the case of the revolt of the *shégué*, caused by the killing of a street child during a pursuit by police, a significant scene which illustrates a large number of street children converging on the central market from all parts of the city; the episode of

Mirnas' poisoning by Shasha, the adolescent street girl who had become his favourite prostitute, subjected to a humiliating ritual by the MONUSCO blue helmet; and the ex-warlord Bizimungu's death at the hands of Adeito, his rape victim obliged to become his wife. All these forms of resistance can be read as forms of counterattack, reactions to power determined by despair and the instinct of survival. Moreover, in the acts of Shasha and Adeito, it is possible to recognise the quality of the weak underlined by Elisabeth Janeway (1975), which concerns being aware of the intentions and emotions of others. According to Janeway's insights, women represent the weak most; however, removed from the exercise of power and finding themselves in subordinate positions, they have developed this unexpected quality, which has a survival value. In this sense, the weak may be more powerful than imagined and possess generally devalued knowledge.

In addition, amongst the forms of resistance illustrated, there is also that expressed by Lomama, the uncle of Isookanga, who presents an ecological vision in opposition to the protagonist. Lomama's perspective originates in participation across species, representing an alternative to predatory globalisation (West-Pavlov 2017). Having found the skin of a leopard half-eaten by warthogs and interpreted it as a sign of dramatic environmental upheaval, the resolute chief of the village travels to Kinshasa to confront the authorities and prove to them the catastrophic alteration of the ecosystem affecting his environment. This event is more relevant still, considering that the leopard symbolises traditional leadership and political power in Central Africa. Indeed, being a nocturnal hunter, the animal belongs to the realms of life and death and is associated with the supernatural. Behind the ecological alteration identified by Lomama, there is a holistic upheaval in which no distinction between nature and culture is contemplated. However, the wisdom and knowledge of the chief are both useless in the urban global context, and his move is merely naïve as the solution to such a problem cannot be obtained from the same actors who profit from it.

Within geography, Hughes (2020) highlights that conventional conceptualisations consider resistance in opposition to a particular configuration of power relations, and points out the harnessing of emerging resistant forces into predetermined forms. This interest in the emergence of such forces leads her to consider actions that do not adhere to expected forms of resistance. While previous research has considered intention as a founding principle of

resistance (Pile 1997), Hughes recognises its role but does not consider intention to be a prerequisite. Instead, being a subject crossed by multiple and contrasting forces, she focuses on the dimension of the incoherent and sees intentionality as an emerging relation in becoming. The protagonist is permeated by this dimension of incoherence and apparent contradictoriness, which is nothing other than the ability to relate to events and to practise change within the leeway allowed.

Isookanga's escape diagram differs from the illustrated forms of counterattack against established power and from the forms of resilience expressed by the street children, their daily practices, and the spread of informal activities. Indeed, all the forms of urban marginality investigated through the lines of flight are aimed at survival. Contrastingly, primarily driven by desire, Isookanga's form of resistance escapes power in a constant becoming, transforming itself along with the situation, believing in and producing change. This unusual protagonist outlines a singular line of flight from an unescapable algorithm, stated in the title and defined with increasing clarity throughout the novel: it is the 'algorithm Congo Inc.', a colonial formula that goes beyond colonialism itself, revealing the colonial matrix of power.

> The algorithm Congo Inc. had been created at the moment that Africa was being chopped up in Berlin between November 1884 and February 1885. Under Leopold II's sharecropping, they hastily developed it so they could supply the whole world with rubber from the equator, which the industrial era wouldn't have expanded as rapidly as it needed to at the time. Subsequently, its contribution to the First World War effort had been crucial, even if that war—most of it—could have been fought on horseback, without Congo, even if things had changed since the Germans had further developed synthetic rubber in 1914. The involvement of Congo Inc. in the Second World War proved decisive. The final point had come with the concept of putting the uranium of Shinkolobwe at the disposal of the United States of America, which destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki once and for all, launching the theory of nuclear deterrence at the same time, and for all time. It contributed vastly to the devastation of Vietnam by allowing the Bell UH1-Huey helicopters, sides gaping wide, to spit millions of sprays of the copper from Likasi and Kolwezi from high in the sky over towns and countryside from Danang to Hanoi, via Huế, Vinh, Lao Cai, Lang Son, and the port of Haiphong. During the so-called Cold War, the algorithm remained red-hot. The fuel that guaranteed proper functioning could also be made

> up of men. Warriors such as the Ngwaka, Mbunza, Luba, Basakata, and Lokele of Mobutu Sese Seko, like spearheads on Africa's battlefields, went to shed their blood from Biafra to Aouzou, passing through the Front Line—in front of Angola and Cuba—through Rwanda on the Byumba end in 1990. Disposable humans could also participate in the dirty work and in coups d'état. Loyal to Bismarck's testament, Congo Inc. more recently had been appointed as the accredited supplier of internationalism, responsible for the delivery of strategic minerals for the conquest of space, the manufacturing of sophisticated armaments, the oil industry, and the production of high-tech telecommunications material. (Bofane 2018, pp. 174-175)

While coloniality continuously restratifies in new historical and political assemblages, Isookanga evades power actualisation by practising residual leeway. Therefore, not only is his change of vision a turning point in the story, but it also releases the decolonial charge of the novel. The tugboat leaves the dystopia of globalisation, localised in the city centre and performed through the evocation of trafficking, exploitation, and war, and heads towards the forest and a new possibility. This possibility remains unexpressed: on the one hand, it may be a utopian journey; on the other, nothing excludes its feasibility. Indeed, in creating a fictionable world, fictional matter also creates another possible world. This establishes a relation between fictional and factual, which may be more productively explored by investigating their reciprocal influence rather than their opposition. Bofane creates space to conceive what would not have been envisaged before, and opens conceptual possibilities previously unimagined. By overturning the initial idea of the city as a necessary place of power, the neutrality of the concept is deconstructed. The narrative provokes a critical reconsideration of the city, building on its role as a colonial control tool (Woods, 2023) and relocating it within a neoliberal and neocolonial system. Moreover, in this reverse journey, the forest and river take shape again as significant narrative elements. Going up river, Isookanga retraces the colonial route backwards. However, his return is not to the same origins; instead, Bofane overcomes the city-forest and modernity-tradition dichotomies by alluding to difference and becoming and creating the possibility of redemption rather than a mere return to before.

Recalling Andrew Robinson and Simon Tormey's (2010) study on Deleuze, postcolonialism, and the subaltern condition, Lorna Burns and Birgit Kaiser (2012) note that subaltern is a

subject of desire which follows minor lines of becoming by employing rhizomatic strategies and escaping the striations of power. The marginal may exert agency, create counter-actualisation, and practise affirmative forces rather than generating opposition. According to the authors, "literature can play the imagining of differential futures specific to but not specified by the colonial past that engendered them" and suggest a "becoming-postcolonial beyond the oppositional politics of anti-colonial discourse" (Burns and Kaiser 2012, pp. 12-13). Within the intricacies of the nefarious necropolitics that characterise urban life in contemporary Congo, Bofane's writing explores symptoms "to assess the chance of health", following what Deleuze recognises as a writer's ability to diagnose the world and work with the symptoms (Deleuze 1998, p. 3). In doing so, the text produces effects that may provoke changes in perspective and connect to other social or political forces to contrast the negative effects of power and release its revolutionary force.

4.8.2. Decolonial style

As mentioned above, I include style in the discourse on resistance and discuss it in this second part. Indeed, the ability of writers to diagnose the world may be further explored by considering the role of style and its fusion with content. Nina Williams (2021) considers style as a practice that operates aside from recognition and precedes existing referents of expression. For this reason, style should be re-theorised as a transformative force that is disruptive and differentiating, and can change the order of things. In this section, I reflect on the novel's contribution in offering the possibility of imagining differently and then thinking differently about urban marginality. For this purpose, I examine the stylistic use that the author makes of exploitation and globalisation, two interrelated and omnipresent themes in the narrative which the author treats through humour.

Bofane introduces the exploitation of the subsoil, recalling the presence of China in Africa through the character of Zhang Xia, a former worker in a Chinese mining extraction company. Chinese companies have become established in several African countries, involved in mining, building, trade, and services, particularly in the last two decades (Jackson et al. 2020; Xiaoyang 2016; Van Dijk 2009; Michel and Beuret 2008; Kernen 2007). This is one outcome of the reorganisation of the global order after decolonisation and the decline of the sovereignty

of nation-states (Hardt and Negri 2000). In Katanga, Chinese presence has been significant since 2007, when an important contract was signed based on raw materials in return for infrastructure. However, after the global financial crisis of 2008, a collapse in copper prices caused the closure of construction sites and projects, and many workers were left out of work (Braeckman 2009). Ironically, Bofane chooses a marginal person to represent the significant Chinese presence in Africa; indeed, Zhang Xia is himself a victim of globalisation as a former worker now reduced to a street vendor. Even more ironically, it is Zhang Xia who eventually gives the protagonist the CD-ROM with the map of resources and, therefore, the access key to imagine a future different from the one planned.

The association of exploitation and globalisation is also manifested through Raging Trade, the online video game in which players fight for control of Gondanavaland; this clearly references Gondawana, the original supercontinent. The game offers a visionary perspective on the possible aftermath of globalisation by visualising a homogeneous land where unscrupulous actors fight to profit from its resources. As Mapangou (2019) points out in his analysis of Bofane's novel, specifically referring to Raging Trade, globalisation is intended "as a playful space which creates poor people who also are players" (ibid., pp. 46-48). Through this narrative device, the author presents a world dominated by a paroxysmal consumer society, where the "market colonises the space between individuals" and transforms consumers into commodities (Bauman 2008, pp. 16-17). Raging Trade appears recurrently, punctuating the plot. Focusing on the function of the video game, Gilbert Shang Ndi (2020) identifies the role of the hypertextual dimension of the novel. By analysing the relevance of technology in writing and relating it to the recurrent references to war, minerals, and globalisation, Ndi defines what he calls a "Coltan novel". This refers to the procedure "of factoring the product of high-tech in a novel" through the fusion of theme and style. Congo is transformed into a "stylistic device": as an object of foreign projects, the country's legacy is being the prototype space of a neoliberal economy (ibid., pp. 57-59). Although Ndi's essay explores the significance of technology and virtual communication, the reflection on the hypertextual may be extended to the entire structure of the novel, as it leads to a rich apparatus of situations, individual stories and facts linked by unexpected connections. Not only is "Coltan novel" an interesting concept that identifies a primary characteristic in the novel's structure, but it also

highlights the nexus between marginality, war, exploitation, and globalisation, which Bofane constantly reasserts through his writing.

The subtle cynicism and impactful sarcasm in Bofane's writing contribute to the fusion of theme and style evoked by Ndi. Wisely and skilfully used by the author, sarcasm and cynicism become surgical tools to explain power relations and the necessary grammar for a language of counter-power. They are used powerfully, for example, to investigate and ridicule the white woman's sense of guilt during the sex scene between the Belgian anthropologist and Isookanga; in the explication of the 'algorithm Congo Inc.' by which the author connects colonialism to globalisation in the country's mineral fuelled conflicts; and to describe the cycle of violence in Bizimungu's death scene – grotesque, cruel, and obscene at once. The effect is a language that refuses rhetoric and victimisation, preferring a more active approach to rereading past and present facts. Working on Bofane's "carnivalesque postcolonial state", Kaline Kuenen (2018) recalls Mbembe's conception of 'obscene' and 'grotesque' as intrinsic qualities of all systems of domination due to the tendency of the state to dramatise its importance to deliver an alternative version of reality (Mbembe, 2001). Kuenen investigates irony and parody and identifies the mechanism of inversion, considering it a way to overturn official and humanistic values in the characters. However, being a constant in the writing and not concerning characters exclusively, inversion deserves further consideration. Indeed, overturning can be considered a technique the author uses to resolve the dichotomies imposed on the African world and to modify the discourse on Africa by deconstructing common places and creating alternative perspectives. Finally, I would like to mention the author's stylistic use of language, which recalls the urban soundscape of Kinshasa through the discreet but constant use of Lingala, mainly spoken by street children. Lingala flows through the city's streets and particularly characterises the market area, where it is shouted by street vendors. Among the various voices are those of the water sellers, repeating "Mayi yango! Eau pire!". Bofane plays with the language, in this case transcribing the French pronunciation deliberately uncorrected in order to evoke the real Congolese pronunciation of the French word *pure,* while at the same time creating a *jeu de mot* with the French word *pire*, which means 'worst'.

As Deleuze (1998) suggests, style can be a liberating force that allows us to escape power structures and repressive norms. It is by working on a register of humour, ironic or sarcastic, which flows between form and content that Bofane creates his style. The author ridicules market mechanisms and international politics, or exaggerates situations of oppression and atrocities; he takes them to the point of collapse, causing their explosion grotesquely or reversing the order of discourse and generating unpredictable outcomes. Bofane's writing is a practice of truth-telling through humour, often polemic, where the humour is used to resist dominant truths and becomes a medium to transform experiences of oppression into awareness, letting the "true nature of the life of the city" emerge (Brigstocke 2014, p. 123). In *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament*, style merges with content and concurs to deliver a diverse vision of the capital and its urban and extra-urban dynamics. Indeed, structure and form may be powerful resistance tools which should not be ignored (Noxolo and Preziuso 2013), and they release an important share of the novel's decolonial potential. Ultimately, this potential has to do with the capacity to possibilise, that is, to create space for the unthought.

4.9. Re-mapping Kinshasa

This chapter ends by discussing the last composition [Fig. 3] and the role of collage in the analysis. As I have previously pointed out, engaging with collage is part of the analysis, due to a need to visually explore features and aspects extracted from the literary text. All collages originate from the lines of flight, often proceeding simultaneously due to the migration of visual fragments from one composition to another. I have chosen to close the chapter with this collage because most of the elements discussed in the analysis of urban marginality in Kinshasa converge, generating an atmosphere dense with movement, overlapping, and stratifications.

Visualisation has been a further attempt to create connections, following a Deleuzian and Guattarian approach through movements of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. The key Deleuzian question 'What can I do?' has been applied not only to the elements that came

from the novel but also to those that originated from the active dismantling reading and the analysis through the lines of flight. Indeed, the open form of the collage has tried to explore

Fig. 3 – *Plan de la ville de Kinshasa* [bottom middle photo of boy courtesy Jacques Kabongo; other photos by the author]

this matter visually through further rhizomatic directions. Moreover, as I have underlined in the cases of the previous collages, this practice contains traces of Derridian thought. Indeed, collage is a figure of *différance*, which leaves open the process of signification in a perpetual movement of post-positioning. As in all the other compositions within this work, I consider this collage part of a process more than a result and potentially in becoming. It reflects a non-representational perspective, highlighting the recognition and overcoming of the limits of representation.

The materials used come from photographic and cartographic sources. The composition is centred on the city and marginality, and touches upon aspects such as informal activities, housing, urban expansion, and the villagisation of the outskirts of Kinshasa. Along with this, the multiform and surreal nature of the collage allows the overlapping of forest and river, simultaneously displaying present and past elements. The alterations of images realised through the isolation of fragments and visual effects, such as transparencies and overlapping, make further connections between elements possible. For instance, while the forest is oppositional to the city in the imagery, it forms part of the city in the collage and invades the entire visual field and everyday life. In the same way, the field of view is crossed by the river, which reveals itself as an element of both the present and the colonial past. A further aspect of creating a collage is the manipulation of cartographical fragments, coming from the disassemblage of a 1:10,000 topographic map of the city centre of Kinshasa. Once the map had been disassembled, certain places were selected from the novel and the sites frequented by street children, as described by De Boeck. These places were then put together to reassemble a surreal map of the Democratic Republic of Congo. On the one hand, the new map expresses the country's urban polarisation, which reflects the convergence of national and international tensions in the capital. On the other hand, this hybrid cartography is made exclusively from fragments of places that come from the analysis, and which are places of marginality despite being parts of the city centre.

