

THE ENDLESS DETERRITORIALIZATION. IMAGINING CONTEMPORARY PORTUGAL THROUGH THE CHRONICLES BY KALAF EPALANGA

A DE-TERRITORIALIZAÇÃO SEM FIM. IMAGINANDO O PORTUGAL CONTEMPORÂNEO ATRAVÉS DAS CRÓNICAS DE KALAF EPALANGA

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ABSTRACT: In the last years, Kalaf Epalanga, best known as one of the member of the electronic band Buraka Som Sistema, have published several chronicles for the *Público*, a newspaper which strongly invested in this kind of texts. Furthermore, the case of Kalaf Epalanga re-affirms the hybridity of the “chronicle”, stimulating a connection between journalism and literature. His contributes challenges the theme of identity as it have been discussed and analysed in Portugal in the last decades, as he denounces Portuguese racism and question Portuguese multiculturalism.

KEYWORDS: chronicle, Kalaf Epalanga, diaspora, imagined communities.

RESUMO: Nos últimos anos, o angolano Kalaf Epalanga, mais conhecido como um dos membros da banda de música eletrônica Buraka Som Sistema, tem publicado várias crônicas no *Público*, jornal português que tem investido massivamente nesse tipo de texto. O caso de Kalaf Epalanga volta a destacar o hibridismo de tal gênero, situado na fronteira entre o jornalismo e a literatura. As contribuições do referido autor desafiam o tema da identidade debatido e analisado nas últimas décadas, denunciando o racismo da sociedade portuguesa e questionando o multiculturalismo luso.

Palavras-chave: crónica, Kalaf Epalanga, diáspora, comunidades imaginadas.

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Introduction

In few countries the debate on national identity has been so deep and articulated as in post-fascist Portugal. It is, at least, since the 1974-75's revolution that the question "what Portugal is" has paved the way to unfinished and contradictory analyses, with specific focuses on the narratives and the myths which along the centuries rose around the idea of nation, intending it as an "imagined community" (ANDERSON 1991). However, these narrations often externalize the source of Portuguese identity: on the one side Portugal can't be *imagined* without dealing with the relationship with its former colonies; on the other, as Eduardo Lourenço (1988) and more recently Margarida Calafate Ribeiro (2004) pointed out, Portugal can (and, in the opinion of the two authors, should) be thought within the European context and thus in connection with other European countries, following the suggestions of the so-called Geração de 70.

Today, Portuguese imagined community has to face new challenges, triggered both by the crises of the European Union and by the effects of the diasporic movements that since the 1960s have been investing Portugal, especially for what regards the migration of people from the so-called PALOP (Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa). The latter, in particular, offers the opportunity of re-thinking Portugal by questioning three relevant issues: race, language and citizenship. Hence, migrations processes force to investigate the reality of Portuguese identity and, as the appeal for the collection of ethno-racial data by the Decolonial International Network (DIN 2018) shows, its misrepresented hybridism.

In this context the articles by Kalaf Epalanga (best known as a member of the band Buraka Som Sistema), published on *Público* newspaper, offer other hybrid elements to be analysed. The first is the very nature of the articles, often defined as "chronicles", a hybrid literary genre, far to be deeply analysed, as illustrated by the Brazilian author Affonso Romano de Sant'Anna, as he affirmed "o que existe teoricamente sobre crônica ainda é muito precário" (apud SANTOS, 2013, p. 26). Where the chronicle is known to be a middle way between literature and journalism, Epalanga moves from his experience as a musician and author of spoken word album, such *La Fuga...* It was just after publishing two collections of chronicles, *Estórias de amor para meninos de cor* e *O angolano que comprou Lisboa (por metade do preço)*, that he published a novel, *Também os brancos sa-*

bem dançar. The duality between journalism and literature is therefore enriched by interconnection with other kinds of support, and in particular with musical genres such as *kizomba* and *semba*.

The second element refers to the issue of identity: Kalaf Epalanga is Angolan and yet he does not hesitate to define Lisbon as “his” city and identify Portugal as his country. However, the national lens does not fit his point of view, as all his texts show a diasporic imagination, capable to lead the reader to move from one place of the world to another, in an endless de-territorialisation.

