

O “PÓS-COLONIAL” COMO CATEGORIA DE ANÁLISE SOCIOLÓGICA DAS LITERATURAS PALOPIANAS: POSSIBILIDADES E LIMITES

EL “POSTCOLONIAL” COMO CATEGORÍA DE ANÁLISIS SOCIOLÓGICA DE LAS LITERATURAS PALOPIANAS: POSIBILIDADES Y LÍMITES

THE “POSTCOLONIAL” AS A CATEGORY OF SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF PALOPIAN LITERATURES: POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS

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RESUMO: O objetivo do artigo é colocar em questão os limites e as possibilidade dos aportes teóricos "pós-coloniais" para a análise sociológica das literaturas produzidas em língua portuguesa, com especial enfoque em África. Mostra o delineamento da noção de "pós-colonial" não apenas em seu âmbito geral, mas aplicada principalmente ao campo da literatura, em especial da literatura produzida em língua portuguesa, apontando limites e possibilidades quanto ao uso da referida categoria para uma análise sociológica dos países africanos de língua oficial portuguesa. No campo das possibilidades se encontra uma nova forma de ver o mundo a partir de lugares ainda considerados periféricos pelo norte global, já com relação aos limites, através da trajetória de Inocência Mata, questiona-se se tal categoria não tenderia a reproduzir aspectos próprios da colonialidade, uma vez que a África continua a ser analisada a partir de seu processo colonizador.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Pós-colonial. Sociologia da literatura. Moçambique. Língua portuguesa.

RESUMEN: *El objetivo de este artículo es cuestionar los límites y las posibilidades de las contribuciones teóricas "poscoloniales" al análisis sociológico de las literaturas producidas en portugués, con un enfoque especial en África. Muestra la delineación de la noción de "poscolonial" no solo en su alcance general, sino que se aplica principalmente al campo de la literatura, especialmente la literatura producida en portugués, señalando los límites y las posibilidades con respecto al uso de esta categoría para un análisis sociológico de Países africanos de habla portuguesa. En el campo de las posibilidades, hay una nueva forma de ver el mundo desde lugares aún considerados periféricos por el norte global. En relación con los límites, a través de la trayectoria de Innocence Mata, uno se pregunta si esa categoría no tenderá a reproducir aspectos propios de la colonialidad mientras África continúa siendo analizada desde su proceso de colonización.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Postcolonial. Sociología de la literatura. Mozambique. Lengua portuguesa.*

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ABSTRACT: *The aim of this paper is to question the limits and possibilities of "postcolonial" theoretical contributions to the sociological analysis of literatures produced in Portuguese, with a special focus on Africa. It shows the delineation of the notion of "postcolonial" not only in its general scope, but applied mainly to the field of literature, especially literature produced in Portuguese language, pointing out limits and possibilities regarding the use of this category for a sociological analysis of the Portuguese-speaking African countries. In the field of possibilities, there is a new way of seeing the world from places still considered peripheral by the global north. In relation to the limits, through the trajectory of Inocência Mata, one wonders if such a category would not tend to reproduce its own aspects of coloniality as Africa continues to be analyzed from its colonization process.*

KEYWORDS: *Postcolonial. Sociology of literature. Mozambique. Portuguese language.*

Introduction

With regard to Cultural Studies, we highlight the emergence of a theoretical field called Postcolonial Studies/Theories. To outline the notion of "postcolonial" applied to the field of literature, especially literature produced in the Portuguese language. I sought to understand the different meanings produced in relation to the postcolonial term as applied to the analysis of literature, particularly in African Portuguese literature. Identifying the fundamental interpretations in the debate about the literature produced in Portuguese language, with emphasis on African literatures. Pointing to this, arguments highlighting the possibilities and limits of sociological analysis of Portuguese language literatures based on the "postcolonial" category.