The collage has been realised both analogically and digitally. The aforementioned map occupies the centre and is surrounded by other components. Above all, there is the forest, which covers almost the entire composition, overlapping other features. Informal activities carried out by the inhabitants surround the map, having been isolated from their original

contexts. These are visual examples of everyday practices typical of the urban environment. In the bottom section of the collage, the Congo River flows, the statue of Leopold II appearing to float on its waters; his is an emblematic colonial figure, which makes this natural element a powerful connector between the present and past. Housing, urban expansion, children, war, and mineral exploitation also appear, contributing to the density of themes and atmosphere through the sense of suspension of a poised and funambulist city. Collage allows an active visualisation by associating the elements and their position; it creates connections and provokes emotions and affects. Moreover, it makes evident the disjunctive synthesis described by Deleuze and Guattari (2004; 2017); this process affirms and creatively connects differences rather than denies them through integration or structures of meaning. For Deleuze and Guattari, disjunctive synthesis is how becoming operates, also in knowledge, a process anything but linear.

The contribution of collage to geographical analysis and discourse concerns an array of possibilities: that of deconstructing and reconstructing an image of the city through 'pieces' of everyday life, first decontextualised and then inserted into a new context; the possible value of visual effects, manipulation, and alteration of images in creating a surreal atmosphere which takes into account the open-ended nature of place; the simultaneity of past and present; the fusion of ordinary and extraordinary dimensions; and the exploration of space-time through fractures in continuity and linearity. Collage emphasises places through an apparent lack of meaning, rather than explaining them by assumed meanings. Doing that challenges the observer, inviting a constant activity of decoding, association, resignifying, and exploration. Above all, in this absence of meaning, a space is open for a sense to emerge. My analysis attempts to contribute to this emergence by observing the different texts beneath the city (Mattheis and Gurr 2022) and looking inside "the breach opened in epistemology by creative culture" (Ceralols and Luna 2017, p. 33 [translation mine]).

4.10. Conclusion

The chapter has explored urban marginality in Kinshasa through the novel *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament* and collage. It adopted an approach inspired by Derrida's notion of

textuality and Deleuzian active dismantling reading, going beyond the novel through lines of flight and proceeding by social scientific literature and collage. I first introduced the story and characters, from which I extracted the lines of flight related to marginality; then, I focused on the forest and Congo River, considered to be essential components in the novel and within Congolese imagery. To investigate postcolonial marginality, I identified three lines of flight in urban space, street children, and informal activities. Starting from specific exit points in the literary text, the lines of flight extend and connect the narrative materials with the related social scientific literature, and expand visually through collage. The selection of images and the reconfiguration of fragments participate entirely in the analytical process, activating sensory, emotional, affective, and imaginative dimensions.

After exploring marginality from different angles, the chapter considered the possible forms of resistance. Following the Deleuzian reinterpretation of Foucault's concept of diagram, I intend resistance as a desiring and productive force and associate it with the protagonist. I related this perspective to Kinshasa's urban space, street children, and informal activities. Then, I focused on the novel's decolonial potential as a further form of resistance, including style in the discourse; indeed, Bofane transforms style into a powerful resistance tool through irony and sarcasm. The chapter also discussed collage in terms of composition and procedure. Although the compositions appear in specific sections, the practice of collage participates in the entire analytical process, fuelling the exploration through the lines of flight and reflection on the novel itself through connections of non-linear order.

CHAPTER 5

Unthought Lisbon: imperial fiction and literary truth

5.1. Overview: postcolonial discomfort

This chapter analyses a different case of urban marginality in the postcolonial city. Indeed, while street children and informal activities are forms of marginality ascribable to the socioeconomic dimension, the urban marginality analysed here is psychological and existential. Marginality is a multiscale concept that can assume different forms, from the most intrinsically individual to the socially codified. This makes it a complex and nuanced issue that requires unpacking (Chappatte 2015; Déry et al. 2012). The progressive detachment from the city reveals the singular form of marginalisation that constitutes the core of this analysis and is a complex condition to identify. Moreover, this condition risks being misunderstood as an individual and isolated fact disconnected from the social and political background. Exploring the discomfort transmitted by the novel and delving into the colonial imagery evoked by the literary writing, this chapter highlights the profound connection between the condition of extraneousness and the insane relationship with the city experienced by the narrator, as well as the unrooted and dense social and cultural ramifications of colonialism, of which colonial war is the acme. Therefore, although starting from a subjective condition, the analysis goes beyond it, revealing a broader cultural dimension that fuels the individual marginalisation process. Finally, I will focus on resistance, considering the possibility it has to take shape within this singular form of marginality.

While the novel alludes to urban marginality, recalling family habits, rituals, and political practices, the contemporary reflections of the Portuguese philosopher, essayist, and literary and film critic Eduardo Lourenço (2006; 2019) allow me to delve deeper into the aforementioned aspects. Lourenço is an eclectic humanist whose largely unpublished "labyrinthic", "fragmentary", and "complex" production, spanning from the 1950s to his

death in 2021, has been defined as “a triumph … of ‘indiscipline’, in a world … of ‘specialisation’” (Vecchi 2021). Although this figure is not ascribable to the postcolonial current, Lourenço may be considered a precursor of the postcolonial studies for his acute and severe analysis of Portuguese colonialism carried on during and after the colonial time; in this sense, he embodies one of the different ways of being postcolonial (Sidaway 2000). The choice of this philosopher is justified by the fact that not only do Lourenço’s essays investigate the role of Portuguese cultural background and the process of mythification of national history, but novels are also central to his analysis; indeed, they display the images that forged the nation (Vecchi and Russo 2019). For these reasons, it is beneficial to reconsider this humanist, especially within Anglophone geography, where, although the postcolonial debate is fervent, it does not frequently emerge outside of the former British dominions. Finally, working on a visual exploration of these issues, the practice of collage contributes methodologically to exploring atmospheres, fragments of memories, and images delivered by the literary text and social scientific literature. I incorporate the collage process into the analysis, and try to write about a practice that, to a certain extent, I imagined as a supplement and an alternative to social scientific writing. The novel overflows discursively and visually through the lines of flight, and different textualities merge into other planes of composition, triggering a process of decontextualisation and recontextualisation.

This investigation is inspired by António Lobo Antunes’ novel *The Land at the End of the World* (2012), set in Lisbon during the Portuguese colonial war against Angola. Together with the novels *Elephant Memory* and *Knowledge of Hell,* the book is part of a trilogy on the Angolan colonial war, published in Portugal between 1979 and 1980. Despite its year of publication in Portugal being the same as *Elephant Memory* (1979), *The Land at the End of the World* was the first to be written; therefore, it may be considered the first book by the author and the one chronologically closest to the experience of the war – an experience that returns in almost all the vast production of Lobo Antunes. I chose this novel because it is set in Lisbon, and there is a strong feeling concerning the city. This is despite the Portuguese capital being almost absent, both in the writing and due to the dissolution of the relationship between the subject and the native place. Lisbon is a place of loss, where no real return is possible after the war, and the city can only be glimpsed through difference, in contrast to Angola, or through a lack of relationship with the urban space. Indeed, displacement and

place alterations, along with the complexities of relations, hybridism, and ambivalence, are themes that recur in António Lobo Antunes' production (Correia Gil 2011).

Although Lisbon is the place of enunciation, the fictional conversation between the narrator and a woman who he met in a café at night is characterised by continuous digressions that refer to the protagonist's experiences of the colonial war. The narrator's detachment from his native city originates precisely from this experience, embodying the war's trauma and disdain for his motherland. The story is fragmented within this conversation, which turns out to be exclusively fictional. Indeed, the narrative is organised in a long monologue, made up of leaps and shifts in time and space, juxtapositions, overlapping, contrasts, and ellipses. This incoherent communication splits the image of Lisbon into multiple fragments, belonging to both the past and the present, and mixed with those of Angola. While examining the role of the war in this particular process of marginalisation from the city, the analysis focuses on more immaterial traits of colonial power, such as the colonial dimension of knowledge, investigating how it intervenes. Although intangible, this dimension is the basis that fuels colonialism in a narrow sense, and it is recurrent throughout the novel, embodied by family and state. Indeed, while the novel establishes a nexus between colonialism, the Angolan war and the protagonist's discomfort in the present, it also intertwines a subtle network of implications, the nature of which is more domestic and apparently innocuous. Nonetheless, these implications constitute the robust substratum that made such an anachronistic war possible, leading to the individual trauma evoked by the novel and to the collective collapse generated by history.

As in the previous chapter, I make methodological use of the Deleuzian conceptual tool of the lines of flight to identify the aspects of the narrative matter that I wish to deepen or expand. At the same time, I visually explore them through the collages realised along with the reading of Lourenço's essays. This practice has formed part of the analysis since the beginning, interacting with Lobo Antunes' fragmented writing, made up of atmospheres and shreds of images, and the social scientific sources on Portuguese colonialism. Collage's partial, non-linear, and multivocal nature (Butler-Kisber 2008; 2019) intertwined with the analysis generated connections and elicitations. The latter suggest some of the aspects considered within the lines of flight; connections, in contrast, followed the course of the

analysis in written form or opened up directions not necessarily made explicit or considered by the text. The practice of collage was not aimed at finishing a product, but rather at observing and listening to the connections and nuances the process offers. The choice to locate all of these visual compositions at specific points in the writing was uniquely due to the need to present them within the chapter and contribute to explaining their interaction with the writing. The collages were not designed with a precise place in mind; instead, they developed through changes and exchanges, and composition and decomposition throughout the analytical process.

During the analysis, there were numerous interactions between the visual elements, both those chosen and those discarded. These elements have been partly disseminated throughout this chapter to accompany the writing through open visual associations. Although they did not participate directly in the composition of the collages, their role is intended to be neither documentary nor illustrative. Instead, as ideas, decisions, and doubts arose from these visual encounters, I have chosen to use them, opening up the possibility of interacting with the writing in an intentionally not entirely driven or subjective way. This is also an attempt to circumscribe the tension between collage and writing. Collage challenges the dichotomy of the intellect; working with the dimensions of randomness, ambiguity, contradiction, practising juxtaposition, the unsaid, contrast, and *différance* within a thought that is nevertheless intended to be social scientific, it invites us to consider the limits of writing. Therefore, while social scientific obligations require an explanation of the collages as part of the analysis, the dissemination of these isolated fragments intends to experiment with possible visual resonances without any interpretation, procedural description or captions. In doing so, I explore other possible ways of understanding beyond the "disciplined status quo", following the path traced by those geohumanities that do not believe there is a correct or wrong way to practise geography (Springer 2017, p. 15).

To examine the condition of marginality and detachment of the narrator from the city, it is analytically possible to distinguish the Lisbon of the past from that of the present. Between these two moments is the time of Angola and the colonial war. This seminal two-year period corresponds to the time in which the narrator participated in the war against the Angolan liberation movement and is evoked through images of African majesty alternated with

reminiscences of the atrocities of the conflict. While memories of the war, although fragmented and disjunct, convey episodes or facts, the matter regarding Lisbon, both before and after the experiences of the colonial war, is more ephemeral, primarily delivered through impressive literary atmospheres. The conceptual tool of atmosphere, already explored within non-representational geography (Anderson 2009; Stewart 2011; Vannini 2015b; Bille and Simonsen 2021; Anderson and Ash 2015), is considered a threshold to access these more intangible aspects. On the one hand, they refer to a vision of Lisbon before the war, implying the dimension of colonial collective imagery; on the other, these aspects concern the existential discomfort of the protagonist in the present, which translates to an altered relationship with urban places. The three lines of flight considered here – the detachment from Lisbon, the colonial dimension of knowledge, and the war in Angola – are connected by relations with representation and imagery, which I will attempt to highlight. Moreover, although they are considered individually throughout the chapter due to social scientific writing being an analytical tool, they merge into the collages. Therefore, they are extracted from the previous assemblage of the novel and their relationships are investigated, before again being merged into the assemblage created by the collage in its open and non-linear traces of sense.

Starting from the novel, I identify literary fragments related to the relationship with the city before and after the Angolan experience. I use these excerpts as exit points to extend line of flights beyond the novel and as connecting points to retain the link with the literary text during the rhizomatic exploration. Analysis originates from this basis and develops through the lines of flight, combining different planes of meaning. The main line of flight accounts for urban marginalisation by focusing on the narrator's altered relationship with Lisbon and the progressive dissociation between the subject and his native place. This condition embodies complex and multiple aspects, ranging from the sense of guilt and betrayal felt, the contempt and anger for one's country and origins, to the feeling of loss and exhaustion. Around this revolve the other two lines of flight, the colonial dimension of knowledge and the colonial war, both implications of the previous one. Therefore, the chapter triggers a dialogue between the novel and the critical discourse of Eduardo Lourenço on Portuguese colonial imagery, and illustrates the main characteristics of the Angolan conflict along with the peculiarities of the Portuguese process of decolonisation. The visual component of the

analysis is oriented towards these aspects and their ramifications. In particular, it explores the pervasiveness of colonialism, its capacity, and its forms of continuing, through which the individual and collective dimensions may be reconnected. While combining fragments concerning the war and the narrative matter, the collage opens up a broader dimension, creating space to consider the relationship between colonialism and the dissolution of topophilia, in the direction of the affective sense of place clarified by Yi-Fu Tuan (1974).

To illustrate this specific form of urban marginalisation, I start with a selection of excerpts which do not follow the narrative order but are functional to the discussion. This preliminary textual patchwork is the basis for building the discourse around the lines of flight mentioned above. I do this by interacting the fragments from the novel with the social scientific literature on the one hand, and by further exploring the issue visually through collage on the other. The aim is to create a dialogue between textual images and visual conceptualisations, working with the fragments of figures that emerge from the narrative and the thoughts and connections that may originate from the collage. The selected excerpts first state the change in the subject's relationship with urban space. Indeed, the aspect that I intend to highlight is precisely the emotional disconnection and detachment from the place of origin. This estrangement concerns the space of the city and the apartment, both of which are fragmentarily mentioned in the novel. I consider this detachment as a spatial manifestation of the trauma triggered by the war in Angola. In turn, estrangement and alienation generated by trauma are accentuated by the awareness of the illusory nature and deception on which everything that preceded the war was grounded, namely the colonial imagery to which the narrator's family adhered. A second typology of excerpts from the novel sheds light on this passage. Although the collages created are inherent to the lines of flight of the colonial cultural dimension and the war in Angola, the practice of collage participated in the entire analytical process. That is to say, the investigation of detachment through trauma and the concept of exhaustion occurred alongside the visual exploration of war and colonial imagery. The levels of rationalisation and serendipity, association, and intuition operated together in the analysis, and it is exclusively the need for organisation of the material, explanation, and writing that requires separation and articulation.

I first investigate urban marginalisation by considering Edward Relph's (1976a) seminal idea of placelessness and discussing the necessity of other conceptual tools for exploring this form of alienation. I then briefly return to atmosphere before moving on to trauma and exhaustion. Subsequently, I explore its implications through the other two lines of flight, the colonial dimension of knowledge and the war in Angola. This may partly account for the plurality of aspects that intervene in relations with places. Thus, on the one hand, marginalisation is considered as an outcome of a plurality of processes, facts, and events; on the other, it is a trace through which to interrogate that plurality as an already happened writing, to remain with Derrida. At the same time, trauma acts as a device which, while producing detachment, also generates the conditions for awareness. This, though, does not detract from but instead accentuates the condition of marginality and alienation in the city.

