

Fintar o Destino: between the colonial bond and a postcolonial double-bind

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‘When Vasco da Gama captained Benfica,
those were the glory days’

Landeg White, ‘Fado’ (*Arab Work*, 2006)

Abstract. This article addresses Fernando Vendrell’s *Fintar o destino* [*Dribbling Fate*] (1998) by considering the appropriation of sports by the Portuguese *Estado Novo*’s colonialist ideology and policies (inspired by Gilberto Freyre’s lusotropicalist theories). In parallel, it highlights the role that football in particular plays in underwriting and simultaneously undermining affective, cultural, and economic bonds and binds between Cape Verde and Portugal, pre- and post-independence. The connections between former colony and metropolis, as viewed through the lens of the increasingly globalized and commercialized world of football, go beyond (post)colonial nostalgia, as sport may be seen — the emergence of neo-colonial patterns notwithstanding — to provide a platform for a reimagining of individual and collective hopes and challenges.

Keywords. Fernando Vendrell, cinema, football, sport, Lusotropicalism.

Resumo. *Fintar o destino* (1998) convida a uma revisitação da apropriação do desporto por parte das ideologias e práticas colonialistas do Estado Novo português, influenciadas pela teoria lusotropicalista de Gilberto Freyre. Do mesmo passo, aborda o papel que o futebol desempenha, enquanto fenómeno através do qual se manifestam esperanças individuais e coletivas, ao contribuir para a simultânea reinscrição e contestação das ligações e dependências afetivas, culturais e económicas entre Cabo Verde e Portugal nos períodos pré- e pós-independência. As ligações entre as antigas colónia e metrópole, perspectivadas através de um universo futebolístico cada vez mais globalizado e comercializado, estendem-se para lá da nostalgia (pós-)colonial, com o desporto funcionando potencialmente — ainda que considerando a emergência de padrões neocoloniais de exploração — como uma plataforma para uma reinterpretação das esperanças e desafios a nível individual e coletivo.

Palavras-chave. Fernando Vendrell, cinema, futebol, desporto, Lusotropicalismo.

Drawing the lines: campo/contracampo

Fernando Vendrell's *Fintar o Destino* (1998) [Dribbling Fate] opens with the image of a youth, who will remain anonymous, drawing the lines of a football pitch in the barren landscape of São Vicente Island alternating with the film credits. The hand-held camera shots, relatively long cuts, and the soundtrack contribute to an ominous start to the film which, in many ways, contrasts with the character-driven narrative of the film. The ambiguous status of the opening shots in relation to the diegesis (the football field and the young character are not featured again) highlights the way in which these scenes work as a metaphorical establishing shot.

These establishing shots of the 'campo' find a counterpoint of sorts (or a 'contracampo') in the protagonist Mané's long-deferred visit to the pitch in the Estádio da Luz, during which he finally – after an interregnum of four decades – visits the club which he supports from afar and which, when Mané was aged nineteen and a talented goalkeeper for local club C S Mindelense, had invited Mané to play for them as a young prospect: Sport Lisboa e Benfica. The shot of Mané's hand caressing the perfectly kept grass in the Lisbon stadium mirrors the earlier shot of the hands and body of the youth painstakingly scratching the surface, dispensing the lime so as to draw the lines of the playing field against the barren, unforgiving landscape.



The establishing shots evoke more than the isolation of the islands and the harsh physical elements, a recurring trait of films set on the Cape Verdean archipelago. They also inscribe, from the very start, a human and historical element via the presence of the youth and the superimposition/creation of a space in the Cape Verde islands for the colonial export that is football. The significance of the references of Benfica, as the most successful metropolitan club of the time, counting among its ranks the most talented players hailing from the Portuguese colonies and, as a consequence, the club which eventually became most associated with the abusive colonial narrative of the Portuguese *Estado Novo* regime, cannot be overlooked. The DVD edition of the film features mock-nostalgic recreation of Mindelo's sporting life during the colonial period (football, but also including golf) which did not make the final cut but which nevertheless point to the sports legacy of the colonial period.

The effect produced by the lines being drawn at the beginning of the film is that of highlighting football as more than a mere metaphor for social phenomena, or just a manifestation of deeper social trends and tensions; in fact, as Roberto DaMatta points out:

Sport is part of society just as society is part of sport so it is impossible to understand one activity (or a set of activities) without reference to the totality within which it exists. Sport and society are as two sides of a coin and not as the roof is to the foundations of a house.¹

The drawn lines of the football field inscribe and enclose metaphorically a number of wider aspects of society; in this particular case, the aspects of a postcolonial society which are enacted on screen most visibly – albeit far from exclusively – through Mané's unconditional

¹ Roberto DaMatta, 'Sport in Society: An Essay on Brazilian Football', trans. by Peter Fry *Vibrant – Virtual Brazilian Anthropology*, v. 6, n. 2 (2009), pp. 98-120 (101-102). Available at <http://www.vibrant.org.br/issues/v6n2/roberto-damatta-sport-in-society/>

support for the club of the former metropolis which he had a chance to join as a young man. The centrality of football to the narrative is undeniable, allowing for the classification of *Fintar o Destino* as a sports film, however elusive that category may ultimately prove to be, with ‘a sport, a sporting occasion, or an athlete as the central focus’.² The human element in the opening scenes foreshadows the character-driven narrative, centred around Mané, that the film – which could be classified under the subgenre of ‘fan film’³ – will unfold.

As Fernando Arenas points out, the film addresses the question of ‘affect’, a ‘question that informs postcolonial relations while being fraught with contradiction and ambiguity’,⁴ while avoiding – and in many ways, forewarning against – the pitfalls of lusotropicalist nostalgia. While documenting in Mozambique a situation close to that described by filmmaker Fernando Vendrell in Cape Verde and which was the inspiration for the the film,⁵ Nuno Domingos speaks of a ‘Portuguese football narrative’ which is still ‘a major element in the local urban popular culture’ in former Portuguese colonies.⁶ The reproduced colonial ‘bonds’⁷ would seem to confirm Eric Hobsbawm’s statement that ‘[t]he imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people. The individual, even the one who only cheers, becomes a symbol of his nation himself’.⁸ The postcolonial dimension of affect towards football clubs from the ex-metropolis places the football supporter as ‘symbol’ not of his/her nation but rather of an imagined community of *Benfiquistas*, *Sportinguistas*,

² *Introducing Sport in Films*, ed. by Emma Poulton and Martin Roderick, Sport in Films, 1 edition (Routledge, 2008), pp. xviii–xxvii.

³ Bruce Babington, *The Sports Film: Games People Play* (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2014) pp. 49–51.

⁴ Fernando Arenas, *Lusophone Africa: Beyond Independence* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press: 2011), p. 137.