The proposal that was developed is based precisely on the questioning of the limits and possibilities of such theoretical references by placing the focus of the analysis on literatures produced in Portuguese language and African literatures in a broader sense, beyond the linguistic delimitation of colonial character, that is, “African literatures in Portuguese, Spanish, English, French”, etc. The limits are anchored in the question of the extent to which the assumptions of postcolonial theories and their theoretical contributions reproduce logic based on national identities, typical of the “era of colonialism”?

Methodology

In addition to the contributions of the different postcolonial strands, and due to the bibliographic character of the research, it was necessary to delineate the main possibilities given

to the postcolonial category in its various senses, especially in relation to African countries of Portuguese colonization, to understand the theoretical possibilities that the postcolonial category has for the analysis of these societies and how the literature is configured in a primordial instrument of reading of these societies.

Results and discussion

For Sérgio Costa (2013), postcolonial criticism began with intellectuals from the black or migratory diaspora, coming from poor countries in Europe or from North America. Postcolonial theories first found their way into literary studies (England and the USA) from the 1980s. After their contribution to literary studies, these perspectives began to expand into other disciplines, with contributions from Homi Bhabha, Said, Spivak, among others and others. The postcolonial approach arises from the debates between structuralists and poststructuralists, mainly criticizing the process of knowledge construction that, by privileging the models of approach used in Europe, would reproduce the colonial relationship. In this sense, the study of “social minorities” and the processes of transformation in non-Western societies would continue to be treated similarly to those considered to be centers (COSTA, 2013). The term “post” in the term “postcolonial” does not simply indicate a chronologically “after” but a reconfiguration in the field of discussion, in which hierarchical relations eventually gain meaning. Already the “colonial” refers, in addition to the process of colonization, different situations of oppression that may be related to gender, ethnicity, race, among others.

[...] the established forms of knowledge production contribute to the reproduction of the internal logic of colonialism insofar as not only the experiences of minorities, but also the processes of social transformation in “non-western” societies are recurrently analyzed in terms of their functional relationships or similarity and difference with what has been defined as the center of modern society (COSTA, 2013. p. 30).²

The deconstruction of west/rest polarity is a nodal point in postcolonial discussions. According to Costa, it is the presence of this colonialist perspective in the production of knowledge that unites the various approaches within the postcolonial debate. From the chronological point of view, the prefix “post” refers to former colonies, which have distinct

² [...] as formas estabelecidas de produção do conhecimento contribuem para a reprodução da lógica interna do colonialismo na medida em que não apenas as experiências de minorias, mas também os processos de transformação social nas sociedades “não ocidentais” são analisados recorrentemente nos termos de suas relações funcionais ou de semelhança e diferença com aquilo que se definiu como centro da sociedade moderna (COSTA, 2013. p. 30).

postcolonial conditions. West/rest deconstruction is a central aspect of colonial relations. Such relations tend to be perpetuated even after the formal extinction of the colonial statute (COSTA, 2013), but remain as a model of knowledge production and political intervention. There are several tasks of postcolonial theorists, and according to Sérgio Costa's analysis, citing Stuart Hall's contribution, two can be highlighted:

1- To demonstrate the existence of the west/rest polarity, which is built on the discursive plane and legitimates itself in the political sphere. In this sense there is an asymmetrical and irreversible relationship between East and West, in which the West has an ontological and unchanging superiority, which is part of the logical construction of the world of life itself.

2- To show that the west/rest polarity does not pose risks from the cognitive point of view, because it overshadows the existing hierarchical relations, also overshadowing the established imaginary in relation to the rest of the world.

This polarity plays a decisive role not only in the early modern works in the field of the human sciences - from Kant to Weber, also becoming one of the foundations of modern science itself, which takes the social norms, structures and values found in qualified societies of westerners as a universal parameter that defines what modern societies are (COSTA, 2013 p. 31).³