5.2. First line of flight: urban detachment

The condition of urban detachment has been explored within the Frankfurt School through alienation, a concept associated with the functioning of capitalist society. Expanding Marx's idea of alienation as a separation between human beings and the products of their work, the Frankfurt School discusses the role of the rationality-modernity paradigm, which, from an instrument of liberation, became an instrument of accumulation and control (Horkheimer and Adorno 2010) and the transformation of the modern individual into a passive consumer of material and cultural products, as well as a disconnected and estranged subject (Debord 2002). Social life is reduced to an experience dominated and mediated by objects and their exchange value, and while life becomes a spectacle, "consciousness is determined at the point of consumption" (Binnie et al. 2007, p. 515). Moreover, alienation returns in the figure of the *flâneur*, a critical and detached subject who walks through the city and its commodification. The *flâneur* contemplates and is fascinated by the fragmented urban scenario but resists homologation. Thus, he is both a victim and a model of resistance to alienation (Benjamin 2010a).

The urban marginality analysed in this chapter is a radical detachment, due to a refusal towards one's own city and what it represents. Although it is possible to see a form of

alienation in this condition, and its causes are not foreign to capitalism, they are not directly connected to it and the city's transformation but rather to a change that occurred in the subject. I start my analysis by testing the concepts of placelessness and topophobia (Relph 1976a; 1976b), as they are the primary geographical conceptual tools for exploring a negative sense of place, and I recognise in these tools some limits for investigating postcolonial urban marginality. Indeed, postcolonial urban marginality is a multidimensional concept that crosses different spaces and times and implies multiple emotions. For this reason, I turn to the idea of space as an assemblage (Dovey 2016; 2020) and explore detachment through trauma and exhaustion.

5.2.1. From placelessness to atmosphere

The different levels that my analysis attempts to identify through the lines of flight are intertwined in the narrative matter of the novel. I first opt for a selection of textual fragments; they are exit points which, in testifying to the condition of detachment, highlight the constant shift from the urban space to that of the apartment until reaching a less visible space that we could call existential. I do this analytically to account for what I frame as the spatial manifestation of trauma, which I try to investigate by proceeding backwards, from the altered and multiscalar relationship with space to the implications that the process of marginalisation carries within itself. I discuss Relph's idea of placelessness and topophobia, which first identified a negative sense of place, non-involvement, and outsideness, to consider to what extent they could be useful analytical tools concerning the urban marginality analysed here. Although topophobia focuses specifically on the negative responses of a subject to place, it is still antinomic and insufficient to consider the complexity of the case analysed. Indeed, I would like to underline the simultaneity of these different spaces, or rather the intrinsic plurality of space (Massey 2005), which Lobo Antunes' writing offers. Therefore, the textual analysis attempts to isolate urban marginality and the other two lines of flight from the literary assemblage and reconfigure them through social scientific discourse, while collage contributes to the analysis visually.

> The halo of light cast by the street-lamps resembled the smoky aureoles above the saints in church paintings, and, as I stared into the desert, wilting gloom that was gradually fading in an improbable dawn, I thought, So this is Lisbon, and I felt the same incredulous disappointment

as when I had visited the house in Nelas many years later, and had found, instead of vast, echoing halls filled by the epic breath of childhood, only small, banal rooms. Sitting on the back seat of the taxi … I was trying desperately to recognise my city through those windows covered in pimples of water that slid down the glass … My grandiose memory of a glittering capital city full of movement and mystery straight out of John Dos Passos, which I had been fervently nurturing for a whole year in the sand of Angola, shrank back in shame before those suburban houses in which low-ranking clerks lay snoring amid cheap silver trays and crocheted table linen. (Lobo Antunes 2012, pp. 99-100)

Do you realise that I live in a Pompei of buildings under construction, of walls, beams, growing piles of rubble, abandoned cranes, piles of sand, and cement mixers like round, rusty stomachs? In a few hours' time, workmen wearing hard hats will start hammering away at these ruins perched on future window frames, pneumatic drills will bite into the concrete with stubborn rage, the plumbers will open up networks of arteries in the stiff flesh of the houses. I live in a dead world, with no smells … I live in a world of dust, stone, and trash, mainly trash, trash from the construction sites, trash from the clandestine slums being built, trash from the somersaulting bits of paper that chase each other along the fences and the gutters, blown about by a non-existent breath. (Ibid., p. 198)

As I stood there, still in uniform, with a bag full of books on one shoulder and another full of clothes in my hand, Lisbon presented me with the opaque face of an insurmountable backdrop, smooth, hostile, vertical, with no windows opening onto cosy future nests on which I could soothe my eyes thirsty for repose. The traffic majestically circles to Rotunda da Encarnação with a purely mechanical indifference that excludes me, the faces in the streets slip past me, utterly oblivious, and there is something in their attitude that reminds me of the geometric inertia of corpses. My green-eyed daughter doubtless considers me an undesirable stranger whose narrow, superfluous body has taken its place beside her mother in bed. My friend's lives, which have grown used to going on without me in my absence, will find it hard to accommodate this newly resuscitated, disoriented Lazarus, who finds it painfully difficult to relearn sounds and the use of certain objects. I had grown too accustomed to the silence and solitude of Angola, and it seemed to me unimaginable that the grass and the scrub would not push up through the tarmac on the avenues with their long, green fingers honed by the first rain. (Ibid., p. 216)

Concerning Lobo Antunes' literary Lisbon, Cristiana Sassetti (2004) spoke of a dystopian vision of the city. The capital is depersonalised, and while its monumental features erode, its provincial connotations emerge. The push for urban expansion and densification, which recurs in the novel through the images of the buildings under construction around the narrator's apartment, accentuates the sense of disorientation and alienation. Urban space and the present are often invaded by situations and places from Angola and the past. It is a fragmented space where different places can overlap and merge in various combinations. Moreover, such a blend can concern the internal spaces of the apartment, as well as more intimate mental, psychological, or existential spaces, whose inextricability is constantly reaffirmed by writing. Technically, this specific condition, which I consider to be a form of urban marginality, may be recognised as a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder. Indeed, the long Portuguese colonial war, in addition to the profound wounds inflicted on the Angolans, also had a heavy impact on the physical and psychological conditions of Portuguese war veterans, and only recently have studies on the consequences of that conflict been oriented in this direction (Becker and Quartilho 2021). However, this medical lens would contribute little to the cultural-geographical reading I intend to offer on this form of postcolonial urban marginality.

To frame geographically the condition of detachment transmitted by a disenchanted and sometimes cynical vision of the city, I first resort to the idea of placelessness developed by Relph (1976a), attempting to mould it to my case and see to what extent it can, in some way, contribute to the analysis. Grounded in phenomenology, placelessness attempted to identify and define terminologically a sense of place characterised by the inauthenticity of the relationship and the condition of the outsideness of the subject. Placelessness dates back to the era of humanistic geography, making it almost contemporaneous with the concept of topophilia developed by Yi-Fu Tuan (1974), which constitutes, in a certain sense, a possible counterpart. Without going into the question of terminological adequacy (can we indeed conceive of the absence of place?), the idea of placelessness merits consideration of the possibility of non-involvement with places. Throughout subsequent geographical phases, the concept of placelessness has been subjected to criticisms, which refer primarily to essentialism and the dualistic approach on which the idea is founded, such as the opposition of place and placelessness, or insideness and outsideness (Seamon and Sowers 2008;

Freestone and Liu 2016). Beyond this, the limitations of the applicability of placelessness to the case analysed here concern Relph's almost exclusive association between the interrelated categories of placelessness, outsideness, and inauthenticity, together with modernity, technology, mass culture, standardisation, and decision-making centralisation.

The incumbency of modernity delivered by the novel, embodied by the reproduction of the buildings and the densification of a city under construction, does not seem to be the central issue of detachment, despite the fact that they participate in the condition of extraneousness and can be considered an epiphenomenon of capitalism and coloniality. Instead, the core of this separation has to do with trauma, whereas, although it is mentioned by Relph, the unconscious is absent from his first reflection. Nonetheless, in a discussion paper published the same year, placelessness was further articulated by the idea of topophobia (Relph 1976b). Relph uses this term to refer to the negative emotional responses to places whose manifestations may differ. Built on Eric Dardel's (1986) concept of 'geographicity', that is, the prescientific and preanalytical human responses to the world, topophobia points out those experiences which are "repulsive, distasteful and negative" (Relph, 1976b, p. 26). The idea of topophobia seems to come closest to the singularity of the case discussed here, particularly for its openness to the attitudes of those experiencing the spaces rather than the features of these spaces. Nevertheless, like placelessness, topophobia is also structured on a dualistic and antinomic relationship, being the opposite of topophilia and its constellation, which includes, for instance, components such as sense of familiarity or childhood. By using it terminologically, in the next section I keep the word topophobia to define certain atmospheres in the novel.

The contributions of both placelessness and topophobia are only partly appropriate to the nature of the issue examined here. The case of postcolonial urban marginality investigated in this chapter is characterised by multidimensionality that cannot be contained in the reflections mentioned above. This refers, for instance, to a plurality of emotions such as anger, guilt, resentment, nostalgia, horror, desire for revenge, and positive memories, which are not directly related to space but cross rhizomatic paths. Moreover, it is a spatial and temporal multidimensionality; it concerns everything that precedes the Angolan experience and the present, and merges places of war with those of the metropolis before and after the

colonial conflict. Finally, in this process of marginalisation, diverse planes of awareness meet due to the role of trauma, whereas neither placelessness nor topophobia seem to leave room for trauma. This requires combining interpretive keys, which take inspiration to a certain extent from topophobia but move towards an assemblage that can offer a level of conceptualisation appropriate for this particular case.

Therefore, I adopt the perspective proposed by Kim Dovey (2016; 2020), who, recalling Deleuze and Guattari, thinks of place as a multiscalar assemblage. Indeed, Dovey considers place as something which emerges from a plurality of forces, produced by a multiscalar assemblage of parts and processes and shaped by aspects intertwined or folded into the other, which can also be contradictory. Lobo Antunes' writing delivers this complex multidimensionality through dense literary atmospheres, which shuffle not only descriptive elements, reflections, moods, and facts of the past and present, but also fragments of places that belong to realities disconnected in time and space, which the unconscious elaborates and the writing tries to make manifest. The conceptual tool of atmosphere seems adequate for examining the identified lines of flight through novels and collage. Literary atmospheres are the access point to investigating certain implications that detachment can reveal and the link with collage. They allow us to examine detachment in terms of trauma and exhaustion and to investigate the expansion of the other two lines of flight, of which urban marginality is a trace. I realise this expansion also through collage, attempting to create visual atmospheres; indeed, by reconfiguring them, colonial imagery and the Angolan conflict are expanded out of the novel and explored in their ramifications. In this sense, the collage takes on the visual investigation of the two lines of flight that are implications of the detachment from the city and are tracked down backwards, through the loss of the city.

5.2.2. Trauma as a place of resistance

The non-representational tool of atmosphere is particularly appropriate for this analysis as it can refer to both literary and visual components. Atmospheres create a space of intensity in which a series of opposites, such as presence and absence, definite and indefinite, may coexist (Anderson 2009). They animate forms of attachment or detachment, reveal forces and imaginaries (Stewart 2011), highlight the spatial aspects of affects, may generate

"affective resonances" (Vannini 2015b, p. 8), and are relational (Bille and Simonsen 2021). Nonetheless, atmospheres cannot be strongly defined nor easily named precisely due to their indeterminate nature (Anderson and Ash 2015). On the one hand, the intrinsic ephemerality of atmosphere does not smoothly facilitate analysis; on the other, it constitutes a strength as it makes it possible to further methodological practices. Following Anderson and Ash's suggestion to invent new names for atmospheres (ibid.), and recovering some elements of Relph's reflections, I define some of the atmospheres encountered in Lobo Antunes' novel as topohobic. This is because they show with particular intensity the sense of extraneousness, desolation and detachment that runs through the places, projecting this condition onto different levels of scale. These topophobic atmospheres reveal a feeling of anguished non-belonging that goes from the city to one's home, from the places of war to one's own country, until reaching the meanderings of a childhood that was believed to have been uncontaminated. Through the following excerpts from the novel, which are examples of topophobic atmospheres, detachment not only emerges as extraneousness, absence of involvement, and belonging, but it also projects a disturbing alteration on urban and domestic spaces until reaching a psychic dimension. These alterations, sometimes accompanied by the ebbs of the Angolan experience, open a crack to identify an underlying trauma, of which marginality is a spatial manifestation.

> Just as when I leave here, once I've told you this strange story and have, at a camel's pace, drunk the contents of every bottle in sight, I'll find myself outside in the cold …, lonely as an orphan, with my hand in my pockets, watching the sunrise and filled with an anxiety the colour and texture of the cream, an anxiety only heightened by the macabre pallor of the trees … Nothing is alive then, and an indefinable threat begins to grow and draw near, pursuing me, filling my chest, preventing me from breathing freely; the creases in the pillow turn to stone, the furniture bristles with hostility. The houseplants extend parched tentacles to grab me, on the other side of the mirror left-handed objects reject my proffered fingers, my slippers disappear, my bathrobe has ceased to exist, and inside me, stubborn, insistent, painfully slow, is that train crossing Angola, from Nova Lisboa to Luso, filled to overflowing with uniformed men, their weary heads nodding and banging against the windows as they search for that impossibility, sleep. (Lobo Antunes 2012, pp. 46-47)

> I live in Picheleira, behind the Fonte Luminosa, in an apartment with a view of the river, the far side of the estuary, the bridge, and the city at night, like one of those foldout panoramic views for tourists, and whenever I arrive and open the front door and cough, the far end of the corridor returns my cough as an echo and gives me a really odd feeling, you know, as if I were about to meet myself in the blind mirror in the bathroom, where a sad smile awaits me, hanging from my face like a garland worn during a Carnival long since over. (Ibid., p. 105)

> If I open my mailbox, I never find a letter, a circular, even a piece of paper bearing my name to prove that I exist, that I live here, that, in a way, this place belongs to me… there lingers in me the stubborn suspicion that they'll throw me out one day, that when I go into my apartment, I'll find someone else's furniture in there, strange books on the shelves, a child's voice somewhere down the corridor, a man sitting on my sofa and looking up at me, indignant and perplexed. (Ibid., pp. 134-135)

Recalling the Latin etymology of the verb to exist – where *sistere* stands for 'place oneself' or 'occupying a certain place', and *ex-sistere* indicates acting to find a suitable location – Michel Lussault (2009) considers existence as "a permanent spatial action" (ibid., p. 219). This is because of the distance through which human beings practise spatiality, continually redefining their position and condition in the world. In the above textual fragments, the role of space as an 'operator of visibility' (ibid., p. 59) is almost didactic. The condition of marginality reveals itself as a spatial manifestation of trauma by detachment, that is, separation. Indeed, through detachment from the city, it is possible to track down a trauma which, in turn, has a multidimensional nature and may trigger further levels of reading. However, this relation is not just causal; the condition of detachment is transmitted through the juxtaposition of fragments of images, affects, memories, thoughts, and emotions: all factors that create an atmosphere. Starting from this literary nebula, it is possible to identify and explore such a substantial disconnect, pursuing, at the same time, the two lines of flight relating to the Angolan war and the role of Portuguese colonial imagery.