⁵ *Fintar o destino*, dir. by Fernando Vendrell (David & Goliás, 1998).

⁶ Nuno Domingos, ‘Urban Football Narratives and the Colonial Process in Lourenço Marques’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 28, 15 (2011) pp. 2159–2175.

⁷ Nuno Domingos, *Urban Football* (2011), pp. 2159–2175.

⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 143.

Portistas. Paul Darby and Fernando Borges⁹ (in relation to Cape Verde) note how support for Portuguese teams is deep-seated in former Portuguese colonies in Africa.

In the film, football may very well be the ‘centerpiece of a drama onto which the individual and collective dreams of a nation are projected’.¹⁰ But it is the relation between individual and collective that is in question and the question behind and beyond the national paradigm. Sport is uniquely effective, it would seem, not only as ‘a medium for inculcating national feelings’.¹¹ Football is important to Mané not so much in relation to the nation, present or in the colonial past, but rather because it triggers ‘intimate’ and ‘remote subjectivities’.¹² Football will also act as a medium for Mané’s reinsertion and refashioning of his role in the São Vicente community of which he is – and this is truer by then end of the film – a member. Thus, dribbling fate might be read less as an indication of Mané’s ‘lost opportunity’ as a young prospect, and more as a way in which he has reinvented himself (as agent, going to Lisbon, etc). In this sense, the film seems to conform to the master narrative of sports film, falling under the master thematic of gaining (or losing) respect or acceptance.¹³

What’s love (of football) got to do with it?

The phenomenon of football in Africa, according to Nuno Domingos, contradicts J. A. Mangan’s ‘bond theory’ which sees sporting practices as a vehicle for the creation of ‘cultural bonds’, leading to ‘the acceptance of the colonizers’ practices and values by the local

⁹ Paul Darby, ‘Migração para Portugal de jogadores de futebol africanos: recurso colonial e neocolonial’, *Análise Social*, v.41, n.179 (2006), pp. 417-33 (426); Fernando Borges, ‘Pontapé inicial: um estudo de caso do futebol no Cabo Verde moderno’, in *Mais do que um jogo: o esporte e o continente africano*, ed. by Victor Andrade de Melo, Marcelo Bittencourt and Augusto Nascimento, (Rio de Janeiro: Apicuri, 2010), pp. 185-209.

¹⁰ Fernando Arenas, *Lusophone Africa*, 2011, p. 138.

¹¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (1992), p. 143.

¹² David Rowe, ‘If you film it, will they come? Sports on Film’, *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 22, 4 (1998), pp. 350-359.

¹³ See Garry Whannel, ‘Winning and Losing Respect: Narratives of Identity in Sport Films’, in *Sport in Films*, ed. by Emma Poulton and Martin Roderick, (London: Routledge, 2008) p. 93-110.

populations, contributing to impose a political recognition'.¹⁴ On the one hand, football's early professionalization and popular, working class practice clashes with the 'amateur and elitist ethos' of other sports in colonial history.¹⁵ There is little doubt that much can be gained from addressing the historical, cultural and socio-political aspects of sports in the African continent.¹⁶ Football's multifaceted and polarized dissemination can shine light on the workings of informal colonial structures, as '[t]he game was transmitted in Africa through the action of various agents with different interests'.¹⁷ As Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson succinctly put it, unlike sports such as cricket and rugby, football spread through 'trading ecumene', industry and business, in informal ways.¹⁸ The local appropriation of football in the colonies spawned ambiguous and multi-layered relations, or, as Domingos puts it 'occasionally contradictory': on the one hand, sporting practices may indeed have 'represented an attempt to adhere to the colonizer's values', with football allowing for 'social mobility, a way of integration in the colonial society or even a ticket to travel to the metropolitan society'; on the other hand, 'the game also became an arena of resistance to the colonial power'.¹⁹ Consequently, Domingos maintains that football's expansion in Africa was manifold and that it escaped the control of colonial organizations with the creation of 'native' clubs, associations and structures, leading to a 'creolization' of football, often with a 'pan-African dimension'.²⁰ Not that colonial authorities did not take measures to reign it in and reinstate control.²¹

¹⁴ Nuno Domingos, 'Football and Colonialism, Domination and Appropriation: the Mozambican case', in *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 8, 4 (2007), pp. 478-494 (479).

¹⁵ Nuno Domingos, *Football and Colonialism*, (2007), pp. 478-494 (480).

¹⁶ See Bea Vidacs, 'Through the Prism of Sports: Why Should Africanists Study Sports?', *Afrika Spectrum*, vol. 41, 3, (2006), pp. 331-349.

¹⁷ See Nuno Domingos, *Football and Colonialism* (2007), pp. 478-494 (481).

¹⁸ Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson, *Globalization and Football: a Critical Sociology* (London: SAGE Publications, 2009), p. 8.

¹⁹ Nuno Domingos, *Football and Colonialism* (2007), pp. 478-494 (482).

²⁰ Nuno Domingos, *Football and Colonialism* (2007), pp. 478-494 (481).

²¹ Nuno Domingos, *Urban Football* (2011), pp. 2159-2175 (2169-2172); Victor Andrade de Melo and Marcelo Bittencourt, 'Sob suspeita: o controle dos clubes esportivos no contexto colonial português', *Tempo*, v. 16, 33, (2012), pp. 191-215.

In the Portuguese colonies, however, the player's path to professionalism was restricted to and limited by a distinctively colonial framework: the path was delineated according to interests and links between metropolitan clubs and affiliated or subordinated local clubs; additionally, it was the status of the 'assimilado' attributed to sufficiently culturally Europeanized Africans that allowed these players to play for the Portuguese national team and clubs.²² The metropolitan clubs' 'embaixadas patrióticas'²³ [patriotic delegations] acted as vehicles for colonialist propaganda. Even if there was no fully-fledged plan by the *Estado Novo* to instrumentalise football, as in the paradigmatic case of Italian fascism,²⁴ there was a significant engagement with an ideological view of sports at the official level, corroborated by media and clubs, very often seeking to endorse the post-WWII rhetoric inspired by Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre's thinking on the Portuguese contribution to the formation of Brazil reinforced from the 1950s onwards with Freyre's engagement with *Estado Novo*'s colonialist policy. As Melo and Bittencourt note, the 'mobilization of sport by the Portuguese regime was also related to their strategies to keep possessions in Africa and Asia', with the 'purpose of exalting a supposed imperial identity, as a sign that it had constructed a "civilized" nation that was the product of interracial encounters'.²⁵

Portugal's international isolation in geopolitical terms post-WWII inspired the revoking of the Acto Colonial (1930) and led to the Constitutional revisions of 1952, driven by Adriano Moreira's insight and coopting of Gilberto Freyre's ideologically charged ideas, which nevertheless carried a modern air of scientific legitimacy.²⁶ Freyre open cooperation in defending Portuguese colonialism would follow suit and was visible, among other places, in

²² Paul Darby, 'Migração para Portugal de jogadores de futebol africanos' (2006), pp.417-33 (421)

²³ See Marcos Cardão, 'Peregrinações exemplares: As embaixadas patrióticas dos clubes metropolitanos ao "ultramar português"', in *Esporte e Lazer na África: Novos Olhares/ Sport and Leisure in Africa: A New Approach*, ed. by A. Nascimento, M. Bittencourt, N. Domingos and V. A. de Melo (Rio de Janeiro: 7Letras, 2013), pp. 109– 28.

