

Haiti and Mozambique: Postcolonial Literature in the Context of Combined and Uneven Development

Haiti e Moçambique: literatura pós-colonial no contexto do desenvolvimento combinado e desigual

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HAITI AND MOZAMBIQUE: POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE IN THE CONTEXT OF COMBINED AND UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT

Abstract: In this essay, I compare two narratives from different nations, Haiti and Mozambique, in order to analyze intersections between the postcolonial contexts in which each fiction is embedded. Two theoretical perspectives inform my reading of Nadine Pinede's "Departure Lounge" (2011) and João Paulo Borges Coelho's Campo de trânsito (2007). I draw first on Vivek Chibber's argument that postcolonial studies fail to provide an adequate basis for a theory of human rights and a practice of global solidarity. I then introduce the Warwick Research Collective's elaboration of a new theory of world literature constructed around the concept of "combined and uneven development". My discussion of "Departure Lounge" and Campo de trânsito subsequently focuses on the fictional portrayal of emergent practices within traditional societies experiencing a process of modernization and the effects of the world capitalist system. I conclude by proposing a way out of the limitations of postcolonial studies.

Keywords: Haiti, intersectionality, Marxism, Mozambique, postcolonialism.

HAITI E MOÇAMBIQUE: LITERATURA PÓS-COLONIAL NO CONTEXTO DO DESENVOLVIMENTO COMBINADO E DESIGUAL

Resumo: Neste ensaio, comparo duas narrativas de nações diferentes, Haiti e Moçambique, com o objetivo de analisar interseções entre os contextos pós-coloniais nos quais cada ficção se encontra embutida. A minha leitura de Nadine Pinede's "Departure Lounge" (2011) e João Paulo Borges Coelho's Campo de trânsito (2007) é informada por duas perspetivas teóricas. Em primeiro lugar, baseio-me no argumento de Vivek Chibber (2013a; 2013b) que demonstra que os estudos pós-coloniais falham em providenciar uma base adequada para uma teoria de direitos humanos e uma prática de solidariedade global. Introduzo posteriormente a recente proposta de uma nova teoria de "literatura mundo" elaborada pelo Warwick Research Collective, construída em torno do conceito de "desenvolvimento combinado e desigual". A minha análise textual de "Departure Lounge" e Campo de trânsito centra-se, subsequentemente, na representação ficcional de práticas emergentes no interior de sociedades tradicionais que experienciam um processo de modernização e nos efeitos de um sistema capitalista mundial. Concluo propondo uma saída para as limitações dos estudos pós-coloniais baseada no conceito de interseccionalidade.

Palavras-chave: Haiti, interseccionalidade, marxismo, Moçambique, pós-colonialismo.

In this essay, I compare two narratives from different nations, Haiti and Mozambique, in order to analyze intersections between the postcolonial contexts in which each fiction is embedded. Two theoretical perspectives inform my reading of Nadine Pinede's "Departure Lounge" (2011) and João Paulo Borges Coelho's *Campo de trânsito* (2007). I draw first on Vivek Chibber's argument (2013a; 2013b) that postcolonial studies fail to provide an adequate basis for a theory of human rights and a practice of global solidarity. I then introduce the Warwick Research Collective's elaboration of a new theory of world literature constructed around the concept of "combined and uneven development". My textual analyses of "Departure lounge" and *Campo de trânsito* subsequently focus on the fictional portrayal of emergent practices within traditional societies experiencing a process of modernization and the effects of the world capitalist system. I conclude by proposing a way out of the limitations of postcolonial studies based on the concept of "intersectionality".

Of course, comparing experiences between Haiti and Mozambique may strike one as arbitrary or at least as unusual. Nonetheless, it is my intention to do precisely that. My purpose is to show that, beyond their different historical trajectories – not to mention the obvious dissimilarity in terms of their colonial agents and these colonizers' *modi operandi* – there exist striking (though perhaps not so obvious) affinities between their postcolonial worlds. By analyzing the short story "Departure Lounge" (2011) by Haitian descendant Nadine Pinede, and the novella *Campo de trânsito* (2007) by Mozambican writer João Paulo Borges Coelho, I intend to show how these two countries and their peoples share common experiences and identities that are frequently disregarded by postcolonial studies.

POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES: STRENGTHS

Before commenting in detail on our two fictional works, I would like to draw attention to Vivek Chibber's critique of postcolonial studies as developed in his recent book *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (2013a) in the second section of my essay. In the third section, I will introduce the new theory of world literature being elaborated by the Warwick Research Collective from the perspective of the concept of "combined and uneven development". WReC's work resonates deeply with Chibber's ideas and critique. These contributions serve to frame my analysis of "Departure Lounge" and *Campo de trânsito* and to enable my subsequent conclusions on how the study of World Literatures, especially those of the developing world, can benefit if we expand the repertoire of our theoretical and critical toolkit.

First, however, I should like to acknowledge significant strengths among a variety of postcolonial theorists. Postcolonial studies as a positive theory and also as a radical

critique have been around for quite a while. Its most important non-European figures – Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Ranajit Guha, Aníbal Quijano, Partha Chatterjee, and Dipesh Chakrabarty – share a salient feature: they all broke ties with Marxism in the 1970s. In Portugal, much the same can be said – although in some cases to a lesser extent – of the virtuoso community of scholars centered around and led by Boaventura Sousa Santos in Coimbra.

There is much to admire in postcolonial studies. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979) forcefully exposed the ideologies of exoticism and inferior difference imposed on the East by most Western writers – from anthropologists to travel diarists, literary and cultural critics. His work, mainly Foucauldian in methodology and effect, should be considered as foundational for postcolonial theory. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, whose theoretical work has been inspired mainly by deconstructionists (Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man, in particular), has claimed throughout most of her career equal and parallel allegiances to feminism and to communism. Her seminal – or perhaps better “disseminal” – essay on “Can the subaltern speak?” (1988) was itself foundational for institutionalizing the term “subaltern”. Ultimately, of course the notion of “subalternity” derives from Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, but with Spivak it acquires centrality within a major branch of postcolonial studies (especially the Subaltern Studies Group).