The deconstruction of this binary has been followed by several researchers. From Spivak's *Rehearsal Pode o Subalterno Falar?* (1988), the expectation that a new epistemological perspective would emerge giving voice to the individual (post-colonized). The author uses the example of India, showing that there is no subaltern individual who seeks speech, in fact there is a heterogeneity of subaltern individuals who are not fully aware of their pre or postcolonial condition once their identities have been constructed on colonial violence. The intellectual who is anchored in postcolonial theories seeks to understand colonial domination as a curtailment of resistance, which makes the speech of the subaltern individual disqualified. Aware of the impossibilities announced by Spivak, postcolonial theorists seek alternatives to the deconstruction of the west/rest perspective that are distinct from the mere reversal of position of these subjects. It would not be a matter of giving voice to the oppressed, but of a decolonization of the imagination, which is necessary in a critique that is not only anti-colonialist. The postcolonial must promote the deconstruction of the colonialist borders and those created by the anti-colonial struggle, “at the same time, however, we seek to overcome

³ Essa polaridade tem papel determinante não apenas nos primeiros trabalhos modernos no campo das ciências humanas - de Kant a Weber, tomando-se, também, um dos fundamentos da própria ciência moderna, a qual toma as normas sociais, estruturas e valores encontrados nas sociedades qualificadas de ocidentais como parâmetro universal que define o que são sociedades modernas (COSTA, 2013 p. 31).

these institutions, disciplines and categories” (COSTA, 2013, p. 39).

Luciana Ballestrin aims, in her article *América Latina e o giro decolonial* (2013), to present in general the genealogy of postcolonial theories and the trajectory of the Modernity/Coloniality Group, its theoretical/epistemological contributions to the Social Sciences, always proposing a renovation, especially in Latin America. The author also shows in her work the decolonial option, as well as her contributions in the epistemological, theoretical and political field. An important movement was the South Asian group that formed the Subaltern Study Group and its main objective was to critically analyze the colonial historiography of India made by Western Europeans, criticizing the historiographical perspective of orthodox Marxism (BALLESTRIN, 2013). In the 1980s, subaltern studies⁴ became known outside India through works such as the aforementioned Spivak essay.

In Ballestrin's analysis, the Modernity/Coloniality group was originated in the United States between 1990 and 1992, a group of Latin American and Americanist intellectuals founded the Latin American Group of Subaltern Studies, inspired by the Indian one. Latin America was thus inserted in the postcolonial debate, reviewing the epistemologies previously established for the social sciences and humanities. Incorporating themes addressed by the Indian counterpart, the group was moving towards a reconstruction of Latin American history. This reconstruction emerged as an alternative to the theoretical project produced by Cultural Studies. The group put the lens on the political categories (class, nation and gender) that were invisible in Cultural Studies under the category of “hybridity”.

Walter Mignolo was already the most radical voice of the group (BALLESTRIN, 2013), showing dissatisfaction with the original subaltern studies. Conducting his critique of colonial legacies on the American continent, he does not believe that the texts produced by the group of subaltern studies should only be translated and applied to the Latin American reality. For Mignolo it is necessary to seek a critical categorization of Westernism that has its place in the analysis of Latin America itself. At this point, Walter Mignolo denounces that what Cultural, Postcolonial and Subaltern Studies did not make a definite break with Eurocentric values. For the author, the Latin American group should not mirror the Indian response to colonialism, since Latin America had trajectories of domination and resistance distinct from what happened in India.

For him, the group of Latin subalterns should not mirror the Indian response

⁴ The term subaltern was borrowed from Gramsci, here the term is understood as a disaggregated and episodic class or group that has a historical tendency towards ever provisional unification, which aims to end the ruling class hegemony.

to colonialism, as Latin America's trajectory of domination and resistance was itself hidden in the debate. The history of the continent for the development of world capitalism had been differentiated, being the first to suffer the violence of the modern colonial/imperial scheme (BALLESTRIN, 2013, p. 95-96).⁵

The author also points out that Latin America has other colonial relations on the part of the new US empire, although it was also an American colony. Due to various disagreements, the Latin American group dissolved, some of its former members and other Latin American theorists eventually founded the Modernity/Coloniality group (BALLESTRIN, 2013). “With just over ten years of existence, the group shares notions, reasoning and concepts that give it its own identity and vocabulary, contributing to the analytical and utopian renewal of 21st century Latin American social sciences” (BALLESTRIN, 2013, p. 99). The need to transcend, in other words, to decolonize from epistemology and the Western canon, and to think of the south from the south itself, became evident. However, Foucault and Gramsci remained as references of the South Asian group, which prevented the theoretical radicalization of both Indian and Latin American groups, before their ruptures culminating in the Coloniality/Modernity group.