²⁴ See Simon Martin, *Football and Fascism: The National Game under Mussolini* (Oxford: Berg., 2004), pp. 51-77.

²⁵ Victor Andrade Melo and Marcelo Bittencourt, 'Sports in the Colonial Portuguese Politics: Boletim Geral do Ultramar'. *Tempo*, vol. 19, 34 (2013), pp. 69-80. (71).

²⁶ Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, 'Empire, Colonial Wars and Post-Colonialism in the Portuguese Contemporary Imagination', *Portuguese Studies*, 18, (2002), pp. 132-214 (165).

the publications emerging from his close collaboration with the official commemorations of the V Centennial anniversary of the death of Henry the Navigator (*O Luso e o Trópico*; but also the earlier *Integração Portuguesa nos Trópicos*). As is the case of Freyre's ideas on football, the basic tenets of 'lusotropicalism' were already present *in nuce* in *Casa-grande & senzala* and it is as unsurprising as it is significant that the term 'lusotropicalism' was crystallized during a journey across the Portuguese colonies sponsored by the *Estado Novo*.²⁷ It was first featured in a talk by Freyre in Goa, later included in *Um Brasileiro em terras Portuguesas*, a collection of speeches and talks.²⁸ The travelogue *Aventura e rotina* was the other writing to emerge from Freyre's state-sponsored visit, and it completes the image of lusotropicalism proffered in Freyre's speeches as a benign version of colonialism, with an emphasis on culture rather than race, marked by the plasticity and propensity for miscegenation, democratic *avant la lettre* in social and ethnic terms.²⁹ Freyre's visit to Cape Verde, described in *Aventura e Rotina*, was a major disappointment to the Cape Verdean intelligentsia. Rather than, as was expected, finding Cape Verde to be an illustration of lusotropical society, Freyre's disparaging remarks (among other things, finding little interest in the *crioulo* language and appealing to greater European influx so as to counteract the excessively African elements in the islands) confirmed the flaws and prejudices carried in and by Freyre's theories.³⁰ Although the changes implemented in the aforementioned *Estado Novo*'s Constitutional Revision of 1951, inspired by the nascent lusotropicalist ideology, represented

²⁷ Regarding the *Estado Novo*'s appropriation of Freyre's ideas, see Cláudia Castelo, *O modo português de estar no mundo: o luso-tropicalismo e a ideologia colonial portuguesa (1933-1961)* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 1998); Yves Léonard, 'Salazar et lusotropicalisme, histoire d'une appropriation', *Lusotopie*, (1997), pp. 211-226.

²⁸ Gilberto Freyre, *Um brasileiro em terras portuguesas: Introdução a uma possível luso-tropicologia, acompanhada de conferências e discursos proferidos em Portugal e em terras lusitanas e ex-lusitanas da Ásia, da África e do Atlântico* (Lisboa: Livros do Brasil, 1953).

²⁹ Gilberto Freyre, *Aventura e rotina: Sugestões de uma viagem à procura de constantes portuguesas de caráter e ação* [1953], 3rd edition (Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks, 2001).

³⁰ Isabel P. B. Fêo Rodrigues, 'Islands of Sexuality: Theories and Histories of Creolization in Cape Verde', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 36, 1 (2003), pp. 83-103 (84-90); Fernando Arenas, *Reverberações lusotropicalis: Gilberto Freyre em África I – Cabo Verde* (BUALA: Cultura contemporânea Africana, 2010), <http://www.buala.org/pt/a-ler/reverberacoes-lusotropicalis-gilberto-freyre-em-africa-1-cabo-verde>.

an improvement on the previous Colonial Act, it was clearly insufficient and it amounted, in some instances, to no more than a cosmetic discursive operation.

When it comes to sports, and football in particular, the contrast between, on the one hand, the official discourse and discourse of officials³¹ and, on the other, the effectively segregated organization and practice of the sport could hardly be more striking, as Domingos has demonstrated in the case of Mozambique.³² In effect, besides the clear propagandistic interests, the post-WWII surge in the growth and development of the colonies' economies will lead to closer ties between the metropolis and the 'overseas provinces', conveniently remained in the context of the pressure for decolonization and self-determination. Combined with the international success of players hailing from the colonies both at club level and at international level in the Portuguese national team, there is a strengthening of ties between metropolitan and – often subsidiary – overseas teams via visits, exchanges and tournaments (including the unmistakably propagandistically events of the Salazar Cup).³³ The *Estado Novo* drew on the success of players from the colonies representing Portuguese clubs to score ideological points but this should not distract from the fact that it is hard to overestimate the impact of players hailing from the colonial possessions, with Eusébio da Silva Ferreira as the most significant example of the scale of that impact, but by no means an exception. When Eusébio arrived to play in Benfica, players such as Matateu (*Os Belenenses*), Fernando Peyroteo (*Sporting Clube de Portugal*), Mário Wilson (*Académica de Coimbra*), Rodolfo Albasini (*Futebol Clube do Porto*) had already had a dramatic impact on Portuguese football; Eusébio's Benfica featured two team captains that had been born in the colonies (José Águas, in Angola; Mário Coluna, in Mozambique).

³¹ See Victor Andrade Melo and Marcelo Bittencourt, 'Sports in the Colonial Portuguese Politics' (2013), pp.71-77; see Pedro Sousa de Almeida, 'Futebol, racismo e media: Os discursos da imprensa portuguesa durante o fascismo e pós-revolução de Abril', *Revista de Ciências Sociais*, vol. 44 (2016), pp. 71–90.

³² See Nuno Domingos, *Football and Colonialism* (2007), 478-494; Nuno Domingos, *Urban Football* (2011), pp 2159-2175; Victor Andrade de Melo and Marcelo Bittencourt, 'Sob suspeita' (2012), pp. 191-215.

³³ Victor Andrade de Melo and Marcelo Bittencourt, 'Sports in the Colonial Portuguese Politics' (2013), pp.71-77.