Following the Derridean impulse, Homi Bhabha emphasized what he, rightly or wrongly, considered to be the aporia (undecidability; intractable contradictions) of the subaltern's position and stressed the (at least symbolic) potential for subverting colonial power through subaltern discourses, insofar as these may appropriate and resignify colonial logics. Ranajit Guha, whose work informed and inspired the Subaltern Studies Group, stressed the importance of anti-essentialism in the construction of subalternity, as well as the need to write “history from below”. And the art historian Siva Kumar contributed fundamentally to the notion of what he calls “contextual modernity”. This view of modernity can be seen as a forerunner to the rearticulation in Marxist terminology by Chibber and WReC of the unevenness of modernity. Within postcolonial studies proper, Paul Gilroy's discussion of “double consciousness” also reverberates with Marxist understandings of contradictory class locations and contradictory class consciousness. Originally set forth in W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903), the term “double consciousness” anticipates the feminist-Marxist concept of “intersectionality”.

In Latin America, the Grupo Modernidad/Colonialidad (also known as Grupo Decolonial) has produced major academic contributions from the perspectives of decolonization and opposition to imperialism and colonialism. This multidisciplinary group includes such prolific figures as the sociologists Aníbal Quijano, Edgardo Lander, Ramón Grosfoguel and Agustín Lao-Montes, the semioticians Walter Mignolo and

Zulma Palermo, the education theorist Catherine Walsh, anthropologists Arturo Escobar and Fernando Coronil, the literary critic Javier Sanjinés, and philosophers Enrique Dussel, Santiago Castro-Gómez, María Lugones and Nelson Maldonado-Torres. These scholars represent especially important influences in the development of the theories and practices of “Southern Epistemologies”. And their main postulate – namely, that colonialism is not the opposite of modernity but rather part of its central dynamic (its “dark side”) – can be made to dialog with the Marxist idea of “combined and uneven development”.

The research context of Portuguese postcolonial theory is dominated by researchers who are also broadly engaged with the project of identifying and elaborating “Southern Epistemologies”. These include such brilliant scholars as Boaventura Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses.

POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES: LIMITATIONS

Chibber focuses his critique of postcolonial studies primarily on the works by Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, and Dipesh Chakrabarty, all of whom are founding and key members of the Subaltern Studies Group. According to Vivek Chibber in *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (2013a), it was natural for these academics to take Marxism as their primary interlocutor. Nonetheless, he argues,

the primary source of the engagement with, and rejection of, Marxism has been political: a sense that the world has moved on; that dilemmas of late capitalism, particularly in the Global South, cannot be apprehended by the categories of historical materialism; even more, that the failure of liberation movements in the twentieth century was, in substantial measure, the result of Marxism’s abiding theoretical inadequacies. (Chibber, 2013a: 2)

As Pranav Jani explains:

Upon examining the work of Guha, Chatterjee, and Chakrabarty, Chibber claims that the key pillars of postcolonial theory are: (1) the West and the East are fundamentally different from one another, and (2) any theory seeking to understand these spaces under a common global framework is doomed to be Eurocentric. Imperialist, liberal, and even Marxist theories of global capitalism and modernity, goes the argument, end up taking the history of capitalism in northwestern Europe as the template for what has happened in the rest of the world, and all of the categories used assume that parallel. But in reality, they say,

colonial capitalism was completely different than capitalism in the West and produced entirely different societies and cultures. For postcolonialists, according to Chibber, the stark difference between regions in the world proves the limits of what Marxists call capitalism's "universalizing tendency" (its tendency to go global) and that European theories like Marxism cannot provide the theoretical or historiographical tools to discuss that difference because they either ignore cultural and historical diversity or posit narratives and subjectivities that do not exist in the Global South. (2014: n.p.)

In the past three decades, postcolonial studies has as a field acquired, certainly like no other literary critical trend, an outstanding visibility. Migrating quickly from literary analysis to other subjects, such as history and anthropology, and carrying with it a deep and abiding interest in culture and ideology, postcolonial studies substituted itself in the place previously occupied by Marxism. Thus, the main goals of postcolonial theory would be to explain in a different way the function of capitalism and to enable a contrasting critique of its resulting inequities. Asserting itself not only as a theory, but also as a radical political practice, the fascination with postcolonialism spread all over, and it continues to thrive.

Chibber comments, however, that "the challenge faced by postcolonial studies is strikingly similar to the one accepted by Marxism a century ago – to generate a theory adequate to the needs of a radical political agenda" (2013a: 2). He calls, nonetheless, attention to the differences:

[...] the most obvious one being that Marxism's initial development and spread was almost entirely based in working-class organizations and political parties, while its foothold in universities was infinitesimally small. Postcolonial studies is its mirror image, having developed entirely within the university and, though drawing some inspiration from movements, rarely in more than symbolic contact with them. (2013a: 2-3)

Chibber highlights one of the major problems with this field of studies, i.e., the lack of a research agenda and its presentation more as a political orientation than as a theory per se. Postcolonial studies don't offer a coherent methodology, but merely a political agenda and perception. And Chibber adds:

It is not that postcolonial studies is an assemblage of theories while Marxism was not – in fact, Marxism always comprised an eclectic range of theories, much as

does the former. The difference is that Marxism always sought internal coherence and while postcolonial studies resists any compulsion to bring together and assess its various strands. Thus, as its influence has spread, the variations in what falls under its rubric have tended to increase. From literature and cultural studies, to historiography, the philosophy of history, and anthropology, it is now possible to find postcolonial theory in all these areas and elsewhere besides, but with the common “theory” increasingly hard to discern. (2013a: 3)

It is then easy to understand why Chibber criticizes postcolonial theory. From his point of view, it tries to do the same as Marxism – i.e., to explain the world and how to proceed in order to change it – and it fails in both realms. Postcolonial theory not only fails but also has serious conservative implications. For example, it revives such Orientalist ideas as that the West profoundly differs from the East: “it relentlessly promotes Eurocentrism [by portraying] the West as the site of reason, rationality, secularism, democratic culture, and the like, and the East as an unchanging miasma of tradition, unreason, religiosity, and so on”. According to Pranav Jani, we can compare Chibber’s formulation with that of Sarkar, a founding member of Subaltern Studies “who famously left the editorial collective after it turned decisively toward postmodernism” (2014: 108). Jani adds:

In “The Decline of Subaltern in Subaltern Studies” Sarkar argued that the “detachment from socio-economic contexts and determinants” in Subaltern Studies had led to a simplistic vision of the “subaltern” (the marginalized, the oppressed) as being frozen in time, outside of modern life. As both Chibber and Sarkar contend, postcolonial theory and subaltern studies take us back to the same orientalist representations the colonizers peddled – now repackaged by this movement in the language of radical theory. (2014: n.p.)