The third element refers to race: in 1988 José Tinhorão wrote about Portuguese “*branqueamento*” in terms of a process started with the end of slavery. Tinhorão closes his book about the presence of black people in Portugal underlying the oblivion of the “*dívida inegável da nação e da gente portuguesa à força de trabalho e ao sangue dos negros africanos*” (376). However, due to migration processes, black presence in Portugal is strong and evident and Kalaf Epalanga tells it, emphasizing and denouncing the contemporary forms of racism.

This last point leads us to question Portuguese society and the cohabitation between people with different stories and races. The comparison between two texts by Slavoj Žižek (1997) and Paul Gilroy (2004) on the concept of multiculturalism can be the starting point to re-imagine Portugal as a nation, and thus questioning the very notion of “nation” as an efficient lens to be used.

Over-imagined community

The historian José Mattoso wrote that in late XIX century, as the King D. Luís asked some fishermen whether they were Portuguese, he was answered “*Nós outros? Não, meu senhor! Nós somos da Póvoa do Varzim!*” (1998, 14). The anecdote is relevant as it witnesses how the idea of being part of a nation was weak, even in the century when the form of state-nation was being adopted in Europe. However, Mattoso underlies the importance of literature as he refers to Camões’ *Os Lusíadas*, affirming that

o imaginário que o poema representa e fortalece [...] adquire uma tal potência, que não deixará mais de alimentar os sonhos mais utópicos acerca do destino nacional, até aos dias de hoje. Por outro lado, ao tornar-se uma representação fortemente

interiorizada, contamina a própria historiografia, mesmo aquela que se pretende científica e objetiva, sobretudo a partir do século XIX. (ibid., p.16)

Eduardo Lourenço moves from this ambiguity, through his “*psicanálise mítica*”, in order to analyse how the soul of Portuguese people is considered “*inalterável*” (1999, p. 10). History is not sufficient to describe the identity of a nation, on the contrary “a história chega tarde para dar sentido à vida de um povo. Só o pode recapitular. Antes da plena consciência de um destino particular [...] um povo é já um futuro que imagina para existir” (ibid.). The point is that, starting from the so-called *Descobrimientos*, the idea of Portugal has spread around the world, and through Camões’ poem this image is fixed, as he

falou da “alma [portuguesa] pelo mundo repartida”. [...] Como se de súbito nos tivéssemos transformado numa autêntica “grande nação”, sem mais passado que o de Roma ou de Alexandre com o qual pudéssemos comparar o nosso, encerrámo-nos magicamente na esfera do Império e de lá olhamos e medimos. (ibid., p. 17)

Roberto Vecchi wrote that Lourenço’s approach can help to “repensar-nos num tempo europeu que se pode constituir unicamente aceitando as tantas alteridades, próprias e impróprias, de histórias e identidades que o fundam” (2009, p. 149). However, Boaventura de Sousa Santos had a claim against the uncritical use of Lourenço’s approach. In fact, where Lourenço referred to the “*psicanálise mítica*” in order to “reinventar uma nova cultura radicalmente diferente” (ibid., p. 83), the risk was to accept the heritage of those myths as ontology of Portuguese people. Against this approach, he remarked that “os discursos convencionais sobre a «identidade nacional» ou sobre o «carácter nacional» têm sido construídos a partir de um *genios loci* mitificado abstracto e mitificador” (1994, p. 55).

The image of Portugal finds in the 25 de Abril revolution a fundamental turning point, as this is the moment when the dialectic between Atlantic and Europe has become explicit. The defeat in the colonial war by the African liberation movements and the mass migration from Africa should lead to a re-interrogation of the images of Portugal. However, something failed and, after the entrance in the European Community (1986), a new image was elaborated, an image based on the «conception of Portugal as a European country in line with the

others» (SANTOS 1994, p.136). The writer Helder Macedo resumed this change in a paragraph of his novel *Pedro e Paula*:

quarenta e oito anos de vampiros sonâmbulos foram tão contagiosos que os portugueses até acreditaram que tinham feito uma revolução pacífica, de brandos costumes. E ao mesmo tempo também diziam que a revolução tinha sido feita nas colônias, sem notarem a contradição. Um pingo de napalm para cada cravo vermelho? E depois de alguns estertores entre os Já Já Já e os Nunca Nunca Nunca, ocupações ao Sul e cacetadas ao Norte para desopilar o fígado, mais ou menos toda gente acabou por concordar que assim é que tinha sido bom, rumo ao futuro e a Europa conosco, porque agora somos todos brancos e os pretinhos que se lixem. (MACEDO, 1997, 105)