After the experience of the colonial conflict, the narrator cannot modulate distance; the separation from what surrounds him becomes a progressive hiatus, and his relationships are disturbed. The inability or impossibility of being in the world is continually highlighted

spatially. We are faced with a loss of place, which corresponds to his inability to identify with his family again (Cabral 2003), or to relocate himself within his country's historical and cultural discourse. Therefore, the process of marginalisation is accompanied by progressive depersonalisation, expressed in an urban and modern Portuguese present with which the individual is unable to establish a logic of life (ibid.). The continuity with which Angola returns, contaminating the space and time of the narrative through an obsessive presentification, reiterates processes of dislocation that concern both space in a narrow sense and a shift in perspective. This, in particular, leads the narrator to take a different perspective on his country. Dislocation, after all, is one of the elements that characterises the postcolonial narrative within which Lobo Antunes' novel is placed (Carriço Vieira 2003).

> It's odd talking to you about this in Lisbon … in this room from where you can see the river, the lights of Almada and Barreiro, the heavy, phosphorescent blue of the water. So strange that sometimes I wonder if the war really did end or if it's still going on somewhere inside of me, with its disgusting smells of sweat and gunpowder and blood, its dislocated bodies, its waiting coffins. I think that when I die, colonial Africa will come back to meet me and then I will search in vain, in the niche of god Zumbi, for wooden eyes that are no longer there, I will see again the Mangando barracks dissolving in the heat, the blacks from the village in the distance, the sleeve of the landing strip waving mockingly at no one. (Lobo Antunes 2012, p. 180)

> And apartments, at around supper time, lit by the sweetly domestic light of lampshades and by the rectangular phosphorescence of television screens, make me feel hopelessly excluded from thousands of small, comfortable universes of which I would love to be a part … Everything is real apart from the war, which never existed: there were never any colonies, no Fascism, no Salazar, no Tarrafal prison camp, no PIDE, no Revolution, nothing, you understand, the calendars of this country stopped moving so long ago that we've forgotten all about them, meaningless Marches and Aprils rot on the tear-off pages of the wall calendar, with the Sundays in red on the left in a useless column. Luanda is an invented city which I take my leave, and in Mutamba, invented people take invented cars to invented places, where the MPLA is subtly introducing invented political commissars. (Ibid., pp. 213-214)

> Why the hell doesn't anyone talk about this? I'm beginning to think that the one million five hundred thousand men who went to Africa never existed and that I'm just giving you some spiel, the ludicrous plot of a novel, a story invented to touch your heart (Ibid., p. 80)

Moreover, the diffraction and dilation of time and space and the insistent intrusion of Angola testify to a fracture and an impossibility. On the one hand, it is the impossibility of love, which is expressed in the failure of marriage and the sexual impotence that occurred after the war (Cabral 2012); on the other, the impossibility refers to telling the war and is manifested in a fragmented, unstable, and at times violent writing (Siqueira Cardoso Vale 2014). Nevertheless, it is precisely in this writing that a possibility of resistance is identified as an exit from the traumatic repetition (Cabral 2012; Siqueira Cardoso Vale 2014). Specifically, a form of resistance to the impossibility of saying can be found in the constant search for a broken style, characterised by the absence of unity in speech, by fragments, dysphorias, alterations, deformations, perturbations and "anamorphosis as a mark of distortion of the world through war" (Seixo 2002). Recalling Deleuze, we can say that in this minor use of the language, in this attempt of the author to become a foreigner in his language, there is an enterprise of health, which works with symptoms through style.

The discourse on style becomes essential in both functional and political terms. For Deleuze, literature extracts "affects" or "percepts" which are "irreducible to the affections or perceptions of a subject" (Smith 1998, p. xxx). They are instead the outcome of a process of desubjectivation, and go beyond the individual (Deleuze and Guattari 2017). Deleuze calls these epiphanic moments 'haecceities', when a zone of indiscernibility opens up and "life and literature converge to each other" (Smith 1998, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv). What makes this possible is style, the medium to raise affections to the affect. Through this interpretation of style as a tool of resistance, it is also possible to identify the decolonial potential of the postcolonial novel underlined by Noxolo and Preziuso (2013). Writing constitutes a mode of resistance to the trauma of war, made explicit by the author on several occasions (Blanco 2002), and which probably does not need further justification. Nonetheless, considering writing as a form of resistance entails adopting a poststructuralist perspective, which intends the text to be part of a larger context involving broader cultural practices and negotiations of meaning.

This use of language also reveals trauma. In geography, trauma has been studied by emphasising its relationship with space. Coddington and Micieli-Voutsinas (2017) consider it timeless and difficult to place, being always elsewhere, connected with another time and space. Trauma is a threshold between present and past, has multiple borders and embodies temporalities and spatialities that can move (Coddington and Micieli-Voutsinas 2017; Coddington 2017; Pain 2021). Moreover, through traumatic experiences, some form of parrhesia, that is, the multiplicity of ways to speak freely about the truth, may emerge (Moss and Prince 2017). Through style, Lobo Antunes' writing brings together all of these components. To continue the analysis of detachment and its connection with trauma, I first take some elements from a Lacanian reading of the novel (Patrón Saade 2013) and then consider the narrator's condition of urban marginality through the concept of exhaustion, developed by the late Deleuze (1998). This allows me to investigate further the possibility of resistance and to insert into the discussion the other two lines of flight, explored visually through collage. Indeed, both the conflict in Angola and the colonial dimension of knowledge are at the origin of the trauma and, albeit in different forms, constitute implications of the process of detachment which leads to marginality. For Lacan, love and identification within history are narcissistic manifestations of the ego since the ego wants to be seen as desirable, as the ideal ego that has been returned to the individual during the Lacanian mirror stage. Indeed, this phase shapes a sense of unity on the one hand and alienation on the other; the latter is due to the gap between the ideal image of the self and the one that reality gives us back. This gap allows desire, which Lacan considers a lack, destined by its nature to remain unsatisfied, as it continually changes its objects and signifiers in the symbolic chain.

Trauma creates an assault on the ego, distorting both narcissistic loving identification and the possibility of inscription within history (Lacan 2003). This happens to the narrator, who cannot continue his marriage, love other women, or recognise himself in a family history or national historical and cultural dimension. The assault on the ego occurs through the irruption and return of the real, which, in Lacanian terms, is what exists outside the symbolic order and which, therefore, precedes both language and cultural symbols. The real can burst following intense and disruptive experiences and their traumatic effects, and since it cannot be symbolised, it returns through incessant repetition. It is Angola which constantly invades the present, infesting the fragmented images of Lisbon with a multitude of shreds of war

scenes, mutilated soldiers, local authorities reduced to figurines, and brutalities suffered and committed. The return of the real prevents substitutions in the symbolic chain through which desire is nourished, thus inhibiting desire itself. The ego is attacked through the corrosion of its contours, which allow the individual to place himself in space, as enucleated above by Lussault, and in the discourse of history, both familiar and collective. The real does not let the narrator position himself in what remains his city. Therefore, by a few traits, Lisbon appears a stale and suffocating city, tangled in labyrinths of narrow streets, crochet doilies and laces, Manueline doodles, *azulejos* and constant repetition of shapes and motifs, recalling a glorious past that no longer makes sense to the narrator.

The condition of urban marginality is neither described nor mentioned; what transpires from these atmospheres and the sense of topophobia they transmit is a reiterated process of marginalisation, restated by the absence of any relationship with space that makes sense to the subject. First of all, it is the absence of the city in the strict geographical sense, which appears only as lack, never presenting itself as an organism, a whole, or a space endowed with some unity; secondly, the absence of the city is given by the insane relationship with the spaces of present and past. The apartment without a sea view or horizon offers no room for manoeuvring for desire, and Lisbon is as foreign as Angola. However, the most intriguing aspect in Patrón Saade's analysis of *The Land at the End of the World* is that while trauma's persistence leads to the disruption of the narrator's self-image, it also contributes to his resistance to the dominant historical narrative. This turning point is of great interest to the analysis, as it implies that trauma and its negative connotations can also offer possibilities of resistance. In addition to this and beyond the already highlighted role of writing as a form of resistance, there is the narrator's speech itself, which, despite broken, compulsive and confused, constitutes a form of resistance to the silence about war and the complicity of an obsolete cultural apparatus, which acts on consciences as a heavy colonial device. Paradoxically, the trauma, hidden behind the radical separation that gives rise to the condition of marginality, is also a form of redemption since it constitutes a gateway to further awareness.

5.2.3. Exhaustion and the creation of the possible

Alongside this Lacanian reading of the role of trauma, I add a further perspective borrowed from Deleuze, which refers specifically to the concept of exhaustion. Deleuze's reflection further reinvigorates the dimension of resistance, especially in light of Pelbart's interpretation, which I refer to here. Furthermore, the Deleuzian concept of exhaustion lends itself to an analysis based on collage. Indeed, it offers insights into the relationship between language and the dimension of the visual, as explained in the theoretical and methodological chapters. The concept of exhaustion, developed by Deleuze in one of his last essays, refers to a condition in which the subject "can no longer possibilise" (Deleuze 2015, p. 15 [translation mine]). To explain this, Deleuze establishes a difference between exhaustion and tiredness. Where the tired no longer has the possibility of action and thus of realising something, the exhausted has exhausted what is possible (ibid.). Whereas tiredness comes when we realise our possibilities, exhaustion is inactivity (Pelbart 2015). For Deleuze, the exhaustion of the possible implies the exhaustion of the possibility of language and the exhaustion of the possibility of space, that is, of the possibility of action. This condition seems to adhere to that specific form of marginality discussed, which the narrator embodies.

> Meanwhile, one by one, the faucets and the cistern stop working, the blinds get stuck like complicated eyelids that refuse to open, the humidity cultivates converging islands of mould in the wardrobes; slowly, insidiously, the apartment is dying; from its open mouth comes an air redolent of spent breath, the molten pupils of the lightbulbs stare at me in a final, anguished mist; seated at my desk, I feel as if I were on the desert bridge of a sinking ship, with its books, its plants, its unfinished manuscripts, its non-existent curtain buffeted by the pale wind of an obscure happiness. The block being built opposite me will soon wall me in as if I were a character out of a story by Poe, and only my teeth will be visible, glittering in the darkness, like those of ancient skeletons crouched in the corner of a cave, embracing their bony knees with the yellowing tendons of their elbows. (Lobo Antunes 2012, pp. 106-107)

> I wake up on nights like this, when the alcohol emphasizes my feelings of abandonment and loneliness, and, finding myself at the bottom of an inner well that is too deep, too narrow, too smooth, there rises up in me, as clearly as when it happened eight years ago, the memory of my cowardice and my egotism, a memory I thought had been locked away forever in some lost drawer in my mind, and a kind of, how can I put it, a kind of remorse that makes me curl up in

> one corner of my room like a hunted animal, white with shame and fear, waiting, my mouth resting on my knees, for a morning that never comes. (Ibid., p. 151)

> At home, the carpet absorbs the sound of my footsteps, reducing me to the tenuous echo of a shadow, and I have the feeling, when I shave, that once the blade has removed the mentholated foam Santa Claus sideburns from my cheeks, all that will remain of me will be two eyes that hang, suspended, in the mirror, looking around anxiously for their lost body. (Ibid., pp. 125-126)

However, the "diluted self" is not seen as a victim but as an operator who disarticulates time schizophrenically through an operation of 'disjunctive synthesis' (Pelbart 2015). This, as mentioned in the previous chapter, consists of the ability to keep the different elements of the experience separate and organise the meanings through processes of separation and negation without necessarily pursuing the logic of integration, connection, and unity (Deleuze and Guattari 2004; 2017).

According to Pelbart, exhaustion defines the passage from catastrophe to creation, which the scholar specifies as unnecessary (Pelbart, 2015). This is particularly interesting to my analysis because it leads us again towards the possibility of resistance. Indeed, the exhaustion of all possibilities is a precondition for creating another modality of the possible, that is, of a possible that has not yet been determined. The possibility of realising what is possible coincides with that of not realising it because it implies a mere possibility in which everything or nothing is possible. Conversely, exhaustion occurs when every possibility has been exhausted. Then, the exhaustion of the possible allows creation; indeed, it is precisely "against a background of impossibility" (ibid., p. 160) that a new possible is created, not as a given possible but as the actualisation of the virtual. In this scenario, instead of being the result of a process, the crisis becomes the event that triggers a process, creates a new existence, and makes the unimaginable "thinkable, desirable, visible" (ibid., p. 161). The condition introduced by Deleuze and analysed by Pelbart results from a disconnection from all alternatives that make our relationship with the world tolerable. Therefore, on the one hand, exhaustion undoes our link to the world, erasing any illusion of entirety through an act

of separation; on the other, creation is possible from this negation, an indefinite state where deterritorialisation can start.

Although they come from very different approaches, I would like to keep together these two suggestions: that of trauma as a possible place of resistance after the disruption of the ego, from which an analysis and discourse alternative to the dominant one can arise, and that of exhaustion as a condition for creation. Indeed, in the marginality experienced by the narrator, it is possible to recognise a state which results from trauma and, at the same time, manifests itself as exhaustion. The inability of the subject to inscribe himself within the dominant historical narrative runs parallel to the question of detachment, that is to say, the incapacity to recognise himself within the urban spatial dynamics of places where some form of belonging was possible in the past. Both of these aspects, although powerful, emerge from the narrative marginally, interspersing or overlapping the constant resurfacing of the Angolan war scenes. They embody that act of radical separation mentioned earlier, a negation from which creation becomes possible.

In a recent article, Dawney and Jellis (2024) discuss the concepts of exhaustion and resistance, taking a stand against certain geographies' tendency to seek narratives of redemption. The criticism is aimed at the attitude of seeing a potential for transformation in conditions of desolation and consolation in ontological indeterminacy. Indeed, the propensity to identify spaces of resistance in conditions over the edge and, more generally, the belief in the promise of a better world offer a way of putting "a conceptual sticking plaster over the wound" (ibid., p. 160). While it is true that "there is nothing in ontologies of process, indeterminacy, multiplicity and virtuality that points necessarily to a better world" (ibid., p. 158) and that "the ontological indeterminacy of becoming in ruined worlds should not be framed as redemption, or even consolation" (ibid., p. 159), the world will certainly not be better without attempting to imagine change. While I agree with the warning that certain optimism risks attenuating the role and function of privilege in social and political structures, I find it difficult to accept the invitation to remain anchored to the present and to not invoke the future as a better alternative, even if unspecified. This does not mean that a present without a future is inconceivable on a theoretical basis, nor that efforts to specify a better future cannot be made, but that refusing to invoke a better future for social sciences would

mean giving up its role. As for the closing provocation of the authors, who ask what it would mean to simply document "violence qua violence … and refuse to narrate celebratory accounts of exhaustion and endurance", a phrase by the Burkinabe historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo can perhaps answer: “If we lie down, we are dead” (Ki-Zerbo 2005, p. 5 [translation mine]).

I continue the analysis below by exploring the other two lines of flight. Specifically, I start with a critical discourse on Portuguese colonial imagery and then reconnect the discussion to the Angolan conflict as a historical fact that generates trauma, detachment, and urban marginality. Furthermore, I examine these other two lines of flight by practising collage.

5.3. Second line of flight: colonial imagery

In this section, I discuss the line of flight relating to the colonial dimension of knowledge. It starts with the colonial atmospheres of the narrator's aunts’ houses, which he frequented during his childhood, and discusses the role of colonial imagery, passing through Lourenço's criticism and two collages. This line of flight largely revolves around the image of Dom Sebastião, which is relevant in Lourenço’s analysis. Dom Sebastião is a salient historical and cultural figure, as he shaped the spirit and imagery of Portugal over the centuries. Nonetheless, this rhizomatic line continues through the period of occupation of African territory, with particular regard to the Angolan context, moving from the question of the Mapa Cor-de-Rosa to Salazarism. In this way, I explore those essential stages that Lourenço identifies in the history of Portugal, trying to grasp certain ‘constellations’ through the “leap” and “flashes up” of the past (Benjamin 1999, pp. 261 and 255) that the collages manipulate and emphasise.