By setting itself as an opponent of the universalization propagated by Marxism, postcolonialism claims that people are not influenced by their culture, but fully constituted by it. In Chibber’s words, “That means their socializations is so strong, their culture and cultural indoctrination so overriding, that it can erase their understanding of their basic needs and interests, like the importance of physical well-being or individual harm” (2013b: 41). For Chibber, a lot is at stake if we accept this statement, since any conception of human rights stops making sense. Chibber asserts that culture is always an important element of subjectivity, but it can’t be taken as the essence of subjectivity if it makes people ignore their overall well-being.

Another argument put forward by Chibber in *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* is that, while Marxism positions itself as part of an international and universal struggle against capitalism – defending the idea that, beyond religion, color, gender, etc., the oppressed populations of the planet have interests in common in the struggle against capitalism – postcolonialism asserts that workers from non-western societies are not motivated by the same concerns as westerners, that they don't even think in terms of their interests, i.e., that they have a consciousness essentially different from westerners. For Chibber, this conception is reminiscent of the one used by the imperialist and colonizer countries when they deny rights to Asians and Africans. In this sense, Chibber's argument rests on the clearest of principles:

If you think people in postcolonial cultures deserve the same rights as people in rich countries do, you can only make that argument if you also believe they have the same needs and interests as the latter. To deny this is to insist that Easterners and Westerners live in different worlds. Such a theory can't possibly sustain and support international movements as internationalism within the working class. (2013b: 42)

Chibber also addresses and challenges the claim made by postcolonial theory – one which is arguably one of its major fallacies – that Marxism is not different from colonial ideology because it is as Eurocentric as the latter was. Nothing could be more false, however, if one looks at Marxism's history during the twentieth century. Chibber argues that, in fact, Marxism is the only theory that inexorably and incessantly engaged the eastern world. In his words, "The idea that it is a theory that ignores the nonwest or that it imposes western categories artificially, or that it is blind to the realities of the nonwestern world, is pretty far-fetched" (ibidem: 42). As Jani states, "PTSC offers a defense, from a left-wing perspective, of universalism, totality, reason, truth, reality, progress, knowledge, and other terms and concepts that have been denigrated and caricatured by postcolonial theorists and others [...]" (2014: n.p.).

Regarding the lack of internal coherence in postcolonial theory, Chibber explains the analytical confusion of postcolonialism in terms of a phenomenon typical of university culture:

This is the eagerness among academics to appear au courant, at the cutting edge, to display familiarity with the very latest conceptual advances. The most common means of so doing is to roll for the latest neologisms in order to pepper one's work with them, even if only for symbolic purposes. The result is a kind of

conceptual inflation, in which the substantive influence of a framework appears to extend far beyond its actual reach. (2013a: 3)

Moreover, the accusations levelled by postcolonial theorists against Marxism are only a way to build their own credentials:

[I]f you want to establish yourself as a radical in academia, and you don't want any of the hits to your career that come with being a 'Marxist,' the first thing you have to do is say something negative about Marxism. It establishes that even though you're on the left you're not 'one of them'. (2013b: 43)

By way of summarizing Chibber's proposals, and beyond the positive aspects that he finds in postcolonial studies – such as the maintenance of the idea that colonialism was extremely destructive and that it engendered a pernicious ideology – what happens in general with postcolonial theory is that we are served a quantity of scholarship and argumentation that is interested in criticizing the dominant order, but which is not anti-capitalist. In the end, Chibber underscores, this is all that postcolonial studies have to offer. Chibber goes even further by claiming that what we have is a theory that imports from leftist academic culture the empty and presumptuous verbosity that one can find in graduate seminar rooms. According to Chibber, it is necessary “to push back against some of the silliness and obscurantism that has been propagated by postcolonial theory” (2013b: 44). And, as Jani once again points out, “Chibber also reinvigorates debates about universalism, asserting that, in order to understand a world brought together by capitalism, we need to see the world as one – not by ignoring diversity across regions but by explaining how capitalism thrives on the creation of difference and heterogeneity” (2014: n.p.).

LITERARY STUDIES: COMBINED AND UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT

In their collaborative work, which recently appeared under the title *Combined and Uneven Development-Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (2015), the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) proposes a new way to redefine and to reinvent the field of literary studies such that it can emerge out of its current crisis. WReC first lends support to Chibber's understanding of the significant ways in which postcolonial studies have failed, arguing in turn that,

[i]f [Raymond] Williams's identification of a crisis in literary studies in 1981 can be taken to mark the emergence of various new initiatives – among them,

postcolonial, ethnic and women's studies, cultural studies itself, the epistemological and methodological interventions of poststructuralism, postmodernism and deconstruction – perhaps the current moment is marked by the recognition that these 'new formations' have themselves now passed their sell-by dates. (2015: 4)

WReC then moves to resituate the problem of "world literature" by "pursuing the literary-cultural implications of the theory of combined and uneven development" (2015: 6; see also Davidson, 2014; Trotsky, 1906). This paradigm shift involves re-conceptualizing the notion of modernity, which means "de-linking it from the idea of the 'west' and yoking it to that of the capitalist world-system" (WReC, 2015: 15). The theory of combined and uneven development originated in the work of Engels, Lenin and Trotsky¹; more recently, Fredric Jameson has described the world literary system as "one and unequal" (1981; 2013). As WReC authors remark: "The theory of 'combined and uneven development' was therefore devised to describe a situation in which capitalist forms and relations exist alongside 'archaic forms of economic life' and pre-existing social and class relations" (2015: 11). So, in the first instance, WReC defines 'world literature' "as the literature of the world-system – of the modern capitalist world-system, that is" (ibidem: 8). This implies that we need to understand modernity as governed always by unevenness. In other words,

the historically determinate 'coexistence', in any given place and time, of realities from radically different moments of history [...]. The multiple modes in and through which this 'coexistence' manifests itself – the multiple forms of appearance of unevenness – are to be understood as being connected, as being governed by a socio-historical logic of combination, rather than as being contingent and asystematic. (ibidem: 12)