Anyway, back to Lourenço, it is important to underline how there is nothing rigid and inflexible in the image of a nation. And, most of all, the image is not neutral: Sérgio Quaresma, referring to Miguel Real's *A morte de Portugal*, stressed the necessity of re-elaborating the images and the myths of Portugal, as they have been abused by Portuguese *elites*:

para alterar esta tradição é necessário [...] alterar o paradigma mental, existencial e cultural do intelectual português e valorizar, no conjunto das elites sociais, o intelectual erudito, o estudioso académico “contra e paralelamente às formas institucionais e conjunturais dominantes da cultura portuguesa”. (2009, p. 364)

Quaresma and Real opened a gap in the reflection of Portuguese identity, against a conservative intellectualism, yet there are other contradictions to be interrogated.

More precisely, in the epoch of mass migrations we must wonder on how these processes affect the image of the nations. José Tinhorão wrote about the “*branqueamento*” of Portugal after the end of the slavery trade, yet, as Marzia Grassi pointed out, there have been at least 5 phases of migration to Portugal from the Sixties to today, mostly from Africa. The so-called *Retornados* represent one phase of this process, for sure the most massive, but here is where the problem of nationality, language, citizenship and race rise and question Portugal. Is Portugal white? Does Portugal speak Portuguese? Is Portugal Portuguese?

Even if African authors as Pepetela, José Eduardo Agualusa and Mia Couto question the myths of Portugal, they seem not to be interested in re-inventing a new image of Portugal. Yet something is happening in other fields, as António Contador affirms by referring to the “cultura juvenil negra em Portugal” (2001) where he analyses how young black people in Portugal are establishing a new identity especially through music. Hence, in the case of Kalaf Epalanga. it is the that music paved the way to the possibility for a collaboration with *Público* and, afterwards, for a novel (*Também os brancos sabem dançar*) in which the questions about Portuguese identity are one of the keys to analyse the book, as it is shown by the first interviews. “An Angolan bought Lisbon”, is the answer by Kalaf Epalanga to the question about Portuguese identity in the title of the book collecting part of his chronicles. And yet this provocation over-simplifies the challenge that black culture is posing to the image of nation.

The endless deterritorialisation

As he writes about the different forms of narrativisation of the past, Hayden White refers to the chronicle as a hybrid genre:

the chronicle [...] often seems to wish to tell a story, aspires to narrativity, but typically fails to achieve it. More specifically, the chronicle usually is marked by a failure to achieve narrative closure. It does not so much conclude as simply terminate. It starts out to tell a story but breaks off *in medias res*, in the chronicler’s own present; it leaves things unresolved, or rather, it leaves them unresolved in a storyline way. (1987, p. 5)

Even if the issue we are dealing with does not concern the narration of the past, the excerpt helps us to identify the chronicle as an open form, linked to the present and the current events and yet, at the same time, “unresolved”, demanding for a prosecution of the discussion. It is, indeed, one of the genres that has undergone most changes along the centuries:

do grego *chronikós*, relativo a tempo (*chrónos*), pelo latim *chronica*, o vocábulo “crônica” designava, no início da era cristã, uma lista ou relação de acontecimentos ordenados segundo a marcha do tempo, isto é, em seqüência cronológica. Situada entre os anais e a história, limitava-se a registrar os eventos sem aprofundar-lhes as causas ou tentar interpretá-los. Em tal acepção, a crônica atingiu o ápice depois do século XII, graças a Froissart, na França, Geoffrey of Monmouth, na Inglaterra, Fernão Lopes, em Portugal, Alfonso X, na Espanha, quando se aproximou estreitamente da historiografia, não sem ostentar traços de ficção literária. A partir da Renascença, o termo “crônica” cedeu vez a “história”, finalizando, por conseguinte, o seu milenar sincretismo. (MASSAUD, 2003, p. 101)

Starting from the XVIII century and especially from the works of Daniel Defoe, the chronicle is one of the journalistic methods to describe an event. Still, the tale of the events is linked to something that goes beyond the simple facts, and that is the reason why it can be seen in connection with literature.