Freyre's groundbreaking work on football as a relevant aspect of popular culture, linked in his analysis to national identity, and his notion of 'foot-ball [sic] mulato', is inseparable from what came to be known as 'racial democracy', as Freyre framed the Afro-Brazilian presence as a 'positive mark in Brazil's historical process'³⁴ and the resulting hybridization as a fundamental aspect of 'brasilidade', the evolution of which could be traced through football.³⁵ The fact that segregationist and discriminatory practices in football were still very much in play during the first half of the twentieth century³⁶ and that, as late as 1954, Brazilian players of African descent were held responsible for the Brazilian national team's perceived shortcomings (most notably the defeat to Uruguay in the final of the 1950 World Cup in Maracanã stadium) in a thinly disguised biological racism³⁷ should help cast a critical light on Freyre's postulations.

Since Freyre's observations on football were restricted to the game in Brazil, it was up to Portuguese media's 'senso comum jornalístico' [journalistic common sense], as Nuno Domingos puts it, to step in to promote the notion of 'um estilo de jogo imperial, luso-africano ou euro-africano' [an imperial style of game, luso-african or euro-african]³⁸ behind the international success of Portuguese teams at club level (most notably Benfica) and at international level (the 1966 World Cup campaign). It involved a strange variation on Freyre's notions of race; as the newspaper *A Bola* put it in 1966 (the same year as the successful campaign in the World Cup) about the team, nicknamed *Magriços*, a name drawn from a chivalric narrative retold by Luís de Camões in *Os Lusíadas* (Canto VI), a text heavily favoured

³⁴ Tiago Maranhão, 'Apollonians and Dionysians: The Role of Football in Gilberto Freyre's Vision of Brazilian People', *Soccer & Society*, 8.4 (2007), pp. 510-523 (513).

³⁵ Tiago Maranhão and Jorge Knijik, 'Futebol Mulato: Racial Constructs in Brazilian Football', *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Journal*, vol.3, 2 (2011), pp. 55-69 (60).

³⁶ See José Sérgio Leite Lopes, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Color in the Making of Brazilian Football', *Daedalus*, 129.2 (2000), 239-70.

³⁷ See Lopes, 260.

³⁸ Nuno Domingos, 'Uma sociedade vista do campo de futebol', *Gilberto Freyre: Novas leituras do outro lado do Atlântico*, ed. by Marcos Cardão and Castelo Cláudia (São Paulo: Edusp, 2015), pp. 179-97 (194-95).

as well as coopted by a regime building upon a romanticized view of sixteenth century Portuguese maritime expansion:

O futebol português, com a unidade r cica de um pa s pluricontinental e plurirracial, ser , na Europa, a express o acabada da concilia o do praticante dos tr picos, com a sua habilidade cong nita, com o praticante europeu, mais inteligente e met dico, de modo a termos, como resultado da simbiose, uma equipa nacional em que a linha t cnica corre parelhas com a linha temperamental.³⁹

[Portuguese football, by bearing the racial unity of a pluricontinental and multiracial country, will be in Europe the consummate expression of the balance between the player of the Tropics, congenitally talented, and the European player, more intelligent and methodical, so that we can have, as a result of this symbiosis, a national team in which technique and temperament are in accordance].

Pedro Almeida’s reading of texts from *A Bola* regarding Benfica’s 1962 tour through Angola and Mozambique in the wake of back to back European Cup victories are revealing of a similarly ideological mindset. The words of Benfica representatives and political officials do justice to *A Bola*’s jingoistic title: ‘O Benfica rumo a  frica: uma verdadeira miss o ao servi o da p tria!’ [Benfica on its way to Africa: a true mission in the service of the nation!].⁴⁰ Sports, and football from the 1960s onwards in particular, were deployed to foster the idea of a multi-racial, continental empire consistent with the late colonialist cosmetic adjustment.⁴¹

³⁹ Apud Pedro Almeida (2016), p. 81.

⁴⁰ See Pedro Almeida (2016), pp. 79-80.

⁴¹ See Victor Andrade de Melo, ‘Small-Large Representations of the Portuguese Empire: The Stamp Series “Sporting Modalities” (1962)’, *Estudos Hist ricos* 25.50 (2012), pp. 426–46; Melo and Bittencourt (2013).

The Freyrean-inspired instrumentalisation of football, as in the Brazilian case, was not powerful enough to disguise a disquieting reality. The colonial discourse inspired by Freyre's *lusotropicalismo* which eventually came to promote football as a representation and image of the nation/empire ('portugalidade')⁴² did little more than thinly veil historical, institutionally discriminatory and racist attitudes and policies, reflected in the highly segregated practices in Mozambique and Angola.⁴³ As Nuno Domingos states '[a] narrativa desportiva integradora, que louvava a presença dos jogadores negros e mestiços nas equipas metropolitanas, branqueava uma história de discriminação violenta a que o futebol não escapou'[the sports narrative of integration, which showered praise on the presence of black and mixed ancestry players, whitewashed a history of violent discrimination from which football was not excluded].⁴⁴ The activities and agents of clubs formed by 'naturais' [native-born players] from the colonies in Lisbon (Clube Marítimo Africano, founded by members of the Casa dos Estudantes do Império) were spied upon.⁴⁵ The testimony of Mozambican ex-footballer and manager Mário Wilson, in *Futebol de causas* [Football with a Cause],⁴⁶ shines light on the suspicions and vigilance to which footballers from the 'overseas provinces' were subjected, namely Académica de Coimbra footballers, a top division side constituted exclusively by students which was at loggerheads with the *Estado Novo* during the 1960s (most notably during the Academic crises of 1962 and 1969).

Eusébio and the rest

⁴² Nuno Domingos (2011); Mello and Bittencourt (2013).

⁴³ Brazilian football was touted by Freyre as an element of national unity and a vehicle for social mobility; in reality, as Lopes notes, football was rife with class as well as racial barriers and tensions (see Lopes, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Color').

⁴⁴ Nuno Domingos (2015), p. 194.

⁴⁵ See Melo and Bittencourt (2012).

⁴⁶ *Futebol de causas*, dir. By Ricardo Antunes Martins (Persona non grata pictures, 2009).

Vendrell's film clearly establishes a contrast between Mané, leaving the taxi with the symbol of Benfica on his lapel with the aim of talking to the manager or to the President of Benfica, and the statue of Eusébio outside Benfica's Estádio da Luz. Eusébio's presence, through the statue, acts both as a reminder of the success of a generation of players that emigrated to the metropolis and of the opportunity of a lifetime (as Kalu, Mané's prospect and protégé, puts it) that Mané missed by staying behind in Cape Verde as the ship left harbour with his friend Américo on board. Mané is framed clearly outside the grass beneath the statue, somewhat infantilized as he is positioned alongside children playing football, hinting at the childhood dreams he has not yet shaken off.