In the same manner, WReC argues that we need to recognize that capitalist development does not "smooth away but rather produces unevenness, systematically and as a matter of course" (ibidem). Another key element is that "modernity is neither a

¹ The authors explain that Trotsky amplified Marx and Lenin's work by formulating an "elaborated theory of 'uneven and combined development', by way of analyzing the effects of the imposition of capitalism on cultures and societies hitherto un- or only sectorally capitalized. In these contexts – properly understood as imperialist, as Trotsky noted – the imposed capitalist forces of production and class relations tend not to supplant (or are not allowed to supplant) but to be conjoined forcibly with pre-existing forces and relations. The outcome, he wrote, is a contradictory 'amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms' – an urban proletariat working in technologically advanced industries existing side by side with rural populations engaged in subsistence farming; industrial plants built alongside 'villages of wood and straw'; and peasants 'thrown into the factory cauldron snatched directly from the plow' (1967: 432)" (2015: 10-11).

chronological nor a geographical category. It is not something that happens – or even happens first – in ‘the west’ and to which others can subsequently gain access” (2015: 13). Capitalist modernization entails development, “but this ‘development’ takes the forms also of the development of underdevelopment, of maldevelopment and dependent development” (ibidem). WReC thus emphasizes that the “idea of some sort of ‘achieved’ modernity, in which unevenness would have been superseded, harmonized, vanquished or ironed out is radically unhistorical” (ibidem). “Alternative” modernities, as they have been attempted in recent state projects (for example, in Mozambique or Cubanized Angola), thus do not really represent a solution, since they derive from an “assumption as to the ‘western’ provenance of modernity – rather than [from] situating it in the context of capitalism as a world-system – ... both misguided and unnecessary” (2015: 14). These modernities are better understood, in the authors’ perspective, as “peripheral modernities (as long as peripheral is understood only as a relationship to the centers of capitalism [...]), in which all societies shared a common reference provided by global capital and its requirements”² (WReC, 2015: 14). According to WReC, such an understanding

should challenge our uncritical habit of conflating epistemological and chronological primacy (‘modernity happened in Europe first and best, and then in other places’, etc.), and get us into the habit of systematic thinking in terms of non-linear conjunctions. (ibidem: 15)

As we ready ourselves to analyze and to compare specific works of Haitian and Mozambican fiction, we do well to keep in mind two main ideas drawn from WReC: 1) capitalism should be understood to be the substrate of world-literature (its “political horizon”; 2) modernity should be understood as constituting world-literature’s subject and form: “modernity is both what world-literature indexes or is ‘about’ and what gives world-literature its distinguishing formal characteristics” (2015: 15)³.

WReC’s argument can be condensed into the following summary assertions: “a single but radically uneven world-system; a singular modernity, combined and uneven; and a literature that variously registers this combined unevenness in both its form and its content to reveal itself as [...] world-literature” (2015: 49). World-literature is thus an

² WReC here is following Harroonian insights that “If modernity is understood as the way in which capitalism is ‘lived’ – wherever in the world-system it is lived — then ‘however a society develops’, its modernity is coeval with other modernities, ‘is simply taking place at the same time as other modernities’” (2015: 14-15).

³ On these questions, also see Jameson, 2013 and Jameson, 1981.

analytical category and not one centered in, or by, aesthetic judgement.⁴ In WReC's view,

the value of literary-world systems theory lies in the fact that it enables comparison of discrepant literary subunits and social formations of the world-system, both at the same point in chronological time and at congruent conjunctures in the recurring rhythmic cycles of capitalism – Russian and Brazilian novels of the 1880s, for instance, or those from the Austro-Hungarian empire and Ireland in the early twentieth century... (ibidem: 68)

In my opinion, it is by following WReC's proposed reconceptualization of world-literature that a comparative perspective is possible without following into the same, well-known pitfalls of postcolonial theory.

INTERSECTIONALITY

"Intersectionality" is a concept whose relevance to the argument of this essay will not be made clear until my conclusion. Nevertheless, it is useful to introduce "intersectionality" at this point if only as a suggestion for readers to keep in mind as they assess my interpretations of Pinede's and Borges Coelho's narratives. As a way of concretizing "intersectionality", let us consider cases of what is often termed "identity politics". These will illustrate and confirm two points: (1) the symbolic creation of new identities requires materialization in political practices, and (2) identities are never singular, and that fact opens up the possibility of solidarity.

For example, the recognition, celebration, and appreciation of Afro-American culture within the African-American population in the United States helped centrally to consolidate an Afro-American identity. But Black liberation would have been impossible without the organized struggles carried out by The Universal Negro Improvement Association, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, The Black Panthers, or The Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement, as well as by other lesser-known groups. In this way, the formation of an Afro-American identity during the twentieth-century required materialization in social practice as a condition for Black self-emancipation.

⁴ In their analysis, they treat "the novel paradigmatically, not exemplarily, as a literary form in which combined and uneven development is manifested with particular salience, due in no small part to its fundamental association with the rise of capitalism and its status in peripheral and semi-peripheral societies as an import which is in Jameson's words 'as much a component of modernization as the importation of automobiles' (2012: 476)" (2015: 16).

And what is true for the forms of struggle that powered the 1960s Black liberation movement, creating new Afro-American identities from older Afro-American subjectivities, is also true for other self-determining assertions of identity (Black Lives Matter today; the National Organization for Women; the LGBTQ movement; Aztlán and the Chican@ movement; the American Indian Movement). Indeed, the successful emergence of such identities requires materialization in social practices and, in that sense, the mobilization of social movements can precisely be said to transform “subjects” (individuals and groups as passively defined by a social system) into “agents” (individuals and groups as actively transforming a social system).