While the war experience in Angola, albeit fragmentarily, constantly resurfaces in the narrative, the denunciation of the Portuguese colonial cultural system occurs subtly. Analysing Lobo Antunes’ text, Maria Alzira Seixo (2002) highlighted the relationship between writing and Portuguese daily life, along with the normalisation of a certain type of education, which involves family, social apparatus, and ideology, and has its roots in childhood. The appeal of the Portuguese imagery occurs both in a subdued, sarcastic, and domestic manner and through

direct, cynical, and even vulgar invective. While the latter refers above all to the war and the Salazar regime that fuelled it, it is mainly the first modality that interests me since it reconnects to an apparently innocuous colonial dimension, which has innervated the narrator's life and which suddenly, after the trauma of Angola, reveals itself as the ratio of a human, political, and existential catastrophe.


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To introduce this line of flight, I use excerpts from the novel that refer to the figures of the aunts and their houses through claustrophobic and colonial atmospheres. These images of relatives, recurrent throughout the novel, offer a powerful tool for investigating the domestic side of colonialism through the broader reflections of Eduardo Lourenço and the visual exploration of the fragments of colonial imagery. Moreover, it allows us to reconnect the individual to the collective dimension.

> Every building in Rua Barata Salgueiro, sad as a rainy recess at school, was inhabited by some aged relatives rowing with a walking stick down a river of carpets replete with Chinese vases and inland chests of drawers … In all the kitchens, which resembled the chemistry labs at school, there would be a missionary calendar on the wall full of pictures of pickaninnies … The aunts would lurch at me like dancers on music boxes when the clockwork was about to win down, then point the quavering threat of their walking sticks at my ribs, scornfully eye the padding in my jacket, and declare sourly, You're awfully thin … (Lobo Antunes 2012, pp. 24-25)

> At least doing his military service will make a man of him. This vigorous prophecy, uttered throughout my childhood and adolescence by false teeth of indisputable authority, continued to be delivered in strident tones at the canasta tables, where the females of the clan provided a pagan counterweight to Sunday Mass at two *centavos* at point … The spectre of Salazar hovered over [the men's] pious bald pates like the diminutive flames of some corporate Holy Spirit, keeping us safe from the dark and dangerous idea of Socialism. The PIDE courageously continued their valiant crusade against the sinister notion of democracy … And so, when I embarked for Angola, on board a ship packed with soldiers, in order finally to become a man, the tribe, grateful to the Government for making such a metamorphosis possible and at no expense to them, turned up in force to the quayside, putting up, in a moment of patriotic fervour, with being elbowed with an excited crowd … gathered there as impotent witness to their own death. (Ibid., pp. 26-27)

> Do you know General Machado? … He was the father of my maternal grandmother, and on Sundays, before lunch, she would point proudly at the photograph of what looked like a rather unpleasant, moustachioed fireman, the owner of numerous medals that thundered at us from the glass cabinet in the living room along with other equally useless trophies of war, but which the family seemed to venerate as if they were relics … And it was that same baleful creature … who built, or oversaw the construction, or planned the construction, or both planned and

> oversaw the construction of the railway on which we were travelling; our train, with an attachment at the front for detonating mines, rattled across a plain that had neither beginning nor end, as we laboriously chewed our combat ration of canned food with a lack of appetite already imbued with the panic-fear of death, which, over a period of twenty-three months, grew its greenish mushrooms in my damp insides. (Ibid., pp. 47-48)

Eduardo Lourenço weaves a critical discourse on the images that Portugal has created of itself, which allows us to investigate the direction suggested by Lobo Antunes, grafting onto the atmospheres reported above and on the image of an apparently minor, conciliatory and charitable colonialism. Lourenço (2006; 2019) highlights some essential stages in Portugal's history by tracing the genealogy of a series of denied traumas. The concealment that characterised Portuguese colonial discourse is revealed by highlighting the repression of these traumas. His deconstruction work touches on a historical arch that goes from the nation's origins to the Carnation Revolution and post-decolonisation until the end of the last century, and highlights a schizophrenic combination of inferiority and superiority complexes aimed at hiding a condition of weakness. Along with the history, some images from the national literary repertoire are analysed. These participate in the construction of singular imagery and contribute to the asymmetry between imagination and reality, as well as to cultural hypertrophy and Portuguese hyper-identity (Vecchi and Russo 2019). Moreover, the Portuguese imagery is imbued with a messianic and miraculous component that Lourenço not only does not ignore, but actively investigates.


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Collage explores this dimension, vague on the one hand but dense and complex on the other, by using historical figures distorted or visually reinterpreted, elements of everyday life in which the colonial past reveals its omnipresence, and urban fragments or objects that recall a glorious past while minimising and reducing it to particles.

5.3.1. Waiting for the past

> Angola-is-ours, Mr President and Viva Portugal, we are, of course, and passionately proud to be so, the legitimate descendants of Magellan and Cabral and Da Gama and the glorious mission we have been given is, as Mr. President has just said in his remarkable speech, a very similar one. (Lobo Antunes 2012, p. 121)

From the literary colonial atmospheres of the narrator's aunts' houses, I extract a line of flight related to the imagery and explore it through the critical analysis of Lourenço, focusing on the figure of Dom Sebastião. Although Dom Sebastião does not have a direct role in Lobo Antunes' novel, the sarcastic attacks or the subtle irony the author directs both at Salazarism and the Portuguese colonial cultural reservoir align with Lourenço's harsh criticism of the hypertrophy of Portuguese imagery, which has its roots in the geographical discoveries. Dom Sebastião, therefore, becomes a sort of 'bridge figure' that connects the past and the present and embodies that obsession and illusion of magnificence that will lead to the disastrous consequences of war and trauma.

Even the origins of Portugal as a state, which Lourenço defines as "an act without history", are rooted in legend and are a gift of providence (Lourenço 2006, p. 20). In fact, in the twelfth century, during the Christian reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula, independence was granted to the then Portucalense county, and Alfonso Henriques, named Alfonso I, became the first king of the newborn kingdom of Portugal. This is also by virtue of the battle of Ourique, a symbolic episode in Portuguese history, during which the future sovereign defeated the Moors after an apparition of Christ urged him to fight. A further significant historical and cultural node is the figure of Infante Dom Sebastião, a controversial character of the sixteenth century, who still impacts the Portuguese collective imagery today. Known as 'The Desired One' for being long expected to fill a dynastic void, the young sovereign decided to wage a battle at Alcácer-Quibir in Morocco for expansionist reasons, against the advice of

court experts and ignoring the unfavourable socioeconomic context of the country. Choosing to follow his mania of grandeur, Dom Sebastião disappeared in battle, leading to a dynastic crisis due to the absence of heirs, thus handing four centuries of independence to Philip II's Spain, who claimed his right of succession and invaded the country. Lourenço underlines that, at the time of these events, Portugal had already rounded the Cape of Good Hope and settled in India, effectively becoming the first European colonising power. This annexation in the form of a dual monarchy would last approximately 60 years and open a deep fault in Portuguese culture, giving rise to Sebastianism.

Sebastianism is a complex theme that runs through Portuguese history and culture, analysed by scholars of every field over the centuries and reinterpreted by prominent figures such as Ferdinando Pessoa. In its most superficial sense, the term refers to the expectation of the king's return, 'The Desired One', whose death is thus denied as his body was never found in battle. Nonetheless, this expectation carries an intrinsic meaning that has to do with the illusion of having a mission as a messianic people, and this is the aspect that decrees the success of the movement and characterises the Portuguese spirit over the centuries. The nostalgia for 'The Desired One', essentially, coincides with the nostalgia for the glorious past of geographical discoveries, that same past celebrated by the epic poem par excellence in Portuguese literature, namely *The Lusiads* by Luis Camões – a contemporary of Dom Sebastião, to whom the poem was in fact dedicated. Finally, Sebastianism also reconnects to the esoteric concept of the Fifth Empire (O Quinto Império), conceived by the Jesuit António Vieira around 1600, which designed a global Portuguese territorial and spiritual empire. On the one hand, therefore, the figure of Dom Sebastião reveals to Portugal its destiny of subordination and allows the country to become aware of its weakness; on the other hand, Sebastianism generates and regenerates that feeling of unrealism, which is the object of Lourenço's analysis.

The figure of Dom Sebastião is prominent in the first collage [Fig. 4]. Although relegated to the background, it looms over the entire scene. I discuss this collage through the fragments that compose it, aware that this attempt can only be partial, especially considering the open meanings that collage, by its nature, may acquire for different users. I started from the sea,

Fig. 4 – *Retornados*

which I overturned. The picture comes from a personal archive and concerns the Mediterranean. We are, therefore, faced with the 'wrong' sea, far from the Atlantic of geographical discoveries. The photo was taken in Lampedusa during fieldwork on contemporary migrations towards Southern Italy. Although subterranean and perceivable exclusively by the author of the collage, the image of the Mediterranean, in this context, creates a connection between colonialism and migration, and even more so with the explorations of other seas and lands. Who can cross them, and in what capacity, today as yesterday? Moreover, a further connection is traceable through the Black Atlantic of the African diaspora, which brought millions of Africans to America as slaves but also created the conditions for black consciousness, hybrid relations, and resistance (Gilroy 1993; Glissant 2007; Sharpe 2016). The practice of collage offers multiple interpretations (Butler-Kisber 2008); some of these are profoundly subjective and less shareable than others, or not shareable at all. I overturned the sea for other reasons too. First of all, I was looking for an atmosphere of suspension beyond the terrestrial. Nonetheless, it immediately evoked the thin, sometimes blurred boundary between sky and sea in Portuguese imagery, praised by Ferdinando Pessoa and largely linked to the geographical discoveries. This almost classic case of serendipity is quite common in the practice of collage; on this occasion, it sheds light on the ideas of immensity, grandeur, and eternity, deeply rooted in the spirit of that imagery. Dom Sebastião embodies this spirit, as an omnipresent but blind spectre who will reappear in another collage and history.

I placed an astrolabe on the right of the sovereign. It acts as a guide, replacing a star, in a sky that is interchangeable with the sea. The astrolabe refers to measuring distance, managing time, and rationalising knowledge. The image on the left also contributes to the sense of occupying and controlling what is considered indefinite, with particular reference to the land. It is a fragment of the well-known *Padrão dos Descombrimentos*, dedicated to the geographical discoveries and erected in Belém in 1960. This emblematic monument represents a caravel and 32 protagonists of the discoveries, and replicates the temporary one built in 1940 on the occasion of the Exhibition of the Portuguese World hosted in Lisbon (Sapega 2008; Gori 2018; Fong 2020-2021). The fragment used in the collage shows Bartolomeo Diaz, who rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and Diogo Cão, who went as far as

the coast of Angola after reaching the mouth of the Congo River. Both are pushing a stone pillar of the type used by Portuguese explorers to claim territories they reached.

While the figure of the sovereign occupies the centre of the sky with the sea in the background, the boats on which his profile stands instead occupy the foreground. In one case, it is a sixteenth-century caravel, typical of the period of geographical discoveries; in the other, it is an Indigenous pirogue on the Cuanza River with some young natives. I find the contrast between the two boats intriguing due to the prominence and the effect of movement of the canoe, which seems not only to come from a different dimension and profundity but also to veer and change course, in contrast to the stasis of the caravel. As I mentioned above, I was also interested in the sense of suspension of the entire composition, which evokes that dimension of mystery, secret, spirituality, and dream that permeate a large part of Portuguese culture, a dimension which Lobo Antunes rages in spurts, and Lourenço acutely analyses. In this regard, it is worth pointing out that the caravel comes from a 1973 stamp, dedicated to the Museu de Marinha, the Portuguese navy museum, while the pirogue was cut from a 1924 postcard of the Cuanza River, which I purchased from a dealer in the well-known Lisbon market of Feira da Ladra. The spread of images linked to geographical discoveries and colonial possessions is also relevant in the other collages. The manipulation of these visual elements, fragments of Portuguese everyday life, literally entered the everyday life of the analysis.

The collages included in this chapter are just some of the possible outcomes of the visual research that took place. As with any other analysis, when analysing through images it is necessary to set limits and transform the process into something fixed. Fortunately, by its nature collage is never completely firm, and this is mainly due to the fact that it does not fix meanings. Writing on collage implies, in a certain sense, a challenge to the limits of argumentative and linear writing on which social scientific research is based. In this direction, reporting the juxtaposition of the selected visual elements in written form is an attempt to circumvent this difficulty by remaining within the sphere of analytical writing. Even simply recalling the presence, provenance, and location of the used fragments can reveal the non-descriptive and non-representational nature of collage, which contributes to the creation of atmospheres. Concerning the connections and elicitations that can arise from the collage,

one of the most significant issues is identifying when they were triggered. Indeed, it is not always possible to define with certainty whether these connections follow or precede the written analysis, and this is because rational thought and the unconscious dimension interact without warning. Sometimes, it is easy to recognise thought's influence on the imagination; other times, the opposite is true. In the latter cases, the images elicit new connections that can translate into written form or migrate from one collage to another. I return to these points when discussing the subsequent collages, also focusing on the role of the lyrics used and the dialogues they trigger from one collage to another.

5.3.2. From the Mapa Cor-de-Rosa to the Estado Novo

I extend the rhizomatic line of colonial imagery to the occupation of African territory during the nineteenth century. Indeed, this phase triggered an obsession with Africa, which would lead to a colonial war out of place and time. Building upon the previous one, this segment on Portuguese colonialism concerns the relationship between power and knowledge, a knowledge that is not necessarily scientific but is legitimised and promoted by the scientific discourse. As exit points, I use two extracts from the novel that reveal the relationship between colonial imagery and war. The visual contribution to the analysis shapes aspects mentioned in this section and generates connections with the other collages.

The independence of Brazil in 1822 constitutes a crucial moment in the history of Portugal. From that moment onwards, as compensation for the loss of Brazil, the scattered possessions in Africa were looked at from the perspective of constructing an African empire. Over the nineteenth century, many documents on the African continent were produced to organise a first mapping of the internal areas. These materials related to the natural environment, the populations, and the existing social and commercial structures. This was the period of the Mapa Cor-de-Rosa, which designated the entire horizontal strip along the parallels containing the potential African territories from Angola to Mozambique. The Mapa Cor-de-Rosa is another powerful component of Portuguese imagery. It concerns an issue that spanned the nineteenth century and reveals the country's marginal position among European nation-states. Indeed, the Portuguese claims on African territories, based on historical law, collided with the colonial plans of other nations. Following the Berlin Conference (1884-1885),

Portugal had to give up control of the mouth of the Congo River, which it had held since the times of geographical discoveries. The country began negotiations to pursue a project of unifying its African territories between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. However, it encountered resistance from Great Britain, which, in turn, was interested in building a railway line along the meridians connecting Cairo to Cape Town. This culminated in the British Ultimatum of 1890, to which Portugal consented, forsaking its plans and being once again humiliated in the face of international power dynamics. According to Lourenço, from this moment onwards, Portugal was reduced to a subordinate country just after the loss of Brazil, and the possession of Africa became non-negotiable until the collapse of 1974: "Our symbolic flight towards the imperial imagination was extraordinary. While the European powers ... imperialistically competed for the empire of reality, its treasures and its markets, the old town of Camões, drowned in mourning, resentment and melancholy, rebuilt, stone by stone ... a pure dream empire" (Lourenço 2006, p. 117). On the one hand, the outcome of the aforementioned ultimatum spurred a more formal attachment to the remaining African territories, and the African question became an issue of national identity; on the other, the defeat was capitalised on by Republicans (Peralta and Domingos 2019). The song *A Portuguesa*, which would become the national anthem of the newborn Republic in 1910, was written during the controversy with Great Britain, with the aim of exalting ancestors' achievements and reinforcing the Portuguese sense of identity. Its grandiloquent verses appear in the collage described below, starkly contrasting with the less edifying images portraying the colonists and Indigenous population.