Ultimately, Mané does not manage to speak to either the manager or the President of Benfica, but he does have a chat, by claiming his status as a potential player for Benfica in the past, with Benfica footballers António Veloso and Rui Águas. It is Rui Águas, playing himself, the son of another legend from Benfica's golden period (the Angolan-born José Águas) who takes Mané to visit the pitch while Mané tries to fulfil the main purpose of his visit, to arrange for Kalu to try out for the Benfica team. The shot of Mané and Eusébio's statue is as subdued as it is effective in establishing a marked contrast between Mané's dreams and lost hope for sporting glory and Eusébio's career as a striker for Benfica and the Portuguese national team. Mané

was, as Eusébio, born in an ‘overseas province’, but Eusébio, contrary to Mané, grabbed his chance to play for Benfica and is still celebrated as the best-ever player for Portugal.

At the height of his fame, Eusébio was configured as a typically Portuguese product and figure, as pointed out by Almeida, with *A Bola* in 1962 comparing Eusébio to that other flagship product of the nation, Port wine, and, in 1963, highlighting the Eusébio’s surname (‘Silva’) as a marker of his portugueseness.⁴⁷ Eusébio once complained about how the national symbol status was detrimental to his career by reporting that Salazar’s intervention stopped him from moving to other teams in 1963,⁴⁸ and, even if the reasons behind the impediment to Eusébio’s signing are still disputed today, there is little doubt that Eusébio’s image was instrumentalised by the regime. Eusébio serving in the Portuguese military or Eusébio visiting the ‘overseas provinces’ surrounded by admiring youths during the aforementioned Benfica 1962 tour of Angola and Mozambique in a visit that contributed to the war effort (July 1962 issue of the *Boletim Geral do Ultramar*),⁴⁹ help configure Eusébio as an ‘instrumental signifier’ at the service of a ‘banal’ lusotropical discourse.⁵⁰

Eusébio’s statue with the Portuguese flag in the background, framed from Mané’s perspective – i.e. the perspective of a fellow ex-‘Portuguese’ from the ‘overseas provinces’ visiting the capital of the ex-metropolis – highlights the way in which, in the wake of Paul Yonnet’s proposition that there is no such thing as a ‘champion apatride’ [stateless champion], Eusébio the football star performs a ‘fonction représentative d’un groupe, d’une communauté’ [representative function for a group, for a community].⁵¹ As Yonnet puts it, ‘[l]es champions ne sont pas là pour se singulariser, se distinguer du groupe, mais pour permettre aux

⁴⁷ See ‘Futebol, racismo e media’, p. 84.

⁴⁸ See Rui Dias, ‘O Rei: 66 anos na vida de Eusébio’ (Lisbon: Record, 2008), p. 36.

⁴⁹ see Melo and Bittencourt (2013), pp. 76-77.

⁵⁰ Marcos Cardão, ‘Um significante instrumental. Eusébio e a banalização do luso-tropicalismo na década de 1960’, *Esporte, Cultura, Nação, Estado – Brasil e Portugal*, ed. by Victor Andrade de Melo, Fábio de Faria Peres e Maurício Drumond (Rio de Janeiro: 7 Letras, 2014), pp. 172-187.

⁵¹ Paul Yonnet, ‘Composantes de l’identité, Mécanismes de l’identification’, *Football et Identités*, ed. by Jean-Michel de Waele and Alexandre Husting, 19–29, (Science Politique. Bruxelles: Université de Bruxelles, 2008), p. 25.

communautés de se voir exister. En soi, il s'agit d'une noble fonction' [champions don't exist in order to single themselves out, to set themselves aside from the group, but in order to allow communities to see themselves exist. In itself, this is a noble function].⁵² This 'naturalization' of colonial discourse would strike a chord with Roland Barthes' discussion of the semiological system by referring to the cover of *Paris Match* featuring a photo of a 'young Negro in a French uniform'. For Barthes, the photo, in the context of the decolonization and the fight for self-determination in the assimilationist French empire – which, very much like the Portuguese, had a tradition of African players representing the national team⁵³ and of exploring 'colonial ties to claim elite talents'⁵⁴ – is constructed with a view to signify that:

[...] France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors.⁵⁵

Eusébio's status as national symbol will continue in postcoloniality as the figure of Eusébio seems to display the traits of a floating signifier that, as an icon of 'portugality',⁵⁶ is instrumentalised just as was the case during late colonialism. It received official confirmation when his entry into the National Pantheon was unanimously approved and he was induced in 2015, just one year after his death. The death of Eusébio, and consequent inclusion in the National Pantheon, has renewed the discussion of Eusébio's place in national identity

⁵² Paul Yonnet (2008), p. 25.

⁵³ See Paul Darby, *Africa, Football and FIFA : Politics, Colonialism and Resistance* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2002), pp. 14-15.

⁵⁴ Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson, *Globalization and Football* (2009), p. 21

⁵⁵ Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today', *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers, (London: Cape, 1972), p. 107-159 (116).

⁵⁶ The Portuguese tabloid *Correio da Manhã*'s successful campaign to lobby for Eusébio's entry into the Portuguese National Pantheon as soon as possible upon his death (1 year after), described Eusébio as an icon of 'portugalidade'. The use of this term is coetaneous with *Estado Novo*'s adoption of Freyre's theories as a pseudo-scientific cover for Portuguese colonialism and has survived into the democratic period.

discourses and lusotropicalist manifestations.⁵⁷ Upon Eusébio's death, the bishop of Beja, António Vitalino Dantas, embraced the *Three Fs* (Fado, Fátima, and Football), usually associated with the *Estado Novo*'s popular culture,⁵⁸ as positive markers of Portuguese national identity in an article in the magazine *Visão*, prophesying that 'Eusébio ficará para a história como um dos símbolos da nossa identidade' [Eusébio will remain in history as one of the symbols of our identity].⁵⁹

Eusébio's case is exceptional even amongst the many players from the colonies that played top-level football for club and country, contributing towards Benfica's staggering international success (European Champion Clubs' Cup in 1961 and 1962; sinalist in 1963, 1965, and 1968) and the National Team's surprisingly strong campaign in the 1966 World Cup, with Eusébio becoming the tournament's best scorer. A case in point is Mário Coluna, Benfica team captain and in some way Eusébio's mentor, who won equally impressive victories (many shared with Eusébio) and achieved national and international recognition but moved back to Mozambique, where he played a role in developing sports in the young independent nation after 1974 as national team manager and, most importantly, as Minister of Sports. In Portugal, Coluna's passing, shortly after Eusébio's, although duly reported and mourned by fans and media, was underwhelming when compared to the popular frenzy triggered by the news of Eusébio's death, accompanied by a frenetic media coverage.