There subsists, of course, a certain reification of “identity” in what we have just affirmed. Even in the case of identities based on self-determination – ones that are articulated for the purpose of self-emancipation – these in fact lack seamless homogeneity. They may be said to embody their own (stronger or weaker) contradictions, in particular historical conjunctures, such as tensions between women of color and white women, Cuban-American Hispanics and Mexican-American Latinos, gays and lesbians, Native Americans who continue to live on reservation territories and those who have relocated, full-time workers and the precariat, Oprah and Sojourner Truth.

Moreover, and now in a positive sense, identities lack seamless homogeneity because aspects of any individual subject’s identity simultaneously converge with other social identities, even when the individual’s subjectivity is constructed by an identitarian discourse as, in its essence, divergent. That is why it is necessary to introduce the concept of “intersectionality” into any discussion of “identity”. And, indeed, for our purposes “intersectionality” has much to contribute to a discussion of the relations between the identities of the global North and West, on the one hand, over and against the global South and East, on the other, as they are constructed as antinomies in the context of postcolonial theory.

“Intersectionality” is a concept put forward by Black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw and developed in various ways by Patricia Hill Collins, the Combahee River Collective, Barbara Smith and Angela Davis, among others. It is meant to capture two realities: (1) an oppressed individual, such as a Black woman, experiences multiple forms of oppression simultaneously (gender, race, and, in the majority of instances, social class); and (2) systems of oppression transcend singular identities. Thus Black men are ensnared in the same practices of racism that afflict Black women. Forms of oppression and exploitation based on sexual preference, social class, religion, and ethnicity similarly cut across gender boundaries, nationalities, races, and creeds. In all of these cases, the isolation and vindication of a singular identity masks (1) the fact that multiple oppressions are integrated into an overall social system; and (2) the fact that

those who suffer a particular form of oppression, which others do not suffer, still have an interest in allying with those others, since at some point(s) the oppression(s) each one experiences intersects with the oppression(s) experienced by others.

Views of knowledge and of politics based on “intersectionality” thus avoid the worst consequences of the kinds of “identity politics” that have become so fashionably dominant in the academic world. “Intersectionality” means precisely that one has an interest in fighting against all forms of oppression and exploitation. Moreover, it means that one does not need to personally experience a specific form of oppression (racial, gender, national, class) in order to become an effective fighter against that oppression. In this sense, “intersectionality” reveals the limits of social movements based on “identity”, including nationalist or regionalist movements whose politics reify the identities on which they are based.

“Intersectionality” is thus key to understanding the limits of postcolonial theory concerning the cognitive and political insularity and incommensurability of North and South and East and West.

DEPARTURE AND TRANSIT

The relevance of WReC in this essay will quickly become apparent in my analysis of Pinede’s “Departure Lounge”. The relevance of Chibber must await my analysis of Borges Coelho’s *Campo de trânsito*, as well as my conclusion in which the relevance of “intersectionality” will also figure. Succinctly put, these theories facilitate the analysis of formal structures as well as the ideologies conveyed by these literary forms. Since I do not want to be accused of “oversimplifying”, and therefore of being a “reductionist, mechanical Marxist”, I wish to stress from the outset that our fictional texts are not mere “reflections of reality” nor are they mere “pretexts” for the interpretive perspectives I employ. On the contrary, I consider that each fictional narrative intervenes in specific politico-ideological circumstances and, in doing so, produces insights embodying genuine cognitive import.

So I begin here by analyzing “Departure Lounge” and I attempt to show how it is only “by grasp[ing] it as the literary registration of modernity under the sign of combined and uneven development” (WReC, 2015: 17) that it is possible to compare it with Borges Coelho’s *Campo de trânsito*. World-literature in this sense encompasses

[...] modes of spatio-temporal compression, its juxtaposition of asynchronous orders and levels of historical experience, its barometric indications of invisible forces acting from a distance on the local and familiar – as these manifest themselves in literary forms, genres and aesthetic strategies. Any typology of

combined and uneven development will offer a catalogue of effects or motifs at the level of narrative form: discrepant encounters, alienation effects, surreal cross-linkages, unidentified freakish objects, unlikely likenesses across barriers of language, period, territory – the equivalent of umbrellas meeting sewing machines on (animated) dissecting tables. (ibidem)

By compressing spatio-temporal periods of Haiti's history, Pinede's short story falls within WReC's understanding of world-literature. "Departure Lounge" tells the story, narrated in the first person, of Fabienne, a tour guide who is supposed to show Haiti to Miranda Wolcott, a well-off food journalist. As she waits for Miranda at the airport, Fabienne tries to justify her coming back to Haiti by invoking her dead grandmother's "signs" from the grave. During her trip with Miranda, on which they are going to visit co-ops in Cap Haitien accompanied by Manuel, the agronomist and program manager at Plant for Peace, and Alexis, the director of Plant for Peace, Fabienne's stream of consciousness narration goes back and forth, a strategy used to make the reader aware of some crucial events in Haiti's history. Examples are the Massacre River, "where in 1937, the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo ordered the slaughter of at least twenty thousand Haitians" (2011: 256), and the need for Fabienne's parents to leave Haiti because of the brutal government of Papa Doc Duvalier.

In "Departure Lounge" one is faced with inequality on multiple levels. For one, there is open racism: "Then we moved to the U.S., where my classmates asked me if I stuck pins into Vodou dolls. Oh, and if we were responsible for AIDS" (WReC, 2011: 251). Another topic of inequality falls into the category of belittling/discrediting Haiti's cultural/historical importance: "Maybe the sad state of my birthplace is embarrassing me, though I will never admit that to her. It's complicated to try and explain how I can be proud of a place most people see as a hopeless basket case" (ibidem: 252). Issues of sexism and gender inequality are also portrayed: "The smoke snaked along the poto mitan, the middle post holding up the temple. Grandmère Lucille would always say women were the poto mitan of the world. Then one day I asked her why all the priests at our church were men" (2011: 247). Besides other aspects, the short story also conveys the feeling of being distanced from one's own culture: "I can understand my parents' language but can't use it here, now, for a simple greeting. I can translate long speeches from Creole to English for Miranda, yet can't string together one simple sentence when I need to. I am functionally illiterate in what should be my mother tongue, a fumbling tourist in what should be my homeland" (ibidem: 257).