Nonetheless, the culmination of this fiction would unfold within the fascist-type regime of the Estado Novo, established and led by António de Oliveira Salazar and persisting into its final years under Marcelo Caetano. From Lourenço's perspective, the asymmetry between imagination and reality widened drastically during this dictatorial regime lasting over 40 years. The dictatorship in Portugal was established in 1926 following a coup by General Gomes da Costa, which was ousted after less than a month by another coup by General Oscar Carmona. Once a presidential system had been established and he was elected president in 1928, Carmona had at his side as finance minister Oliveira Salazar, an economics professor at the University of Coimbra from the Catholic far right. In 1932, Salazar became head of the government of the Estado Novo. Within a short time, trade unions and political

parties were banned, and both the Portuguese Legion and the Portuguese Youth were created; the former was a body of volunteers for the regime's defence, and the latter a paramilitary organisation of which membership was compulsory for school and university students. Moreover, the International and State Defence Police, known as PIDE, functioned as a political agency specialising in sophisticated forms of torture. References to Salazarism and PIDE recur in Lobo Antunes' novel, as testimony or as invective, both when the narrative addresses the colonial war directly and when it concerns the the family of origin, Catholic and Salazarist. In all these cases, with sarcasm, irony, and anger, Lobo Antunes' writing allows the underground connections to emerge between the cumbersome cultural apparatus of geographical discoveries and the catastrophic drift of colonialism and colonial war.

> … the idea of a Portuguese Africa, which the history books at school, the politicians' speeches, and the chaplain in Mafra all described in such majestic terms, was, after all, a kind of provincial backwater rotting away in the vastness of space, a sort of housing project rapidly devoured by grass and scrub, a great, desolate silence inhabited by the gnarled and starving figures of the lepers. This land at the end of the world was extremely isolated and extremely poor, governed by drunken, greedy district leaders, trembling with malaria in their empty houses, reigning over a people resigned to their fate who sat at the doors of their huts with a kind of vegetable indifference. (Lobo Antunes 2012, pp. 136-137)

> Angola was a pink rectangle on a primary-school map, black nuns beaming out from a missionary calendar, women with rings through their noses, Mouzinho de Albuquerque, and hippopotamuses, the heroism of the Portuguese Youth Movement marking time beneath the April rain in the school playground … You have to understand, you see, that in the world into which I was born the definition of a black was "a cute little thing when small", the way you might refer to a dog or a horse, to some strange, dangerous animal with a curious resemblance to humans, who in the darkness of Santo António village yelled at me: "Go back to your own country, Portuguese" not giving a shit about my vaccines and my medicines and hoping desperately that I got my brains blown out on the road back because I wasn't treating *them*, but the farmers' cheap labour, seventeen *escudos* a day, ten *tostões* per sack of cotton, I was treating the white man in Malanje or Luanda, the white man lying in the sun of Luanda Island, the white man in the smart residential area of Alvalade in Lisbon, the white man in the local sports club, who scornfully refused to talk to soldiers. (Ibid., pp. 161-162)

From 1930, the Colonial Act was in force. It defined Portuguese colonial policy by decreeing the exploitation of Indigenous populations and the deterioration of traditional economies. Concerning Angola, Portuguese occupation was mainly along the coast until 1861. Indeed, the map of the country was drawn between 1880 and 1920, and intense military activity was conducted through occupation and stabilisation campaigns, which imposed Portuguese domination over local forms of political organisation. In this period, a political-administrative apparatus was established that greatly impacted the local population, especially in terms of regulating work and using forced labour, a practice that Portugal continued legally until 1961 (Da Conceição Neto 2000) when the Angolan uprising initiated a thirteen-year war. This conflict was considered a war of independence by Angola and a colonial one by Portugal. Although the latter expresses a Eurocentric perspective, I deliberately adopt it here; indeed, my purpose is to highlight the obstinate and suicidal attitude of Salazarist Portugal at the time of the events which constitute the fulcrum of the narrator's experience.

The collage associated with this history segment is transitional [Fig. 5]. Although history in itself is in constant transition, some periods are more emblematic than others, as is the case of the period analysed above which largely corresponds to the territorial occupation of Africa. The transition, therefore, regards the passage from the exaltation of discoveries and knowledge to that of occupation, possession, dominion, and, essentially, an extreme exercise of power. In this historical conjunction, the connection between the imaginary and material dimensions reveals its strength. Indeed, colonialism was mediated by places which were categorised as empty, underdeveloped, or inhabited by uncivilised people; this served to justify occupation and legitimise intervention and exploitation (Kothari 2020). Once defined, these categorisations gave shape to an official narrative that structured the encounters between racial formation and colonialism (Fong 2020-2021). The racialisation of humans allowed the development of Western imperialist thought and colonial practice, and was legitimised by the institutionalisation of the racist discourse largely promoted by the exhibition of the otherness, often centred on monstrosity or wildness (Sampaio Da Silva 2011). The visual exploration carried out through collage uses this regime of aesthetic power

Fig. 5 – *Edifications*

(Brigstocke and Gassner 2021) while also claiming the right to opacity (Glissant 2007) mentioned in the theoretical chapter, both in analytical and communicative terms. In doing so, collage experiments with a possibility of "speculative experience" that "troubles or crosses the threshold of sense, intelligibility, and legibility" (Brigstocke and Gassner 2021, p. 363).

As a base for the composition, I used an airmail envelope, sent to Luanda in the midst of the colonial period. In particular, I was drawn to the green stamp, which clearly refers to the population issue both visually and in written form. All images come from materials, such as postcards, banknotes, or old pictures found in antiquarian bookshops or markets in Lisbon. I chose a reproduction of the Mapa Cor-de-Rosa stored in the National Library of Portugal among the pictures available online. When manipulating images, even when exclusively considering their most referential capacity of displaying, unexpected relations may intervene. Indeed, juxtapositions of images create circuits of strength, contributing to the potential of collage for making intersections visible. Firstly, I wanted to visualise some images of those who populated Angola. All the human figures in the collage come from old postcards, written and sent, which I found and purchased in Lisbon. Human beings, therefore, become decorative elements of everyday objects, displaying or showing off relations of power towards the black population.

The elements that combine within the frame defined by the envelope are the Sé Catedral of Luanda, the halo of the patron saint Anthony of Lisbon, a compass rose cut from a banknote, the Mapa Cor-de-Rosa, and a postcard. The postcard's text covers the entire surface, overlapping an image that appears controversial today but was just one of many possible souvenirs from Africa during colonialism. Symmetries generated a preliminary dialogue, although largely driven by aesthetic principles, determined by forms, positions, or dimensions. This is one of the ways collage may create connections and elicit lines of analysis. In this case, the images' mental and material manipulation and assembling allow us to become familiar with and enter into a visual relationship with aspects that would otherwise remain abstract. Here, the symmetry regards the colonist suspended on the church, and the native suspended on the map, drawn by external power and knowledge; he is also armed and probably ready to protect his owner during hunting, clearcutting, or other forest activities.

Two elements act as stars, recalling the previous collage: on the one hand, the compass rose, which rises behind the colonist and the church, establishing a visual connection between Portuguese presence, religion, and science; on the other, the halo of the saint, which stands behind the native, and recalls a sun; it is an imposed sun though, as the map and reconfiguration of the land. Furthermore, the new shape generated by the position of the halo evokes other natives, establishing a latent connection with North American Indigenous people. In the postcard preserved in its entirety, servitude is purposely exhibited because the focus is on the prestige and power the Portuguese lord embodies. Even more eloquent is that this controversial image is just a background to the superimposed text written by the sender. The collage offers the possibility of exploring this type of everyday life, imagining an atmosphere, manipulating normalisation, and simultaneously dialoguing with aspects of routine and estrangement.

The referential level of these figures characterises the analysis of this historical segment, referring to the nineteenth century, and the subsequent one, concerning the colonial war period. This is the case, for instance, with regard to the airmail envelope, which refers to a more mature colonisation than that shown by the aforementioned images. Incorporated by collage as part of its possible codes, these contrasts create internal tension and dialogue with different temporalities and the other collages. For instance, the lyrics of the anthem invoke the magnificence of the past and ancestors, potentially dialoguing with the previous collage. Conceptually, this composition revolves around the idea of exploitation: oppression and capitalisation of natives, as well as manipulation of religion and science. However, this possible conceptual wire may only be extracted through weaving images; forms, positions, sizes, colours, altered scale relations, contrasts, reversals, and surreal aspects contribute to a visual and conceptual interrogation, provoking other fragments. In resisting the hypostatisation of social scientific writing, collage brings into analysis elements and associations that otherwise would be excluded. It may contribute “to invent new ways of thinking before we have any knowledge of what is or is not possible” (Roberts 2019b, p. 136), as well as to not hide difference, but rather shed light on it (Dewsbury 2010).

5.4. Third line of flight: the colonial war in Angola

This section illustrates the third line of flight and explores the Angolan conflict, which constitutes the raw material for Lobo Antunes' narration. I reconstruct the antecedents of the war from the formation of the first clandestine groups and the first anti-colonial claims up to the organisation of the movements that took part in the clash. I then consider the spread of the war within the country into the areas mentioned in the novel. Subsequently, I connect the conflict to the Carnation Revolution in Portugal and the fall of the regime, and return to Lourenço's analysis. This shows how the country, despite the evidence of the facts, even in the decades following the regime and decolonisation, is still incapable of emerging from that condition of historical blindness and remains mired in the process of mythification of the glorious past. I discuss this process, also considering the role of memorials.

5.4.1. Actors and places of conflict: from antecedents to decolonisation

> Later on, in Baixa do Cassanje, I heard about a black man, a Jinga, being hanged for the edification of the village, and about other blacks who were ordered to dig a hole in the jungle, climb down into it, and wait patiently to have their heads blown off before being covered in sand, like having a heart blanket pulled over the blood of their corps. (Lobo Antunes 2012, p. 57)

The Portuguese colonies were not touched by the winds of change felt in many parts of Africa after the Second World War. This was because the Portuguese regime refused to participate to decolonisation; instead, it locked itself inside a colonial model focused on the past. Along with the commemoration of discoveries, the Estado Novo adopted strategic rhetoric against the anti-colonial policies of the United Nations after the Second World War, insisting on the multicontinental nature of Portugal, a country made of provinces beyond the sea (Peralta and Domingos 2019). Furthermore, since the regime repressed attempts to form political or trade unions, it was almost impossible to organise opposition groups or anti-colonial movements in either the homeland or the colonies. This dead-end and timeless situation created the conditions for the wave of violence that arose in 1961 (Da Conceição Neto 2000). Nonetheless, as in other African countries, small clandestine groups attempted

to form, particularly among the category of the 'assimilated', by exploiting official cultural, religious, or sporting channels. This is what happened in the case of a militant group formed by black intellectuals that met around the creation of a Centre for African Studies in Lisbon and maintained relations with the Communist Party and other clandestine anti-Salazarist groups. Among them were Amílcar Cabral, Eugenio de Andrade, and Agostinho Neto, who would return to Africa to participate in the revolution (Davidson 1975).

From the mid-1950s, various clandestine groups demanding independence were born, both in Angola and outside. However, in 1957, PIDE established itself in the colony to dismantle these networks. It was precisely to free some political prisoners that, in 1961, the prisons of Luanda were attacked, leading to violent clashes with the police. Rioting also followed a farmers' revolt in Malange, an area of cotton plantations; however, the clashes in Luanda had an international resonance, as the MPLA (the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), founded and led by Mario de Andrade in 1956, claimed responsibility, thereby neutralising the Portuguese government's attempts to minimise them. The repression would doubtless have been harsh. Furthermore, since a revolt also broke out in the north on behalf of another independence faction, Portugal sent reinforcements and a war began (Conceição Neto 2000; Davidson 1975). Aside from the MPLA, it is worth mentioning two other Angolan nationalist factions, including the FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola), founded by Holden Roberto in 1961, and UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), founded by Jonas Malheiro Savimbi in 1966 amid the colonial war.


BANCO DE ANGOLA
BJ52352 500
QUINHENTOS
ESCUDOS
BJ52352
O GOVERNADOR
O VICE-GOVERNADOR
10 DE JUNHO DE 1973
500
LUIZ DE CAMOES


REPÚBLICA PORTUGUESA
IV Centenário de "OS LUSÍADAS" 1572-1972
CORREIOS
1
Ali o muy grande reyno está de Congo
Por nos ja convertido à fee de Christo,
Por onde o Zaire passa claro & longo
Rio pellos antigos nuca visto:
"Lusiadas" Canto V - XIII
ANGOLA
LITO MAIA - PORTO - PORTUGAL

Although all were driven by anti-colonial and pro-independence principles, these groups also had different interests in light of their diverse contexts of origins. While the MPLA primarily represented the perspective of assimilated and mixed-race urban intellectuals (Garztecki 2004), the FNLA had a strong Bakongo and Zombo ethnic imprint, characteristic of the north of Angola (Davidson 1975); as for Savimbi, who was a former member of the FNLA, he gave UNITA an Ovimbundu ethnic mark, as he hailed from the Bié highlands in the centre of the country (Guerra 2002). While these were the three main actors in the Angolan scenario preceding and following independence, other groups were also formed, often through unions or mergers. Nonetheless, their differences would never be wholly overcome in the name of a common objective, and coalitions were instrumentally limited to specific phases of the war. In general, it is possible to state that neither the FNLA. nor UNITA were interested in allying with the MPLA. Furthermore, Savimbi's UNITA was characterised by a series of controversial alliances, including ones with the Portuguese army and PIDE, or international ones with the South African apartheid regime, aimed at countering the advances of the MPLA (ibid.). Alongside independence in 1975, a long and troubled civil war began, which only ended after Savimbi was killed in 2002. The situation would be further complexified during the Angolan civil war, which broadly overlapped with the Cold War period. The alliances of the aforementioned factions would come to have a strong international flavour, involving the United States, Russia, Cuba, and China, among others.

> Ninda, Luate, Lusse, Nengo, rivers swollen with rain flowing under wooden bridges, leper colonies, the red earth of Cago Coutinho that sticks to your skin and your hair, the eternally anxious lieutenant colonel nervously shrugging his shoulders as he sits before a glass of créme de cacao, the PIDE agents in Mete Lenha's café, shooting dull, hate-filled glances at the blacks sipping timid, fearful beers at the next tables. No one who comes here is ever the same again … the war has made animal of us, you see, cruel, stupid animal trained to kill, there wasn't an inch of wall in the barracks unadorned by a picture of a naked woman, we masturbated and ejaculated, this is the word-created-by-the-Portuguese, these blacks hollow with hunger who don't understand our language, it's sleeping sickness, malaria, amebiasis, poverty, when we reached Luso, a Jeep drove up to inform us that the general wouldn't let us sleep in town or show our all-too-evident scars in the mess. (Lobo Antunes 2012, pp. 140-141)

The theatre of the colonial war was initially contained and remained distant from production centres and important demographic areas. After 1966, the conflict spread towards the eastern regions because first UNITA and then the MPLA attempted to penetrate Angola from the east side. The strategy was to settle in Zambia, which was already independent, infiltrate political militants in the eastern regions of Angola, and then proceed towards the Atlantic (Davidson, 1975). By around 1970, clashes were widespread in most provinces of Angola. This included the locations in the deep southeast, where Lobo Antunes was based from 1971 to 1973, and which gave the novel the title. These are places such as Gago Coutinho, Ninda, and above all Chiumé, the most southerly, in the province of Moxico and on the border with the province of Cuando Cubango, both not far from the border with Zambia. On 11 November 1975, following the regime's fall in Portugal, the right to self-determination was recognised in the ultramarine territories, and a transitional government was established in which all of the pro-independence factions were supposed to participate. However, as mentioned previously, the country would enter a civil war lasting almost another 30 years.