The history of Portuguese Literature offers many cases of writers dedicated to this particular genre, starting from Eça de Queiroz and his chronicles for the *Revista Moderna*. In 1867, Eça de Queiroz offered a definition of the “chronicle” emphasizing the literary aspect of the genre, underlying the intimate approach of the writer to the text:

a crónica é como que a conversa íntima, indolente, desleixada, do jornal com os que o leem: conta mil coisas, sem sistema, sem nexos, espalha-se livremente pela natureza, pela vida, pela literatura, pela cidade; fala das festas, dos bailes, dos teatros, dos enfeites, fala em tudo baixinho, como quando se faz um serão ao brasileiro, ou como no Verão, no campo, quando o ar está triste. Ela sabe anedotas, segredos, histórias de amor, crimes terríveis; espreita, porque não lhe fica mal espreitar. (QUEIROZ, 1981, p. 7)

More recently, it was José Saramago to show how the boundaries between literature and chronicle are blurry. Horácio Costa defined as a “*período formativo*” the chronicles published on the *Diário de Lisboa* and the *Diário da Notícias*, suggesting that they represent the roots of a long literary career. Yet, Saramago’s declarations show a less teleologic perspective as in 1998, he affirmed “para entender aquele que eu sou, há que ir às crónicas. As crónicas dizem tudo [...] aqui-

lo que sou como pessoa, como sensibilidade, como percepção das coisas, como entendimento do mundo: tudo *isso* está nas crônicas” (apud REIS, 1998, p. 42).

Today the chronicles have an important role for the newspapers. In her dissertation on Portuguese journalism, Maria Estrela Caleiro refers to Patrick Charaudeau’s categories to emphasize how this aspect turned crucial for the editorial boards newspapers and not just for the single collaborator, as it represent “o grau máximo de envolvimento da instância enunciativa interna (do jornal)” (2005, p. 331). The same Caleiro individuates the 1980s as the turning point for the relevant present of the chronicle in Portuguese newspapers, as the presence of this genre passes from the 0% in 1981, to more than 11%, in 1986, and reached the 7% in 2001.

Another remarkable change is the one that affected the *media*: where in 1986 (the moment of their explosions) the chronicles were limited to the pages of the newspapers, the World Wide Web opened many possibilities, both for the writers and for the newspapers. Nowadays the network of the newspaper *Público* (which includes *P2*, *P3*, *Ípsilon*, *Fugas*, *Culto*, *Cidades* and *Cinecartaz*), counts on 184 partners for its chronicles. However, few writers could have published their chronicles by important editors and Kalaf Epalanga is one of them.

His chronicles challenge the theme of identity starting from its personal point of view and his biography: born in the post-independence Angola, Epalanga writes that he travelled to Portugal during his childhood, in the Nineties, and decided to settle in Lisbon where he founded the music band Buraka Som Sistema, renovating musical genres from Angola such as *kizomba* and *semba*. At the beginning of the 2000s, as Epalanga often remarks, this music turned famous in Portugal and especially in its peripheries. Yet, thanks to their tour, the Buraka Som Sistema made these genres world-wide-known. This experience is a fundamental part of the chronicles, as they often show or, rather, reveal connections between different parts of the world.

For this reason, it is quite surprising reading “Afro-eu”, a chronicle where Epalanga (who published his first book as Kalaf Angelo) declares his will to stay at home for a day, renouncing to his social life and his connection with the worlds he normally likes to visit. This chronicle poses the issue of identity, though, at a first instance, by subtraction:

não sou apenas preto, e não todos os atributos que se lhe designam. Não sou desajustado, não cuspo no prato, nem amaldiçoo a pátria que me pariu, mas estou em guerra, sou o que berra!, contra o olhar e não ver, o ouvir e não escutar. Chega! Mas não ouvirão a minha voz, não serei rima de uma canção rap, não serei o graffiti num qualquer muro desta cidade, não serei a saudade chorada numa morna, nem tão-pouco serei notícia no telejornal das oito. O meu protesto é silêncio, é branco, é ausência. (ANGELO [EPALANGA], 2011, p. 94-95)

However, this demand for absence collapses in the final words of the text, as Epalanga writes “quero que me deixem no meu canto [...], fazer amor com a minha leirense que me entende como ninguém, que é preta como eu, afroeuropu” (ibid., p. 95).

The intimacy of the chronicle and the demand for absence is thus broken by the return and the reaffirmation of a hybrid identity, defined by the fact of being “preto” or, better, “afroeuropu”, a term which explains the sentence of few lines before “não sou apenas preto”.