Nonetheless, it is the worker's struggle – their protests and potential use of violence as a means of social/political power – that surfaces as one of the most

striking features of the narrative: “The farmers begin to tell stories of being threatened and forced to sell their land so as a free-trade zone can be built. ‘We will fight for this land until we die!’ they yell, waving their machetes. But some say they’re afraid of what may happen if they don’t sell. Alexis listens to all of it along with us, then he asks if there’s a way they can put their heads together” (ibidem: 257).

By paralleling individual and collective suffering, the narrative can thus be taken out of its historical and geographical context, in order to become a text that speaks to and about humanity:

“You are crying”, says one of the farmers. I look up and recognize his face. Earlier, when we were walking through his land, he had spotted me and called out in Creole, “You are Haitian, aren’t you? I can tell by your beautiful skin”. But now his voice is sharp: “You are crying, but we are the ones with a reason to cry”. I have a reason too. I can understand my parents’ language but I can’t use it here, now, for a simple greeting. (ibidem: 256-257)

Not to dismiss Fabienne’s own struggle with her split identity, it is nevertheless the farmers’ quest against the government for better working and living conditions which makes this story valuable as an example of world-literature.

Turning our attention now to Borges Coelho’s fictional work, *Campo de trânsito*, will permit us to establish some parallels between the two narratives and to draw a few conclusions.

The plot of *Campo de trânsito* is set around the life of the protagonist, J. Mungau, located in a transit camp. Mungau is taken there in the middle of the night and never knows the reasons for his arrest. Even though it is easy to associate the narrative with a critique of the reeducation camps established in Mozambique after its independence, Borges Coelho asserts that is necessary to avoid such a reading:

O Campo de Trânsito flirta com a realidade dos campos de reeducação do nosso passado socialista, mas, desde o princípio, que visava a algo mais geral. Num certo sentido, é mais abstracto que os livros anteriores e procura colocar algumas questões relativas ao absurdo na nossa civilização global. (Borges, 2007)

In this sense, the book’s referentiality is simultaneously connected and not connected to the reality of Mozambique and can be situated in the context of global civilization. As WReC puts it, this Mozambican text should be considered together with the Haitian text discussed above because they both “bear testimony – in their own

distinct ways, and in both their form and their content – to the ‘shock of the new’, the massive rupture effected at the levels of space-time continuum, lifeworld, experience and human sensorium by capitalist modernisation” (2015: 50). Even though the space is thoroughly described, there are no references to an identifiable geography. It is this particularity that opens up the narratives to and for a “juxtaposition of asynchronous orders and levels of historical experience, its barometric indications of invisible forces acting from a distance on the local and familiar” (ibidem: 17).

Campo de trânsito alludes to a scenario where all the possible situations conveyed by a totalitarian State emerge, where the capitalist order reigns, transforming individuals into a collective where their human individuality disappears as well as their social rights. None of the book’s characters have a proper name, with the exception of the protagonist. They are either prisoners identified by numbers, by their profession (Village Chief, Professor, Director), or by some other characteristic (Professor’s Wife, Egret, Pitted). We can observe here striking similarities with Pinede’s “Departure Lounge” where the farmers who live on Haiti’s border are described as a collective voice that can be placed in any corner of the world, where peasants are threatened and forced to sell their land to comply with the capitalist processes and forces imposed by the intervention of imperialist countries. It is the lack of democracy that links Pinede’s peasants and Borges Coelho’s people at the reeducation camps, all of whom are forced to abandon their lands, displaced, and with no choice other than compliance.

Another similarity suggested by both narratives can be located in the vicious attacks perpetrated by the State on its individuals: Manuel, as we have seen, gets abducted by a group of armed men and hasn’t been seen since, as many have also disappeared at the reeducation camps in Mozambique. This also leads us to the idea of massacres on a greater or lesser scale, ones carried out either by the country’s government – as in the case of Mozambique as portrayed by Borges Coelho’s narrative (where a supposedly socialist State tries to impose on its inhabitants a new mentality based on Marxist-Leninist principals⁵) – or by neighborhood governments – as in the

⁵ While it is customary simply to take at face value Frelimo’s claim that it implemented “socialism” in the 1975-1992 period, in fact it did no such thing. Its model of “socialism” derived directly from Stalinism: a one-party state, a state-controlled (top-down) command economy, a state-controlled process of land reform, extensive nationalization, and a heavily subsidized social sector (the first three of which have no place in Marx and Engels’s conception of socialism, which always stressed workers’ and peasants’ self-emancipation and explicitly rejected any kind of “socialism” bestowed upon the populace from above). All of this assured that political power in Mozambique brought with it the party and state’s bureaucratic control of the means of production. An ideology and practice of “nationalist modernization”, derived from Western models, characterizes both the “post-independence” and the so-called “post-socialist” periods. The difference between the two, of course, is that the form of capitalism pursued between 1975-1992 consisted of state-led development (exactly like that which was seen not only in places such as the USSR and Cuba, but also in US areas of influence such as the Pacific Tigers), while the form of capitalism pursued after 1992 in Mozambique is neoliberalism. The latter period has witnessed the introduction of multiple political parties, but capitalism has been proven globally to be compatible not only with multi-party political systems, but also with single-party states.

reference made in Pinede's short story to the 1937 slaughter ordered by Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, which took the lives of at least twenty thousand Haitians.