Mané's reverence towards Eusébio (visible in the newspaper clippings on the wall in his bar or in his gaze towards the statue) betrays a tone between intimidation and apprehension which stands in stark contrast with the fraternal embrace and instant affection between Mané

⁵⁷ Ana Santos, *Heróis desportivos e identidade nacional, de corpo a ícone da Nação: Estudo de caso de Eusébio*, ed. 1, vol. 1 (Lisboa: Instituto do Desporto de Portugal, 2004); Marcos Cardão 'Um significante instrumental' (2013); Nuno Domingos, 'As lutas pela memória de Eusébio', *Público*, 10 January 2014, pp. 28-29; see Almeida (2016), pp. 84-86.

⁵⁸ The fact that football and *Estado Novo* politics seemed to have been intimately bound did not escape criticism, particularly in the post-dictatorship politically charged environment, in which the regime was accused of deploying or at least exploiting the popularity of local manifestations in music, religion and football. These were summed up as the three Fs: *Fado, Fátima* and *Futebol*.

⁵⁹ António Vitalino Dantas, 'Óbito/Eusébio: Bispo de Beja compara "rei" do futebol a Amália e a Fátima', *Visão* (Lisboa: Visão, 8 jan 2014).

and Américo, even after being apart for decades. The shots of Américo and Mané side by side, the medium long shot when they first embrace and the long shot as they walk to their farewell, show that Américo and Mané are, structurally speaking, twin characters. In Mané's narrative, it is as if Américo has taken his place: 'Américo and I had the fibre of champions. He didn't want to go but in the end it was I who stayed. I stood on the harbour, my eyes set on that ship...'. The parallel with Eusébio (and chronologically, very closely) is as evident as it is contrasting: Américo was signed by Benfica but failed to shine, had a lacklustre career, and now leads an isolated existence in a shanty town in Seixal.

Eusébio, unlike Américo and Mané has succeeded in 'dribbling fate' – albeit at the cost of becoming an 'instrumental signifier' and 'national property'. It is to Américo, the luckless and all but forgotten immigrant in Lisbon, that Mané can and must be compared; not to the revered Eusébio. Mané has for the first time a realistic view of a football career, as a variation on the immigration experience.⁶⁰ The role of immigration is enhanced by the history behind Eusébio's statue: it was commissioned by a Portuguese immigrant in the United States (curiously, the focus of attraction for Mané's prospect and protégé Kalu), a Benfica football fan who wanted to pay homage to the great 'Portuguese' footballing legend.

Benfica: *E pluribus unum*, still? Reminiscences, remnants, and beyond

Throughout the first part of the film, Mané's regret at not having followed his 'brother' Américo's offer from the Lisbon club to become a professional footballer is the reason behind his disgruntled attitude towards his family (he will accuse his wife, Lucy, then pregnant with his first child, of having ruined everything, as the reason why he did not leave in the first place).

⁶⁰ Cf. Darby 2006; Todd Cleveland, *Following the Ball: The Migration of African Soccer Players across the Portuguese Colonial Empire, 1949–1975* (Ohio University Press, 2017).

Mané was not a present father, as will become clear when he has a frank face to face with his son, and his dissatisfaction prevents him from acting as a caring husband and grandfather both in S. Vicente, when he is unpleasant towards his grandson, and in Lisbon, where his arm must be twisted before he agrees to go to his grandson's birthday party. A key moment takes place after Mané is humiliated when he is tricked into paying for a ticket that a ticket tout will not deliver on time and misses the Taça de Portugal final. Mané is forced to resort to watching the game in the street, through TV sets in a shop window. The music sound track, evocative of the score of both the opening shots of the film and of when Mané steps out onto the Estádio da Luz pitch, combined with Mané's solemn posture, points to a moment of epiphany.



Mané's highly-stylised moment of introspection also helps draw out the ritualistic aspect of the first scenes of the film, drawing the lines – or stage, as it were – for what is to come next. The stylization seemingly reinforces fellow football enthusiast Pier Paolo Pasolini's assessment that football is the only remaining sacred representation, both a ritual and a spectacle, and the modern-day replacement of theatre.⁶¹ The disembodied camera that tracks the (as far as it can be discerned) imaginary group back in the Gaivota bar frames an 'imaginary community', participants in a ritual which transcends time and space. They are framed as a group of

⁶¹ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, Vol. II (Milano: Meridiani Mondadori, 1999).

spectators who have expectations of Mané. In a dreamlike sequence featuring Lucy, friends and customers, as well as a diverse array of supporters, who muse about Mané's presence in the match, we have a first glimpse at a community imagined (by Mané) who supports him for who he is and not what he might have been: Lucy herself listens to the match on the radio as it brings her closer to Mané. As Américo had forewarned, he is further from the football that he loves in Lisbon than he would be in Cape Verde, among the family and friends who he evokes and who, through parallel editing, celebrate Benfica's goal in the final simultaneously with Mané. When watching, from an estranged distance, the football match for which he sacrificed so much, when focusing on the goalkeeper and then on Veloso and Águas as they play and celebrate as part of a team, Mané comes to terms with his life choices. Obviously, Américo's story of disillusionment has helped put things into perspective as well, as Mané and Américo reunite as brothers but with football (and footballing glory) now as part of an illusory past. Ultimately, it becomes clear even to Mané that his obsession with football and with what might have been, on an individual level, was effectively disrupting and estranging the family and community lives that he in fact enjoyed in Cape Verde.

The scene exposes the bonds and binds – affective, cultural, economic – which condition the existence of Mané and fellow Cape Verdeans in the islands or in Europe (thus reinforcing Arenas' statement that the film projects individual and collective dreams through football) as well as exposing the remnants of the colonial relation. The group in the bar sport a majority of jerseys from varied Portuguese clubs thus supplementing Mané's wall of colonial sports memorabilia which features an old newspaper clipping referring to Matateu (arguably the first player from the colonies to make an indelible impact both at club and national team level), old photos of Mané's local team *Mindelense*, and overwhelming references to the inevitable successes of Benfica during the 1960s, during which time sports in general, and football in particular, were used as a vehicle for the *Estado Novo's* lusotropicalist

propaganda.⁶²

In Cape Verde, sports and indeed football played an important role in the discourse structuring the idea of the independent nation,⁶³ with the Amílcar Cabral cup (named after the Bissau-Guinean and Cape Verdean intellectual and anti-colonialist leader, and in which Cape Verde competes with a group of West African nations) provides a symbolic counterpoint to the aforementioned Salazar Cup established during the *Estado Novo*. Nevertheless, as noted above, even national team success such as the victory in the Amílcar Cabral Cup in 2000 was overshadowed by Sporting Lisbon's (Sporting Clube de Portugal) first championship title in many years.⁶⁴

Mané's devotion to Benfica, represented by the pin in his lapel and by the memorabilia in his bar *A Gaivota* (to which Mané will add the ticket he forcibly recovered from the tout when he met upon him after the match) certainly falls under what Mário Vaz de Almeida, departing from Raymond Williams' consideration of the 'residual', terms 'forças culturais residuais' [residual cultural forces], visible among lingering (post-)colonial elements present in the film.⁶⁵ Apart from the 'paixão clubística' [passion for one's football club] and the traits of certain characters and the contexts in which they operate (such as Sr Luís, educated in Lisbon; or Mané's son, Alberto, immigrant in Lisbon), Almeida also points out the 'urbanidade' [urbanity] represented in the film,⁶⁶ thus coinciding with Fernando Vendrell's comment about the remnants from the colonial period which inspired the film.⁶⁷ The scenes in which Toy (a regular customer of Mané's bar) fights for the last copy of the previously

⁶² See Melo (2012); Melo and Bittencourt (2013).