This complexity is the main characteristic of Epalanga’s chronicles, which always depict society from a point of view concerned with issues of race and nationhood: the identities cannot be summarized or simplified, rather they are countless and in constant redefinition. The very race can be re-articulated, as he explains dealing with the concept of *negritude* in “Ao que vêm para onde vão”:

o rótulo “negritude” circunscreve uma série de clichés xenófobos, surgidos na Europa do século XVIII, que tinham uma associação direta com a escravidão, e generalizações sobre coisas tão diversas como o analfabetismo, a aptidão para a dança, a força física, religião, sexo, comida, violência, ira, preguiça, gentileza, comédia, música, ignorância ou uma sabedoria ancestral ligada ao misticismo. Curiosamente, conforme vou articulando melhor a minha própria negritude aqui no ocidente me apercebo de que esse conceito sofreu mutações e identifico uma polinegritude ou hipernegritude que está bem mais próxima daquilo que é a condição do negro e como este é visto hoje. Somos todos mestiços, economicamente, socialmente e politicamente falando. (EPALANGA, 2014, p. 43)

It is quite remarkable that Western and European societies are not questioned from the exterior: the *internity* of Kalaf is evident in most of the texts and it is constantly challenged and re-defined. This element could seem paradoxical if confronted with many of the chronicles published in *O angolano que comprou Lisboa (por metade do preço)*, where Epalanga questions himself on the Angolan identity, sometimes even with generalizations, like in “Banho de caneca”:

Ao angolano não falta coragem, isso está mais que provado, é um lutador; mais, é um sobrevivente, sabe que para todo o mal existe um remédio, seja ele uma AK47 para defender ideologias ou a combinação certa de Paracetamol e Arthemeter para enfrentar o paludismo. O único detalhe a lamentar é essa capacidade de resignação que nos turva o horizonte, e faz caber no alguidar e na caneca com que nos banhamos todo um amanhã que nunca mais chega. (ibid., p. 143)

In these overexposure and over-affirmation of his Angolan bonds, Epalanga evidently reverses the power relations between Angola and Portugal, as they were known during five centuries of colonialism. While European technical and military superiority consented the production of the dominator, after the independences of the colonies a new imaginary can describe a person from Angola having enough power to buy Lisbon, as the title of the collection suggests. It could appear as a provocative counter-image of the former dominator; however, other elements disturb the simple duality. The first has to be referred to Epalanga’s home country: commenting his many journeys in Angola, he escapes the Angolan identity, affirming he feels “estangeiro na terra que me pariu” (ibid., p. 183). The second is linked to how Epalanga re-appropriates the city of Lisbon, describing it as an hybrid whose strength lies in mixing of different cultures, and is marked by the presence of people of different races: “Lisboa, a cidade que amanhecia negra e ia ficando mulata à medida que o dia avançava, e que ficava bem nórdica quando o sol se punha” (ibid., p. 204). It is not the city of the intellectuals, of the poets and the Kings, because, as he affirms, in “Pelo preço justo”, “esta cidade agora me pretence” (ibid., p. 228). Epalanga, thus, chooses one part of the city and reject another, which actually is quite symbolic of the stereotypical Portuguese identity: “quando me vierem passar, não esitem em contar-me o que vos aflige, só não me falem de saudade. A saudade não me diz respeito” (ibid., p. 229).

Neither Angolan nor Portuguese, Epalanga celebrates the city of Lisbon were most people from Africa came to live in the last decades. In his chronicles, Lisbon is the centre of the world and, most of all, a place where the mix between cultures and music is possible:

Lisboa é uma cidade mestiça, é moura, é africana, é mundo, e a solução para a crise, creio, passará por nos reconciliarmos com a história deste lugar único, geograficamente bem localizado, bem no centro do triângulo entre Américas, Africa e Europa, para lá dos Pirenéus. Este é o lugar que chamamos de casa, um lugar economicamente falhado, mas culturalmente rico, com um péssimo plano de marketing, mas com conteúdo e uma história para contar. Por que não começarmos com um passinho de dança? (ibid., p. 19)