One of Campo de trânsito's most interesting features is the class taught by the Professor in which he instructs the prisoners in regard to the virtues of collectivity vis-à-vis the disease of individuality. In Mungau's opinion, "a colectividade é um corpo só, um corpo que resulta da união das várias singularidades" (Borges, 2007: 75). On the other hand, Prisoner 13.2 believes, in opposition to Mungau, that "uma união simples de singularidades só poderia resultar numa singularidade que, embora maior, continuaria a ser também ela limitada" (ibidem: 76). Transformation would be the solution – "uma colectividade é, isso sim, uma união de colectividades transformadas!" (ibidem: 76). The Professor then shows the importance of the collectivity by comparing the garden labored by Prisoner's 13.2 group with his wife's, emphasizing the vitality of the first in opposition with the poor quality of the second. According to his point of view, the lesson is obvious: "Vale a pena tanta obstinação individual? Tanto excesso, digamos assim, de singularidade? Vale a pena desafiar os sozinhos a natureza?" (ibidem: 77). The dutiful students reply that no, it is not worth it to defy nature alone. Nonetheless Borges Coelho's narrative suggests something else, since it places in the hands of the Professor's Wife – a character apparently without voice and power, submissive to her husband who mistreats her violently – the agency of the Director's murder following his rape of her while she worked in her garden:

Espreitando por detrás do rochedo Mungau tem enfim a visão da horta da Mulher do Professor. A meio dela, por cima das raquíticas couves, depara com o Director de calças caídas até aos tornozelos, com as perninhas fortes bem à mostra. Segura a Mulher do Professor, muito maior do que ele, com as suas duas enérgicas aranhas; obriga-a a manter-se de gatas no chão enquanto prossegue com uma arrastada prelecção. Sublinha aquilo que diz com puxões secos que a obrigam a torcer a cabeça e a impedem de se levantar. (Borges, 2007: 123)

Later, she asks Mungau: "Empresta-me a tua faca. Tenho de fazer um trabalho que só com ela posso fazer. Devolvo-ta assim que o concluir" (Borges, 2007: 142). Mungau's thoughts convey the awakening of a woman against her oppression not only by men, but also by the capitalist power embodied in the Director's character:

É a primeira vez que lhe ouve a voz assim articulada, proferindo uma frase toda inteira. Não são rugidos nem uivos da fera, nem sequer os gemidos de uma brutalizada vítima. É apenas uma voz de mulher. E di-lo enquanto se vira

fugazmente para trás, na direcção da moribunda horta. Como se só aquela faca fosse capaz de a fazer reviver. (2007: 142)

This act will change life in the fields. Perhaps the sexual violence can be understood as analogous to the crimes committed against the people and the land by capitalism's penetration of pre-capitalist societies. The Professor's Wife contains in herself a powerful negative critique of the social and political system that is in place. She also can represent the potential for resistance to the physical and psychological violence that is imposed on her and on the people of Mozambique. The same can be said about Manuel. Even though he is kidnapped, and his disappearance may imply his death, he was resisting the power of capitalism in a society highly dominated by American and European imperialism and capitalism. Alexis and the peasants who survived "the vicious attacks that took place yesterday in Hinche against peasants leaving the Congress" (ibidem: 261) will keep on fighting "against globalization" (ibidem: 258).

At the end of the novel, one observes the dissolution of the totalitarian organization spread across the three fields – the Old, the New and the Transit one. The prisoners of the two first ones revolt and threaten to invade the third, which lost its leadership. In the midst of the chaos, out of which there seems to be no other way except imposing a new absolute order, the Professor's Wife keeps working on her garden apparently oblivious to her surroundings:

Semicerrando os olhos, Mungau consegue ainda ver uma minúscula horta mais distante onde um vulto inclinado trabalha com afinco, como se todo o trabalho que há a fazer tivesse de ser feito hoje. Como se amanhã já fosse tarde. Um vulto que enterra a enxada no chão com a mesma convicção com que se enterra uma faca afiada num macio peito. (Borges, 2007: 195)

Her resistance to the totalitarianism imposed by the new post-independence government can also be interpreted through the world-literature analysis proposed by WReC as a reflection of the multiple temporalities extant in the combined and uneven development of a periphery. Her way of cultivating her garden can be seen as a traditional mode of subsistence which, along side of the cruel attempts at destruction by the colonialist order, remains alive and still struggles against the new system of modernization. Mungau's position of critical opposition, which he maintains until the end by fighting against the absurdity of his arrest, parallels in "Departure Lounge" the actions of the Haitian activists, who never stop voicing against the absurdities of their nation.

I suggest here that both texts also narrate, using WReC's words, "the coexistence and clash of customary and emergent social and cultural practices in... traditional societie[s] in the throes of capitalist modernization" (2015: 88). In Mozambique, with its traditional modes of subsistence and an old order inlaid within traditional religions, we can hear the echoes of Haitian voodoo: "Obrigo-os a ler essa ordem nas pedras enterradas, nos ossos que afloram e nos espreitam" (Borges, 2007: 103).

This is also mostly exemplified by the clash between the Village Chief's views and the Director's. According to the Village Chief the prisoners have to learn to distinguish between recollection and tradition:

Ambas dependem da memória mas são inteiramente diferentes. Enquanto a lembrança é um exercício individual e rebelde, fútil e pouco produtivo, a tradição é fruto da ordem. Estes prisioneiros chegaram aqui com as suas privadas e desprezíveis lembranças. Acusavam as autoridades de acontecimentos antigos, acontecimentos dispersos que hoje não fazem qualquer sentido. Aos poucos, contudo, vão chegando à tradição, a este sentido supremo que é sabermos todos de onde vimos, esta certeza de virmos todos do mesmo lugar. E sobretudo, esta vontade de fazermos hoje como foi feito antigamente. (Borges, 2007: 102)

The Village Chief also "desconfia da modernidade que se respira no Campo de Trânsito, teme as perversidades que esta deixa fermentar" (ibidem: 184). The Director, on the other hand, "perde-se nas trufas, pensa que elas são a solução para todos os problemas, a forma de amansar os prisioneiros. Desdenha deste trabalho, diz que perco o meu tempo à procura de calhaus" (ibidem: 103-104). In this context, the truffles would be the symbol of the throes of capitalist modernization.