⁶³ Victor Andrade de Melo, 'Nas tensões de um novo país: O esporte em Cabo Verde (1974-1977)', *Rev. Bras. Ciênc. Esporte*, Set 2013, vol.35, 3, pp. 757-771; Victor Andrade de Melo and Rafael Fortes, 'Identidade em transição: Cabo Verde e a Taça Amílcar Cabral', *Afro-Ásia*, (Dez 2014), no.50, pp. 11-44.

⁶⁴ See Melo and Fortes (2014), pp. 41-42; Victor Andrade de Melo and Coriolano Pereira da Rocha Junior, 'Esporte, pós-colonialismo, neocolonialismo: um debate a partir de *Fintar o destino* (1998)', *Rev. Bras. Ciênc. Esporte* (Mar 2012), vol.34, 1, pp.235-251 (240-242).

⁶⁵ Mário Vaz Almeida, 'Fintar o destino, de Fernando Vendrell: A afirmação de uma identidade pós-colonial do homem cabo-verdiano', *Errâncias do imaginário* (Porto: Universidade do Porto, Faculdade de Letras, 2015), pp. 337-346 (340-344).

⁶⁶ Mário Vaz Almeida, (2015), p. 341.

⁶⁷ *Fintar o destino*, dir. by Fernando Vendrell (David & Goliath, 1998).

discussed newspaper *A Bola* and runs past the bust of Luís de Camões in a public park as he heads to Mané's bar, itself displaying on its walls a small archive of the sporting achievements of the Portuguese club as well as players from colonies in the Portuguese empire, provides an effective staging of colonial remnants.

Mané's fascination with the club and the city of Lisbon will remain unscathed. In addressing the urban culture of Mindelo, once a vibrant port city and still the urban centre of São Vicente, the pull of the metropolitan capital is indeed noticeable beyond the obsession with Benfica. Mané is not the only one who saw Lisbon as a first step towards *fintar o destino*. Sr Luís, presumably during the colonial period, has studied in Lisbon and displays the traits of a lusitanized creole elite. For the younger generation, Lisbon has a different status. Erica, Kalu's love interest, is moving to Lisbon to further her education and pursue a career while Mané's son, Alberto, has been living in Lisbon for over a decade and is now settled and has a 'Portuguese' family. Mané has first-hand experience with Lisbon as a pole of economic migration when he takes with him on his trip, as a favour to fellow *mindelenses*, a large number of packages to their relatives who live in the Portuguese capital. However, Lisbon competes with a number of other locations which undermine Lisbon's centrality in the narrative, thus going against the grain of a postcolonial nostalgic mode in a way that often betrays an analysis of postcolonial ties and, to use Arenas' terms, affects. Kalu, for instance, has his eyes set on joining his uncle in the United States. Mané's bewilderment at the notion that Kalu is considering a country in which football is not the most popular sport has comedy value but also reveals that Mané's allegiance, although bound by nation-specific and postcolonial contexts, is – contrary to those, such as Eusébio, who have made it as football players and become symbols or vehicles for certain ideologies – to football itself. This is revealed in the frank exchange he has with his son in Lisbon after having missed the Cup match, which Mané has taken surprisingly well, all things considered. Mané confides to his son that he will always be proud

of having been a footballer, even if that means nothing to others.

Early in the film, Djack – ever the instigator, but providing in this instance an accurate assessment of Mané’s football allegiances – maps Cape Verde’s relation (cultural, economic, migratory) to foreign influences (African and European) when pointing out to Mané that competing establishments have as prizes to their draws, passages to Dakar and Holland, and that Mané should raffle a passage to Lisbon as the prize rather than a bicycle.

The mid-Atlantic positioning of the islands does not imply that they are condemned to be, in the words Freyre used to describe the archipelago, islands in search of a ‘clear, defined fate’.⁶⁸ In other words, bonds are not necessarily binding, although they must be addressed. Nuno Domingos maintains that the persistence of a ‘Portuguese football narrative’ must be understood in all its historical complexity and not merely as a ‘perverse and neo-colonial acculturation’ and/or as a lasting legacy of Portugal’s lusotropicalist colonialism. By focusing on football as a relevant element of urban popular culture, namely of Maputo’s in this particular article, Domingos argues that it is ‘crucial to research the connection between the colonial process of urbanisation and the rise of urban popular cultures’ if one is to understand ‘contemporary social bonds’.⁶⁹ Portuguese football, widely supported in the territories of the former colonies, does not represent a nostalgic evoking of the old colonial order. Domingos resorts to Paul Connerton’s notion of ‘bodily social memory’ to explain the way in which Portuguese football narrative, as a social form, has outlasted the end of Portuguese colonial rule. In Mozambique, Domingos argues:

the Portuguese narrative, alongside other cosmopolitan popular culture narratives, is still a local instrument of sociability that allows individuals to engage in social

⁶⁸ Gilberto Freyre, *Aventura e rotina* (2001), p. 264.

⁶⁹ Nuno Domingos (2011), p. 2161.