Indeed, the music is the last element which make Lisbon different from other places, as it connects the city to other parts of the world. Referring to the growing success of music *kizomba*, he affirms

não é apenas em Lisboa. Outras cidades europeias começam a aderir ao movimento. Paris, Londres, Bruxelas e Roterdão são, como seria de esperar – dada a presença africana que lhe reconhecemos –, lugares onde a kizomba fora do eixo Luanda-Lisboa tem vindo a ganhar cada vez mais relevância. A maior surpresa, no entanto, recai no número de academias, encontros, festivais de kizomba que começam a brotar um pouco por todo lado, da Europa do Leste aos Estados Unidos, da Austrália à América do Sul. (ibid., p. 225)

Lisbon, and the possibilities the city opens to, is the starting point to reach the rest of the world. In this sense Lisbon overcomes the importance of Portugal in terms of capacity to determine an identity. Its way to be connected with the world is different from other cities: it is not its strong economy which defines its centrality (the city can be bought “por metade do preço”), rather its history and its cultures.

This permanent de-territorialisation, which exceeds the territories of lusophony, does the groundwork both for the idea of “Portuguese identity” of semi-periphery proposed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos and the idea of Portugal as European nation. The whole of Epalanga’s chronicles rather suggests a constan-

tly negotiated identity, where the rejection and the assumption of an identity seems ephemeral and insufficient: the objective is not choosing one identity or the other, but to multiply them and expand their limits:

todos mudamos quando chegamos aqui: uns tornam-se ultra-africanos, outros ultraeuropeus, vai-se lá saber porquê. E eu sou o primeiro a reconhecer que mudei! Mas na verdade não sinto que tenha escolhido um continente em detrimento de outro. Sinto-me qualquer coisa como entre... uma suma dos dois. (ANGELO [EPALANGA], 2011, p. 233)

Multiculturalism

The descriptions of Lisbon as a half-blood city, do not erase its problems. At the entrance of the clubs, in friends' talks, in politics, Lisbon's multiculturalism shows its limits and its conflicts. Epalanga deals with Portuguese racism which is

um não-problema, um não-dito, que apenas ouvíamos, sentindo, nas entrelinhas, entre as sílabas engolidas na fala daqueles que nos recebiam. Era quasi impercetível, diria até que era preciso mesmo estar bastante atento para identificar um ato racial direto, salvo, claro, as vezes que gritavam "preto, vai a para tua terra!", de fugida, no anonimato de uma janela de um bairro pacato na mais africana das capitais europeias. (ibid., p. 98)

Portugal is racist even if, "não o será mais do que outros países" (ibid., p. 106), and it is important to underline that the person declaring this, is the same who re-appropriates Lisbon with his imaginary and with his music. Even if many activists, associations or journalists have recently denounced this situation, Kalaf Epalanga is one of the first black writers from Portugal (afro-portuguese, afro-lisboeta...) who claimed it openly.

However, the marginalization of afro-descents in the so-called "*bairros sociais*", on the one hand, produces an invisibilization of the people living there and lack of right, on the other, is one of the causes of the eclectic cultural activi-

ties growing in these places. The music is the first example of this ambiguity, as he affirmed while presenting *Também os brancos sabem dançar*:

eu olho para os bairros sociais como fábricas de cultura. Neste momento, a cultura que está a levar Portugal mais além, tirando o fado, é feita naqueles prédios que foram construídos pelo programa PER [Programa Especial de Realojamento]. Essa era a discussão que eu queria trazer para o livro. Agora, que o racismo também é um dos pontos, sem dúvida. Mas o chamar de atenção que eu quis que o livro fizesse era para ali [para esses bairros sociais]. Há pessoas que olham para os *Buraka* e quase nos isolam, mas nós estamos sempre a relembrar as pessoas: “o que fazemos tem uma origem, que é esse corredor que começa em Luanda e vai acabar na Linha de Sintra, em Setúbal, nos subúrbios da Margem Sul”. (COSTA, 2018)

Artistically relating this mechanism, Epalanga shows a contradiction in Portuguese multiculturalism, which he enriches with new contradictions concerning gender issues. In the chronicle “A bunda”, reflecting on to the lessons of *buraka* by his partner in *Buraka som sistem*, Blaya, he writes:

faz pouco tempo que a Blaya lançou no mercado das aulas o seu *Pack Five Bundas*. Olhei para o nome das suas aulas ao domicílio com divertida atenção, por reconhecer nele a forma como as mulheres da minha cidade vivem essa coisa da lusofonia. Sem os dogmas da multiculturalidade, sem panfletos e discursos abstratos e institucionalizados sobre diversidade e integração. Quem diria que a mais interessante e desaprendida manifestação cultural, no Portugal dos nossos dias, dessa luso-qualquericoisa, dessa nossa mestiçagem, fosse nada mais nada menos do que a bunda?