Angolan independence is intertwined with the regime's fall in Portugal due to the Carnation Revolution of 1974. After Salazar's deposition in 1968, following a stroke, and his death two years later, Marcelo Caetano took the lead and continued both the colonial policy and the war undaunted. Discontent among the military ranks originated precisely around this point, giving rise to a series of documents calling for the extinction of the fascist apparatus and the creation of a civil government. Since these documents were ignored, the armed forces planned the coup d'état of 25 April. The Carnation Revolution of 1974 was effectively a military coup led by the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), but it was anti-fascist, openly left wing, and peaceful. It was also a scenographic revolution. It began at night, with the radio broadcast of a song that later became the emblem of 25 April, and it took place as a march, surprising a largely resigned population, who were not expecting it and did not initially understand the nature of the coup, but later participated en masse. The march proceeded with the occupation of radio and television stations, Lisbon Airport, and Praça do Comércio, where the MFA headquarters was located (Rodrigues, Borga and Cardoso 2000). Only from this moment could the discussion on overseas territories begin and the question of decolonisation begin to be addressed.

Lourenço's analysis does not fail to demolish the watered-down version of this genuinely popular but culturally exploited revolution, both politically and at the level of the largely unconscious collective imagery. The revolution of 25 April functioned to redeem indecent decolonisation; indeed, as a democratic revolution, it hid the real Portuguese situation and the amputation of the privileged African market. Lourenço emphasises the return of the colonists to their homeland, defined as *retornados* (the returned ones), a term that is not entirely appropriate, considering that they were largely born in Angola and had never seen the metropolis. This significant number of people, between 500,000 and 800,000, was added to an already impoverished and illiterate population, about a third of whom were emigrants. The event of the *retornados* closed a historical cycle and left a mark on the country more than decolonisation itself did. Indeed, by confronting society with a *fait accompli*, it fomented a discussion about the colonial question and decolonisation which had previously been lacking. This provocative analysis points out the disinterest with which the Portuguese people accepted the loss of territories for which they had fought for 13 years, and which formed part of their identity as colonising people. This attitude can be interpreted as a sign of the assumption that losing overseas was the price to pay for their liberation from the regime. For Portugal, the arrival of the *retornados* would constitute the beginning of a retrospective awareness of the disaster of the colonial war, which did not seem to concern the country at least until 1975 (Lourenço 2006). *Retornado*s carried a divided subjectivity inside Portuguese society as, once their function in the colonial project was exhausted, they became a scapegoat for Portuguese colonialism. Nonetheless, a process of non-memory, intent on expunging colonial wrongdoings from social and public memory, ran parallel to the mythification of national history. This process attempted to minimise the presence of *retornados*; indeed, within a few years, retornados became invisible (Peralta 2019).

Furthermore, for Lourenço, national disinterest did not only concern the African disaster but also Salazarism, which was forgotten together with the mobilisation of thousands of military cadres, students, doctors, and intellectuals during the 13 years of colonial war in Angola, Guinea Bissau, and Mozambique. Indeed, 1,368,900 soldiers participated in the colonial war, and 8,831 died (Peralta and Domingos 2019). Instead, after the events of 25 April, nationalist mythology would also be replaced with a new mythology based on principles of the April Revolution and universality. A Luso-tropical discourse involving African elites started to

spread, showing off a peaceful coexistence and making invisible not only the structural asymmetries of the past but also of the present, such as the marginalisation of immigrants from the former colonies (ibid.). Moreover, a memorial to those who fought overseas was inaugurated in 1994 in Belém, a place symbolically overloaded with colonial meanings (Sapega 2008). Although the memorial provoked reactions from those who had participated in the April Revolution, it testified to the possibility, 20 years after the end of the regime, of officially commemorating the colonial war, an out of time and disastrous act from a human and political point of view.

This process of laundering concerned both the imagery and the city, and it was superbly embodied by the Expo that took place in Lisbon in 1998 and launched the first urban regeneration linked to the exhibition. Entitled 'The Oceans: a Heritage for the Future', the event was an attempt, camouflaged by an environmental flavour, to commemorate the discoveries once again. It was planned for the 500th anniversary of Vasco da Gama's arrival in India, and for the occasion, a panoramic tower inspired by a caravel and one of the longest bridges in Europe were built and named after the navigator. These urban constructions joined a long list of spatial examples of historical commemoration, amongst memorials, statues, museums, and the naming of streets and squares. In addition to this, the entire eastern degraded area of Doca dos Olivais was renewed and renamed Parco das Naçoes (Park of Nations). This modern and attractive part of the capital is just one example of the capacity of colonial discourse to transform and regenerate itself, while simultaneously concealing slavery, forced labour, colonial violence, and war (Peralta and Domingos 2019). Moreover, it reveals that space and place are both material and imaginary, and that this co-constitution needs to be explored to build knowledge aimed at principles of liberation and decolonisation (Fong 2020-2021). This reiterates the role of imagination and creativity, as it is the way we intend knowledge that shapes the world, and it can reproduce or dismantle power relations. The role of imagination and creativity brings us back to the core of the work, which, in considering the forms of marginality and resistance, also questions practices of knowledge production. In particular, while discussing those practices at the service of colonial power, which triggers processes of marginalisation and produces conditions of marginality, this analysis considers alternative possibilities, exploring the decolonial potential of critical and creative practices in activating forms of resistance.

5.4.2. Postcolonial novels and collage

According to Lourenço (2006), what was missing in Portugal was an interest in critical knowledge of the facts. Over the years, Portuguese society has struggled to elaborate colonialism as the imposition of individual interests, exploitation of lands and populations, the colonies as a reserve and the official mythology as a mask for this, preferring instead to move from one dream image to another (ibid.). From the idea of a nation leading the world to that of better colonialism than others, Portugal finally came to believe in exemplary decolonisation, of which the only recognised traumatic element was the arrival of the *retornados*. However, in this critical void, Lourenço highlights the role of literature, within which a process of re-elaboration of mourning began. Indeed, it is literature which, through a marginal and non-colonialist gaze, allowed the emergence of the 'Empire of Fiction': "Also this is an escape, but more realist than that of the irreversible epic" (Lourenço 2019, p. 243 [translation mine]). Therefore, the process of demystification of national time and space began in Portuguese literature, as well as the conversion of the mythical imagination: "We must get used to thinking that we have inhabited a space larger than ourselves" (Lourenço 2019, p. 244 [translation mine]).

Literature is therefore recognised as a place of resistance and production of new meanings and is granted the potential role in transforming a plastered imaginary, which the regime had contributed to immobilising. In the absence of a critical context, and even knowledge of colonial events, literature is the privileged place for this complicated and preliminary process of re-elaboration. Postcolonial literary geographies underline the ability of postcolonial writing to think about space as something malleable, heterogeneous, and multiple (Thieme, 2016). Indeed, postcolonial scholarship deconstructs the naturalisation imposed on places and illuminates the "multiple spatialities that nonetheless continue to persist" (Krishnan and Cartwright 2024, p. 62). The writing of António Lobo Antunes not only fully participates in this process, but he is one of the first voices to contribute to the birth of postcolonial Portuguese literature. In his novels, he shows those who have not become part of history but survived the catastrophe (Júdice 2003), questions monuments and monumentality against the lived dimension, and creates a contrasting narrative against the glorious and official one (Siquera Cardoso Vale 2014). In this way, *The Land at The End of the World* is an anti-colonial novel, a

sample of literature's ability to regenerate itself internally, by calling into question the cultural apparatus of the Portuguese tradition, including the literary one (Ghandi 2003). Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the urban marginality experienced by the narrator, his detachment and extraneousness from the city, are manifestations of a trauma which triggers a harsh but deep process of awareness and carries a possibility of redemption for the subject. Indeed, it allows him to detect the role of the colonial cultural apparatus, its familiar ramifications, and his ignorant and fearful complicity. The narrator's exhaustion is the condition for creating an alternative discourse to the dominant, one made up of fragments, atmospheres, and non-linear and unfinished arguments, that this analysis attempts to investigate further by expanding and visually assembling them through collage. *The Land at The End of the World* intercepts the material and imaginary co-constitution of space mentioned above through an inverse process which entails the loss of space. While declaring a subjective loss in spatial terms, the novel dismantles and demystifies a solid colonial narrative. This is made possible by using the same imperial rhetorical tools but in a reverse mode: for instance, ridiculing or minimising those aspects that are culturally and traditionally celebrated. This deconstructive interstice is the privileged space in which collages work. Indeed, the connections with the literary matter do not regard specific contents but rather certain disrespectful atmospheres, which attempt to unmask the concealed traits of colonialism, openly exposing or ironically revealing them.

The third collage mobilises images that mainly recall the colonial period during the Estado Novo regime [Fig. 6]. The only exception is the back of the postcard, which is dated 1907 and comes from the same postcard used in the previous collage, showing a white colonist transported in a litter by two natives. It was sent from Angola to Lisbon or, more precisely, to the Benfica district, where the narrator spent part of his childhood. The underground dialogue with the literary material and the other collages proceeds with the image of Salazar. As in the case of Dom Sebastião, this figure is located at the centre of the composition and is blindfolded. However, unlike Dom Sebastião's spectral blindness and empty eyes, which may refer to a form of mystical or esoteric exaltation, Salazar's is related to a parodic dimension of the past. He is blindfolded, but not completely, by a row

Fig 6. – *Estado Novo*

of *azulejos*, one of the most recurring iconic elements of Portuguese culture. This modern dictator with a bourgeois appearance, whose dangerousness is not immediately perceivable, seems to be playing hide-and-seek among the elements of his tradition. The visual journey through the repetition of *azulejos* and crochet motifs follows, to a certain extent, the author's use of these elements in the novel, where the asphyxiating aspect of doodles and recurrent forms present outside and inside homes is exacerbated. In turn, I tried to amplify this trait and highlight the apparent innocence of the domestic dimension, its capacity for camouflage and merging with tradition and the political level. This crosstalk with elements resulting from the analysis of the novel and the examined social scientific literature, as well as from the other collages, takes place against the background of contemporary Lisbon, the outcome and witness of colonial pervasiveness and continuity.

I added transparent or superimposed vintage stamps to the back of the postcard. These associate exotic animals or humans, characterised by a marked ethnic connotation, with Angola, contributing to the stereotyping of the country. The black and white images refer to the presence of colonists and potential *retornados* and are fragments of Portuguese photographs from the 1950s and 1960s. While Salazar sinks among the crocheted laces, along with the caravels and glorious past, the image of Queen Nzinga Mbandi dominates the scene. In the seventeenth century, the queen regained the Kingdoms of Ndongo and Matamba in Northern Angola, which had been conquered in a previous attack by Portugal. This figure creates tension with the racist sentences extracted from the novel, the figure of Salazar and the images of the colonial stamps pretending to essentialise Angola in few traits. Below Nzinga Mbandi, a further stamp commemorates Angolan independence. This juxtaposition generates a sense of continuity between the two figures, accentuated by the symmetry of forms and colours: the yellow tips of the queen's crown and the star, both of them on a red background, contribute to associating these two events of the Angolan history, temporally distant but ideologically close. Fragments and figures that emerge from the literary and social scientific narrative coalesce into collage; in turn, thoughts and connections originate from collages, participating in the analysis.

This collage is an example of the possible dialogue between textual images (*azulejos*, crocheted doilies, the city, and Salazar) and visual conceptualisation (Dom Sebastião's

blindness, dictatorship hidden behind traditions, shipwreck of the caravel, and memorialised past). In this way, forms of irony and parrhesia (Brigstocke 2013; 2014) are practicable as a 'calque' of the sarcastic truth-telling originated by trauma and shaped by literary writing. Finally, several elements in the collage contribute to generating empathy. This is the case for Queen Nzinga Mbandi and the idea of black redemption from oppression, but also applies to colonists, seen as everyday people, often unaware of the real cost of their presence in Africa. Creative geohumanities have considered empathy (Angeles 2017; Angeles and Pratt 2017) and also underlined its controversial nature, which, on the one hand, may amplify the possibilities of connection and, on the other, generate a neoliberal acceptance of sameness, erasing differences and otherness (Lather 2000). Nonetheless, it is precisely due to its intrinsic ambiguity that empathy works within collage. In this case, for instance, it amplifies contrast and troubles easy dichotomies, revealing the complexity and intricacy entailed by colonialism. In doing that, empathy reveals its potential as "a visceral site of power knowledge" (Angeles and Pratt 2017, p. 276) and contributes to the expression of affective geopolitics (Madge 2014), which creative geohumanities incorporate.

5.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to reconnect the individual condition of an individual to a historical, social, and political frame by considering a form of psychological urban marginality recognised through progressive detachment from the city. The analysis began with António Lobo Antunes' novel *The Land at the End of the World* (1979), centred on the Portuguese colonial war in Angola. While examining the role of the war in this particular process of marginalisation, I focused on more immaterial traits of colonial power, trying to emphasise the nexus between the protagonist's extraneousness in the present, the Angolan war, and the colonial cultural apparatus that fuelled colonialism. Starting with the subject's incapacity to recognise the city's spatial dynamics and inscribe himself in the familiar and historical narrative, the analysis identified this condition's implications through the exploration of three lines of flight: the detachment from Lisbon, the colonial dimension of knowledge, and the war in Angola. These connect through their relationships with representation and imagery,

and allow movement outside the novel. While investigating them, I link the individual to the collective dimension through a critical and visual discourse on Portuguese colonial imagery and the Angolan war. I combined Edward Relph's placelessness and topophobia with the non-representational conceptual tool of atmosphere, analysing examples of literary atmospheres which show the emotional disconnection from the place of origin and the colonial embedment within everyday life.

On the one hand, atmosphere can be considered as a threshold from which to investigate some of the implications, of which detachment is a trace. On the other hand, the detachment from the city is a spatial manifestation of the trauma triggered by the war in Angola. Therefore, I investigated the role of trauma from a Lacanian perspective, underlining the possibility of resistance to the dominant historical narrative and, on this basis, connecting trauma to the concept of exhaustion delivered by the late Deleuze. Finally, to focus on the colonial cultural implications evoked by the novel through family habits and rituals, I explored the critical reflections of Eduardo Lourenço on Portuguese colonial imagery and the role of literature. Atmosphere constitutes the link with the practice of collage. Indeed, collage contributes to exploring literary atmospheres, fragments of memories, and images delivered by the novel and the social scientific literature, investigating their relationships and creating visual assemblages. Through these reconfigurations, the colonial imagery and Angolan conflict are expanded out of the novel and explored in their ramifications. Interacting with each other and the writing, the collages offer a different perspective on urban marginality in the postcolonial city, unveiling a sense of continuity from the discoveries to the exploitation until decolonisation. On the one hand, this continuity is deeply intertwined with knowledge, science, and rationality; on the other, it is soaked in religion and pseudomystical and esoteric beliefs. These cultural pillars sustained and justified colonial practice across the centuries.