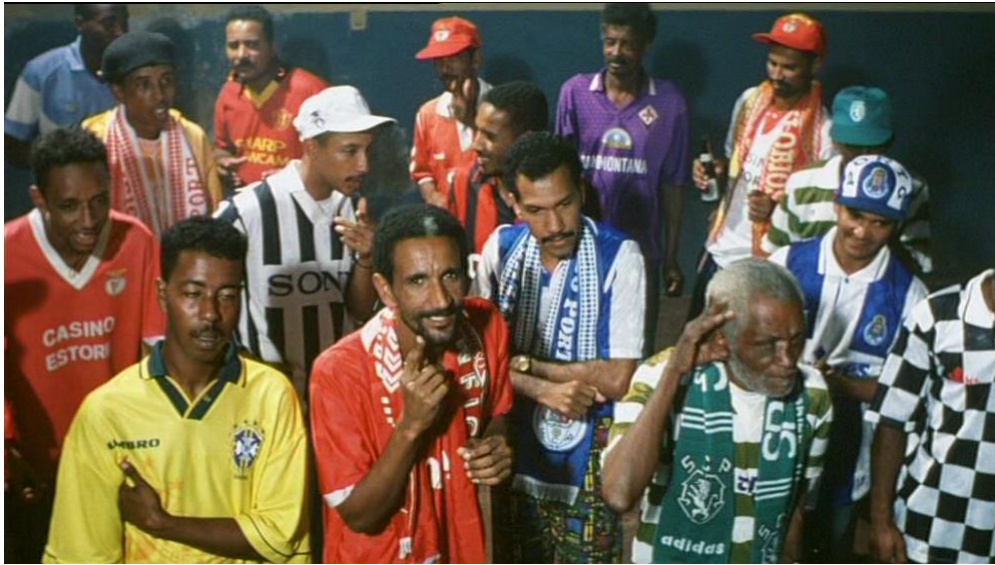
interactions, to gather in public places, as a means to make arguments, to discuss but also to be connected to a larger world.⁷⁰

The same could be said for Cape Verde, judging from Mané's bar – and presumably the bars that offer trips to competing narratives such as Dakar and Holland – as a place for social gathering, discussion, and connection to a larger world. Djack's triangulation of S. Vicente island by using the bars of Mindelo as markers is useful in that it contextualises Mané's obsession with Benfica and, consequently, with the ex-metropolitan capital; it places Portugal and Lisbon alongside other competing narratives. Football can provide more than a means for powerful national identification (which undeniably it does), as Hobsbawm came to realise. Football, according to Hobsbawm, has become the 'public activity' that best illustrates the 'dialectics of the relations between globalisation, national identity and xenophobia'.⁷¹ The film has the first two points covered as it reveals the diasporic ties that recent trends in globalization have accelerated and transformed. In a seemingly paradoxical fashion, football can act, as Domingos points out and the bar in *Fintar o Destino* illustrates, a 'a local instrument' with a wide reach, connecting to a 'larger world' beyond the barriers imposed by colonial bonds or binds. In an interview featured in the extras of the DVD edition of the film, Vendrell addresses precisely how, beyond the reminiscences of the colonial period, football can function as a binding instrument by connecting inhabitants in the island to family members who have emigrated and are part of Cape Verde's significant diaspora community: some *mindelenses*, according to Vendrell, would define themselves as supporters of the national team for the host country of their relatives rather than of a given club, Cape Verdean or otherwise. The group of supporters that Mané imagines populating his bar as he eventually comes to terms with

⁷⁰ Nuno Domingos (2011), p. 2173.

⁷¹ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Nations and Nationalism in the New Century', *Globalisation, Democracy and Terrorism* (London: Abacus, 2008), pp. 83–94 (89).

watching the Portuguese Cup final on TV displays a variety of football jerseys belonging to clubs from different nations (Portugal, Italy, United Kingdom) and even to national teams (i.e. Brazil).



Djack's remapping of the island's connections in postcoloniality gains relevance because it is Djack's questioning of Mané's 'benfiquismo' and Américo's football prowess, combined with Kalu's remark on Mané having lost the opportunity of a lifetime, that spurs Mané to fly to Lisbon, discover Américo's fate, see the match and act as an agent on Kalu's behalf. Mané's success means that, if all goes well, Kalu is set to leave the island, as do a growing number of young football talents from former European colonies who migrate to Europe looking for opportunities in professional football, and who often – due to economic dependency, or affective allegiance (of clubs, staff) – follow routes established during the colonial period. The case can be made that even this ending is far from confirming the diagnosis of alienation of Cape Verdeans when it comes to sporting allegiances. It does nevertheless confirm wider neoliberal and neocolonial trends associated with the globalized industry of football. In the 'broader border ecumene' between 'European nations and old imperial

outposts' when it comes to the migration of football players,⁷² it is difficult not to share Darby's concerns regarding the way in which young talents can be nothing more than a colonial and neocolonial resource (2006). Nevertheless, as Todd Cleveland has pointed out (2017), even the players hailing from the colonies during the *Estado Novo* regime can be seen less as mere pawns and more as individuals who took advantage of – whatever limited – opportunities the colonial sports setup could offer. In other words, Kalu is far from doomed to repeat the mistakes of Américo or to become a victim (in symbolic and discursive terms) of his own success, as was the case with Eusébio.

It is only in the very final scene, which is evocative of the opening shots, that the viewer comes to appreciate fully Mané's reply to Djack that a bicycle can take you anywhere, as long as you have imagination and keep peddling. Djack and Mané symbolically reconcile when Djack wins the raffle but insists Mané should keep the bicycle, since Djack cannot ride a bicycle and Benfica, contrary to what Djack had prophesied, won the final. Djack's fittingly appealing gesture of handing the prize back to Mané – who can then offer it to his grandson and thus make some amends for his insensitivity earlier in the film – denotes the greater recognition that Mané commands. After having failed to succeed (indeed, to take a chance) in the colonial sports network as a football player, Mané redeems himself by becoming an agent in post-coloniality and building for others, in this case Kalu, an opportunity to succeed in international football. The task that Mané has compulsively set for himself in his journey to Lisbon bears fruits as he gains the respect of others, symbolized by Djack's peace offer, but also, as a variant on the aforementioned master thematic of gaining (or losing) respect or acceptance which is characteristic of sports film, regains self-respect. This will allow Mané to mend the somewhat strained relationship he had with the larger community of friends and family, as it is only upon his successful return from Lisbon, where he reconciles with his estranged son before leaving,

⁷² Giulianotti and Robertson (2009), 146.

that Mané is able to rekindle the relationship with his family back on the island, namely his wife and grandson, as well as with friends and customers. The composition of the bicycle raffle scene presents Mané as part of a larger community of friends and family, whereas before his trip to Lisbon he is distanced and even at odds with some individuals. He now has the self-respect to reimagine, indeed refashion his role in the community, and the film's closing scene will move on to present a confident Mané who has gained, or regained the acceptance of those around him. While in conversation on the pier with Kalu, Mané mounts the bicycle with Kalu's help and starts cycling. When Kalu warns Mané that the pier has no way out, Mané's answer is revealing: 'It doesn't matter!'. The viewer is aware that Mané has had to embellish the truth: the ticket stub which is proudly on display in the bar wall was retrieved from the tout and Mané will ask for his son's complicity in keeping his failure to attend the final a secret. However, there is a striking difference: Mané is now, in more than one sense of the word, an agent and he is now able to take control of the narrative, however open-ended it is. Whereas before he was left behind, in the harbour, staring at the ship which took his friend to live *his* own dream, Mané is now able to imagine ways in which both himself and Kalu may dribble fate.