The representation of space in both narratives also exceeds the description of its physical characteristics, "as the political and cultural implications are joined to intimations of the 'irreal'"⁶ (WReC, 2015: 88). Mozambique and Haiti mark a verifiable position in the map, but they also allude to a place of fantasy in the imperial imagination – the Soviet Union and China in the former's case; the United States, the IMF and the World Bank in

⁶ João Paulo Borges Coelho's novel also falls into this category. WReC describes the novel as "inhabiting what Michael Löwy has called 'a border territory, between reality and 'irreality' (2007: 196). [...] Löwy devised the term 'critical realism' to describe an aesthetic 'founded on a logic of the imagination, of the marvelous, of the mystery or the dream' (194), [...]." (2015: 83). According to WReC, "critical irrealism as theorized by Löwy does not, for all its investment in imagination and the imaginary, deny the existence of natural and social words independent of human perception or apprehension. This foundational homage to realism, or remembrance of it, gives critical irrealist texts the ability to articulate powerful critiques of actually existing reality, which, as Löwy writes, have variously taken the forms of 'protest, outrage, disgust, anger, anxiety, or angst' [...]" (2015: 83).

the latter. Also, the realities lived in the context of these physical spaces extend beyond their national borders and are felt throughout other world peripheries, as highly suggested by Borges Coelho's omission of proper names and country designation in his novel. Both narratives intersect at the human level where human beings are being oppressed and exploited by the capitalist system. Both also envision a way out by portraying the union of the individuals in a common cause. Borges Coelho's novel describes that space of encounter – revolution? – in a moving manner:

Murmura-se por todo o descampado – sobre as bancas dos feirantes, na camarata dos guardas, nos labirínticos corredores entre as casinhas dos prisioneiros, no amontoado de crianças, velhos, mulheres e aves domésticas a que já chamam de Aldeia Nova –, murmura-se por toda a parte que a horda do Campo Novo se juntou à horda do Campo Antigo algures, a meio do caminho. São agora uma horda só. Ao braço forte e desarvorado juntou-se a pérfida inteligência. As luvas cinzentas, capazes de prender como tenazes, têm agora pares de óculos de lentes grossas que as guiem. Sabedores destes zunzuns, os feirantes embalam os seus produtos, recusam-se a vendê-los ainda que lhes seja oferecido o dobro do preço que antes pediam. Os guardas, por sua vez, plantam as armas dentro do chão como esforçados aldeãos recorrendo a inéditas e metálicas sementes, enterram as próprias fardas como circunspectos coveiros, libertam-se de identidades passadas, fazem as contas das que lhes convém assumir. [...] Já se fala em liberdade, teme-se o pior. (2007: 192)

CONCLUSION

This essay has attempted to show how world-literature theory as proposed by WReC can function as a way forward out of older paradigms of reading literature that in one way or another iterate and reiterate imperialist ways of dividing the world and its populations. My argument has unfolded within the context of Vivek Chibber's critique of postcolonial theory – a critique which suggests that postcolonial studies, although once undeniably part of the vanguard of intellectual innovation, now constitutes a scientifically and ideologically stale paradigm restricting further advances in emancipatory cultural theory and practice.

Postcolonial theory posits entrenched dichotomies and unbridgeable gulfs between and among regional geographies, races, ethnicities, nations, genders, modern and traditional societies, individuals and collectivities. The two fictions we have considered here, however, effectively cognize and represent a means of overcoming such divisions through forms of solidarity.

In “Departure Lounge” Fabienne’s evolving consciousness of Haitian inequalities also implicates inequalities in the U.S. The representation of her split identity suggests the potential for cross-cultural understanding and resistance. The farmers’ struggle against the destruction of their lands by the forces of economic imperialism (the transmutation of Haiti into a super-exploited free-trade zone) subsumes individuals within a purposeful collectivity while diminishing neither individual personality nor social movement, as happens with the subordination and sacrifice of individuality in oppressive collectivities (such as capitalist minimum wage workers or Stalinist slave labor camps.) The overlay of economic and cultural temporalities accentuates Fabienne’s alienation from her native language, as well as from her past in Haiti, at the same time as it stimulates her memories of a frequently alienated youth as a Haitian immigrant to the U.S.

In Campo de trânsito, the bad collectivities imposed by capitalism and Stalinism – both of which seek to erase the independence of individual thought and action – are contrasted with the good collectivities envisioned by Mungau and practiced by the Professor’s Wife and the political prisoners who revolt in Transit Camps One and Two. Here, especially in the dialog/debate between Mungau and Prisoner 13.2, the narrative voice evinces a belief in the power of social struggle to transform both individual subjectivities and collective consciousness alike. The parallelism between the Prisoners’ gardening (collective) and the Professor’s Wife’s gardening (individual) drives home the same point. Similarly, the garden as the scene of the rape of the Professor’s Wife by the Director and the subsequent vengeance exacted against him by her – especially in the light of the Professor’s ongoing physical abuse of his Wife – accords to the individual (Wife) a revolutionary agency that, once again, parallels and helps to compose the collective revolt against capitalism and Stalinism. Moreover, the revenge of the Professor’s Wife produces direct effects in the fields. These effects symbolically figure forth not only the possibility of solidarity and unity in struggle but also a form of collectivity that, again, does not erase the individual. They highlight the possibilities of resistance along both gender and class lines – possibilities that become and which remain available precisely in the context of “combined and uneven development”. Indeed, perhaps more so than in “Departure Lounge”, Campo de trânsito helps us to understand a number of the political opportunities embedded in the dynamic of an uneven modernity.

Such realities and possibilities, as expressed in “Departure Lounge” and Campo de trânsito, make clear how and why the notion of “intersectionality” contributes a fundamental perspective to a theory of world-literature based on combined and uneven development. Specifically, it elucidates in and for the world-literature system that a better

future can be envisioned by way of cutting through the borders between countries and continents and enabling citizens to discover that they share much more in common than they were taught to think by the oppression and exploitation of capitalist powers.

Intersectionality, world literature as a function of combined and uneven development: these ideas not only strengthen postcolonial studies but they also strengthen Marxist literary and cultural theory. As Sharon Smith argues, intersectionality as an approach to

fighting oppression does not merely complement but also strengthens Marxist theory and practice – which seeks to unite not only all those who are exploited but also all those who are oppressed by capitalism into a single movement that fights for the liberation of all humanity. (2013-2014: 21)

Smith adds:

As an additive to Marxist theory, intersectionality leads the way toward a much higher level of understanding of the character of oppression than that developed by classical Marxists, enabling the further development of the ways in which solidarity can be built between all those who suffer oppression and exploitation under capitalism to forge a unified movement. (ibidem: 22)

It would seem that the impossibility of solidarity (East vs. West; North vs. South) that has been institutionalized by postcolonial studies can be overcome and surpassed by ways of reading and thinking about literature and the social world that bring together writers, books and readers from different, yet intersected, spaces and histories within a common effort to overpower the inequalities created by capitalism.

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