Para além de toda a carga simbólica que lhe atribuímos, de forma consciente ou não, a bunda é também um elemento unificador de classes: todas têm uma! E têm-na por causa dessa mistura de heranças genéticas [...]. Têm-na também por causa dessas viagens lideradas, entre outros, por Vasco da Gama, Pedro Álvares Cabral, Diogo Cão. Toda uma herança histórica que a mulher lusófona transforma, com as suas ancas generosas, em poesia ambulante e que eu, confesso-me, continuo a gostar de olhar, ainda que discretamente. (EPALANGA, 2014, p. 70-71)

The spirit of the chronicle plays on the edge between seriousness and irony, as it deals with an abstract idea (“*dogmas da multiculturalidade...discursos abstratos*”), by re-conducting them to the materiality of the *sexualized* body, as it shows the reference to the female body.

The contradiction resides in the way how multiculturalism is re-appropriated and taken from its abstract idea. The text refers to the “*ancas generosas*” of *lusophone* women as symbol of multiculturalism, yet it is a stereotypical generalization, as *lusophone* women comes from all over the world. On the other hand, the same text suggests that the dance (meaning the *act of dancing*, and not the simple body) can act as a vector of union and dialogue between cultures.

The list of Portuguese conquerors led to a deeper analysis, as Epalanga somehow reminds that the mix he is referring to has been created through violence. Thus we may add that since the beginning of colonialism female body had been was sexualized and, even if, today, the “*lusophone women*” actively “transform” this legacy, the fact that there is something to be transformed reminds that the legacy is still present.

In the reflections about Portuguese identity, race and gender are often forgotten, and these omissions leave their traces in the analyses of contemporary “multicultural” Portugal. Paul Gilroy and Slavoj Žižek’s reflections on multiculturalism provide a way to distinguish two different approaches. The latter highlights how the cohabitation of people of different origins or ethnicity is explored by the forms of capitalism, hence “contemporary ‘postmodern’ racism is the *symptom* of multiculturalist late capitalism, bringing to light the inherent contradiction of the liberal-democratic ideological project. Liberal ‘tolerance’ condones the folklorist Other deprived its substance” (1997, p. 37). On the other hand, Gilroy states that “the market-driven pastiche of multiculturalism that is manipulated from above by commerce only appears compelling and attractive in the absence of governmental action and political initiatives organized from below” (2014, p. 164). It emerges a distinction between institutional forms of multiculturalism (which, according to Žižek, has in the idea of “tolerance” one of its main claims) and forms of organization produced outside the political pretensions of the establishment. It comes that the multiculturalism Kalaf Epalanga is referring to, is not the multiculturalism produced by the institutions, claiming Lisbon as “*cidade da tolerância*”: it is rooted in colonialism, it comes from processes of migration and thus suffer of various forms of racism. Yet, it is characterized by invention and

contradictions capable of producing new communities, different from the ones of the past, going beyond the heritage of Lusotropicalism.

Conclusions

In the novel *Também os brancos sabem dançar*, Epalanga follows the lines of his chronicle, using the form of auto-fiction to tell a story about music and in particular about the recent success of Angolan music in Portugal. Both in the novel and in the chronicles, Epalanga keeps on using explicitly his biography as starting point to tell something else.

The link between the two genres is affirmed by the author himself as he said “acho que a crónica é o grande exercício. Pelo menos para mim foi assim. [...] Tem um limite de caracteres, tem um limite de palavras e dentro desse limite eu tenho que conseguir expressar a ideia que me levou até ela” (COSTA, 2017). Thus in this case the chronicle is a key access to get to another form of expression, yet there is a difference with other authors such as Eça de Queiroz, José Saramago and António Lobo Antunes: while for these writers the production of chronicle was linked with their activities in the field of literature, Epalanga comes from music and its texts are related to its knowledge and his thought on music. They represent a part of his artistic process and can't be submitted to hierarchies: novel, chronicles and music stand at the same level and actively produce a new image of Portugal.

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