The effort to illustrate the three collages throughout the chapter has aimed to make explicit certain areas of shadow, margins of unsaid, and opacities, which the collages manifest without explaining. This triggers a double decolonial claim. Indeed, not only did the analysis shed light on the historical and geographical collusion between the rational and irrational, and scientific and non-scientific, but in doing so through creative practice, it affirmed the need to incorporate non-logocentric knowledge processes into social science. Meanwhile, by

incorporating literary texts and art-based practices into the analysis, the work shares the claims of geohumanities in considering the political nature of the creative (Marston and De Leeuw 2013; Hawkins 2014a; 2019; Hawkins et al. 2015). Therefore, it restates the interest in themes such as colonialism, race (Saldanha 2006; Ahmed 2007; Noxolo 2020; Hamilton 2020), and marginality (Chappatte 2015; Déry et al. 2012), and attempts to imagine alternative epistemologies (Springer 2017) to intersect creatively, as a Western and white subject, the decolonial discourse (Quijano 2000; 2007; 2008; Mignolo 2002; 2007; 2009; Mbembe 2016; de La Cadena and Blaser 2018; Oslender 2019).


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CONCLUSION

In this conclusion, I firstly retrace my research, following the thread of the objectives and focusing on the findings. Then, I discuss the analysis' theoretical, methodological, and practical implications. Finally, I consider the limitations encountered and future research suggestions. In the final pages, I leave the 'word' to collage by inserting some compositions not previously included in the analysis. The choice has been made not to comment on them, in an attempt to make visible and emphasise one of the meta-analytic outcomes discussed within the limitations.

This thesis has investigated the postcolonial city through the lenses of marginality and resistance, and considered the contribution of creative approaches in decolonising geography. For this purpose, I identified a theoretical framework that could rationally support and imaginatively fuel the research. I considered the areas within cultural geography that best respond to analytical needs: literary, non-representational, creative, postcolonial, and decolonial. I analysed Kinshasa and Lisbon by using novels and practising collage through a method that merges the dismantling reading of the literary texts with visual exploration and assemblage. Navigating the preliminary research questions, I first identified the forms of urban marginality and the possibility of resistance in the novels, then extracted and prolonged them out of the literary text through lines of flight, generating rhizomatic investigations. The need to consider the less tangible aspects of marginality in the postcolonial city, such as those related to emotions, affects, desires, or the psychic dimension, drove the search for adequate literary textual analysis and non-representational visualisation.

To investigate Kinshasa, the urban space, street children, and informal activities were examined through social scientific literature and visual material. These lines of flight coalesce in the collage, which assembles components of diverse nature in planes of composition centred on simultaneity and movement. While offering fragments of views and visions of the

city, the collage contributes to rearticulating urban marginality and resistance in a postcolonial atmosphere where the return of the past and gazes at the future merge into everyday life. Analysis identified in the novel a form of resistance close to an idea developed by Deleuze: resistance as a desiring and productive force that can realise change and which differs from the other forces against established power, whether oppositional or resilient. Indeed, the image of the protagonist is that of a subaltern who is a subject of desire and embodies the potential of affirmative forces, following minor lines of becoming (Burns and Kaiser 2012). Although the marginal's redemption remains confined to the literary universe, the narrative creates its possibility, and the theoretical analysis identifies and defines it. While examining Kinshasa, the first part of my analysis focused on this 'minor' formulation of resistance, which I further articulate through the second part of my analysis on Lisbon.

Progressive detachment from the city is the first line of flight extracted from the second novel. It constitutes the pivot around which the analysis revolves while investigating a form of psychological and existential marginality. This central line of flight is enrooted in the others, namely Portuguese colonial imagery and the colonial war in Angola. Indeed, I considered the detachment from Lisbon as a spatial manifestation of the trauma triggered by the colonial conflict, which generates a sense of alienation accentuated by recognising the illusory nature of colonial national imagery. Through this implication, social scientific literature and collage were used to explore the plurality of processes that shape space, and reassembled some elements disseminated by the lines of flight. While emphasising this spatial multidimensionality, I considered the role of trauma as a device that, along with marginalisation, can generate awareness and allow forms of truths to emerge. Through the Deleuzian concept of exhaustion, which identifies the absence of possibilities for a subject, I recognised in the trauma itself a possibility of resistance. Indeed, Pelbart's reinterpretation of Deleuze's concept sees the exhaustion of all possibilities as a precondition for creating a possible not yet determined, such as in the case of the narrator's speech.

Despite the research concerning different forms of urban marginality, places, times, and colonialism, I avoided a comparative approach since my analytical purpose was to explore singularities rather than to search for similarities or divergences. Nonetheless, I understood resistance to be the common thread connecting the two chapters and making the analysis a

single process. In the case of Kinshasa, the work scrutinised spatial and social issues effortlessly attributable to the sphere of marginality, and the resistance outlined a possibility of escape from this condition. In the case of Lisbon, despite maintaining spatial significance, marginality was considered from a more psychological perspective, leading to an unusual interpretation of resistance. I understand this as a further development of the same investigation, which made the analysis progress by exploring the question of marginality through such diverse aspects. At the same time, resistance was interpreted in depth as a possibility of escape from a condition of crisis. This possibility exists until the end, and can allow access to further awareness and knowledge. Finally, although both marginality and resistance are spatial issues, resistance, in particular, concerns the production of space: it is a form of spacing which has to do with a total reinterpretation of the condition of marginality, even the most desperate, and which gives place to a reconfiguration of the situation.

While centred on resistance, the analysis also reflected on the method, which became, at the same time, a procedure and object of analysis, giving the research a meta-analytical dimension. Indeed, the method was not intended as a separate entity to be planned in advance and then applied to the selected materials, but as a constitutive part of the analysis. Furthermore, it embodied a form of resistance within the discipline by making an attempt to practise a post-qualitative methodology in cultural geography beyond canonical methodological frameworks. This leads us to consider that decolonisation, as an undoubtedly political issue, must also be considered seriously in its epistemological aspects.

The findings illustrated have theoretical, methodological, and practical implications. The theoretical implication that I identified concerns the role of collage in research, with particular reference to the chosen theoretical framework. The practice of collage aligns with deconstruction and Derridean concepts of trace and *différance*; it also constitutes a possible visual translation of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of assemblage. I consider the term 'translation' in the Derridean sense as an act of *différance* through which the process of signification always remains open. Collage begins with choices – those of fragments, a non-entire, a part of – and continues with their encounters, where figures freed from their previous contexts meet (Fuão 2011). This gives rise to an assemblage, an unprecedented production in a constant state of becoming, and visually reveals the non-arborescent and

rhizomatic nature of thought discussed by Deleuze and Guattari (2017). Moreover, in the transfiguration of each initial element and the constant changing of meanings, the collage produces space. The space created is visual, as it gives rise to new figures, but also mental, as it arouses associations and stimulates a process of constant reconceptualisation, which can provide access to previously unexplored levels of knowledge. Indeed, collage is a plane of composition which constantly produces novel connections, fluctuating between the dimensions of immanence and organisation.

The methodological implications of my work consist of the contribution that collage can bring to research, not only in the analysis phase but in the entire research arch, from data collection to dissemination. Indeed, it allows us to work with the intangible aspects of our relationship with spaces. By manipulating, exploring, and transforming this ultra-qualitative data, it identifies unusual associations or elicits unforeseen connections. This potentiality may first intervene in data gathering, enhancing participants' engagement through affective and emotional codes. As this thesis has illustrated, collage can operate within the analysis, extending and amplifying the interpretive level and opening it to the dimension of the unexpected and unfinished. Finally, collage may contribute to dissemination by both facilitating communication with non-academic audiences and by bringing the potentiality of its non-linear and non-syntactical nature into the academic and social scientific discourse.

Considering the practical implications of the reflection on resistance, I return to decolonising as an epistemological issue and the importance of alternative and non-conventional approaches. Indeed, decolonising in intercultural and intracultural terms the most rigid aspects of geographical research and social scientific apparatus implies debating different forms of knowledge, not necessarily Western, academic or conscious-centred, and incorporating non-scientific understanding into the discourse. This can facilitate reaching areas and groups that might not otherwise participate in research or benefit from its results, as I will discuss shortly in my suggestions for future research.

I recognise two main limitations to this research. The first concerns the analysis centred on Kinshasa and deals with ethical and psychological issues; the second concerns the analysis grounded on Lisbon and the research's practical implications. An unconscious selective

process affected the photographic material when visually analysing urban marginality in Kinshasa. While the attention paid to safeguarding the subjects depicted, by hiding faces or reducing the sizes of the images, was done consciously, a preventive discarding of a series of photographs concerning street children occurred at another level. The photos were taken over the years by a local social worker who has taken care of Kinshasa's street children for decades and with whom I have spent long periods in the capital. For months, I followed his charity in the recovery activities of *shégué* children and adolescents, with whom I shared intense moments. Manipulating photos concerning them, directly or indirectly, is simply not the same as pasting stamps or cutting up old pictures of whichever colonial empire. Street children's photos seemed more 'real' because they remained connected to personal memories and an emotional archive. Therefore, altering them implied a process of objectification and would have meant I was participating in the same process of colonial representation of otherness that I intended to criticise. I recognised this dynamic after concluding both analytical chapters (but not the analysis, evidently). From this moment onwards, further collages emerged; I have inserted them at the end of this thesis as a reminder that research is always also internal and is truly infinite.

The other limitation concerns the distance from everyday life, which speculative research sometimes struggles to bridge. This risk is present in the analysis of urban marginality in Lisbon. Although interpreted as a spatial manifestation of trauma and colonial outcomes, the detachment from the city remains confined to a speculative sphere. For instance, it does not compare with similar cases or analogous phenomena, and even if the dimension of singularity has been intentionally sought, this case risks remaining a solipsistic analysis of a fact without correspondence with the socio-geographical aspects of everyday life. Nonetheless, even such a specific sample of urban marginality can be recontextualised, and the analysed case extended. War veterans, *retornados*, and migrants are possible cases in which the detachment from the places where they live can be variously shaped, and the condition of marginality can condense unsuspected logic and forms of knowledge.

I end this conclusion with a brief discussion about my suggestions for future research. A natural expansion of this study should concern both the arguments about marginality and resistance and the methodological one. In the first case, a theoretical deepening can offer

further articulations and developments to non-representational research. In particular, I refer to the Deleuzian and Guattarian philosophical literature and to that on Lacanian psychoanalysis. Concerning methodology, future research would benefit from the contributions of other art-based techniques. Specifically, I think of writing in light of the controversial relationship between words and images. This relationship, which in my work I have explored through literary texts and collage, could be investigated through creative writing, 'fictional' or otherwise. For example, it could be a writing of place, atmospheric, able to combine in new formulations oppositional relations such as here and there, past and present, and the subjective and collective dimensions; or it could be a hybrid writing in linguistic terms that fuses different idioms. In both cases, it would be close to literary writing and an alternative to conventional academic writing. Moreover, this deconstruction could also concern patterns of scholarly communication by destructuring the canonical organisation of contents within presentations, books, or social scientific articles.

Finally, further research should be concerned with fieldwork. This hybrid and creative methodology could benefit research in disadvantaged areas, such as specific urban peripheries or isolated villages, with marginalised categories, such as the elderly or street children, and any research entailing encounters with otherness, whatever form it may take. In particular, as discussed previously, collage can facilitate information collection, stimulate relationships and engagement, and contribute to the dissemination of the work by promoting communication with non-academic audiences. Ultimately, after this speculative choice centred on theoretical and methodological aspects, a natural extension of my research would be to test the post- or more-than-qualitative perspective in fieldwork and social and political action. In this way, it could comprehensively respond to significant demands of geohumanities, namely, new ways to produce knowledge through the refinement and exercise of empathy (Angeles 2017; Angeles and Pratt 2017), consideration of the political nature and role of creativity (Marston and De Leeuw 2013; Hawkins 2014a), and examination of affective geopolitics (Madge 2014).

Fig. 7 – *Untitled* [photo courtesy Jacques Kabongo]

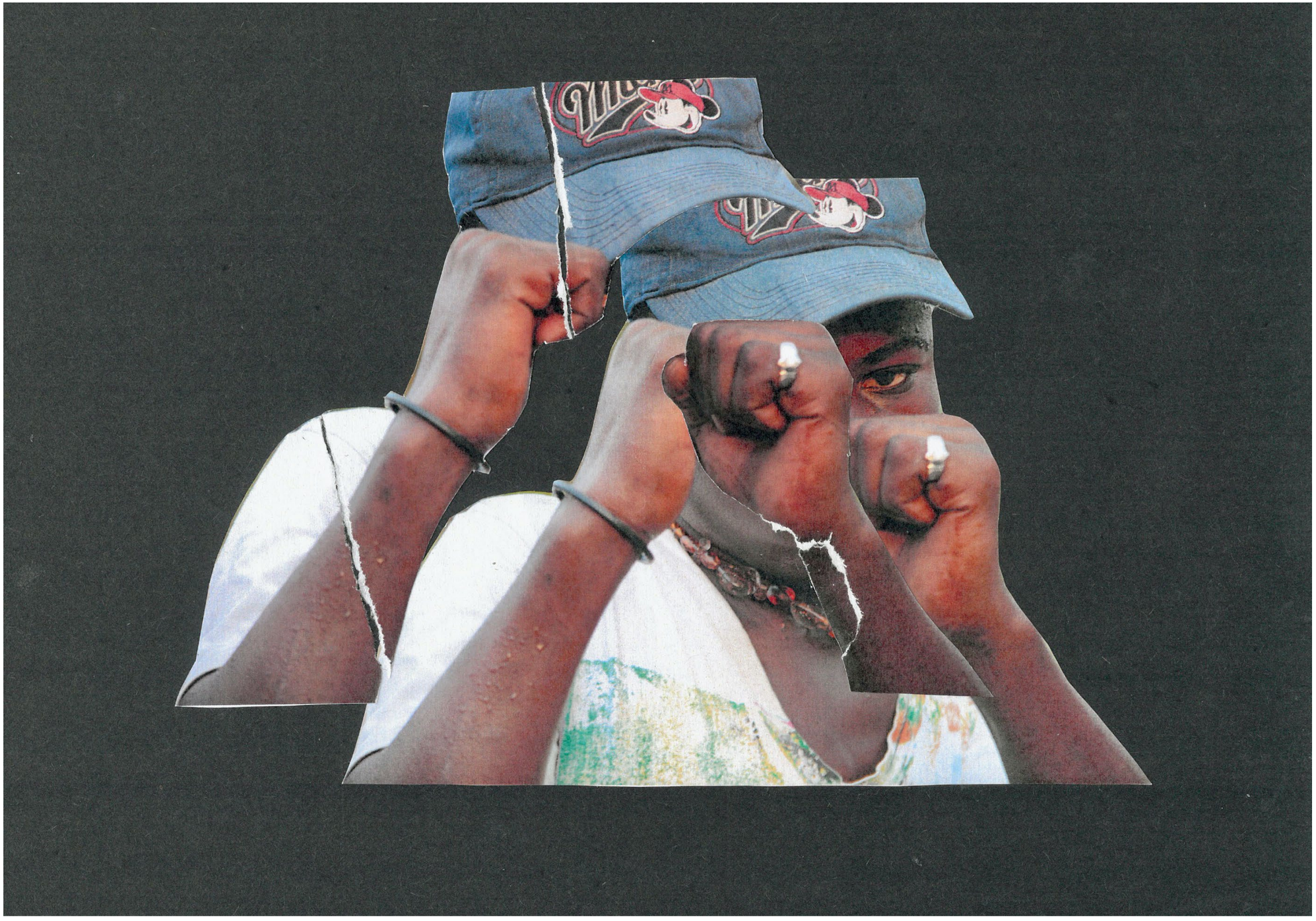

Fig. 8 – *Untitled* [photo courtesy Jacques Kabongo]

Fig. 9 – *Untitled* [photo courtesy Jacques Kabongo]

Fig. 10 – *Untitled* [photo courtesy Jacques Kabongo]

Fig. 11 – *Untitled* [photo courtesy Jacques Kabongo]

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