The decolonial proposal for Ballestrin means a movement of theoretical, practical, political and epistemological resistance. The logic of modernity/coloniality should not be confused with the rejection of human creation in the global north and associated with the south. It should be read as a counterpoint to the historical tendency of the division of scientific work within the social sciences, where the south proves itself as a provider of experiences and the North is configured as theorizing element: the “decolonial perspective, which provides new utopian and radical horizons for the thought of human liberation, in dialogue with the production of knowledge” (BALLESTRIN, 2013, p. 110). Several authors have now produced theories that question ethnocentric and Eurocentric universalism. These have built a set of elaborations called Southern Epistemologies, valuing “trans-modern” perspectives (MIGNOLO, 2010) that propose a decolonization of the social sciences.

Entering the field of literature tied to the postcolonial category, Hamilton's analysis (1999) says that although the PALOP⁶, have similarities with other former colonies, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Angola and Sao Tome and Principe, and they have, together and individually, striking singularities in the African context. An important difference,

⁵ Para ele, o grupo dos latinos subalternos não deveria se espelhar na resposta indiana ao colonialismo, já que a trajetória da América Latina de dominação e resistência estava ela própria oculta no debate. A história do continente para o desenvolvimento do capitalismo mundial fora diferenciada, sendo a primeira a sofrer a violência do esquema colonial/imperial moderno (BALLESTRIN, 2013, p. 95-96).

⁶ Portuguese Speaking African Countries.

located in the areas of cultural expression and in particular literary expression, is the presence of mestizo and white intellectuals in the former Portuguese colonies, something the author will call the multiracial “intelligentsia”, in which Angola and Mozambique stand out. In the mid-1940s, black, mestizo and white intellectuals came together under the banner of the anti-colonial struggle.

As for the similarities with the colonies of France, was the policy of assimilation established by both Portugal and France. However, unlike in Angola and Mozambique, few settlers and children of Francophone settlers became postcolonial writers. The historical peculiarities of the five former Portuguese colonies contributed to the uniqueness of their literary expression, "was the literary expression of cultural revindication, social protest e fight that was preparing the scenario in the five PALOP to the actual postcolonial write" (HAMILTON, 1999, p. 16).

Of course, the literary production of the time opposed the colonial regime. In the PALOP, due to the victory of the liberation movements, a literature emerged that celebrated the defeat of the colonial regime, praised the social revolution and national reconstruction in these countries. Along with works of nationalist and nativist character, works of a more intimate character emerged that, of experimental and reformist character, led some national authors to rewrite and reinvent Africa and their respective countries. Citizens of these countries need to live with social and cultural institutions that are an indelible mark of colonialism, since the very geographical boundaries of these countries were established by their colonizers. Among these marks is the use of the colonizer's language, an issue that disturbed African and Africanist intellectuals, since Portuguese was defended as the official language of PALOP countries, which consider Portuguese as their own. In this sense, the author exposes the question that existed at the time of publication of his dossier: can there be an authentically African literature written in a non-African language?

The answer obviously is yes, "for such literature already exists" (HAMILTON, 1999, p. 17). Political, social, economic and cultural factors are essential points that highlight the problematic surrounding postcolonial theories, given the importance of literature years after the independence of the PALOP countries, the growing tendency of the writers of independence to rewrite the pre-colonial and colonial past in societies under construction in these five countries. In this sense, the author highlights the contribution of Pepetela, the Angolan author, and his still embryonic nationalist perspective on Angolan society. Thus narrating the past became valid within the postcolonial perspectives. In this sense, the authors' efforts to “re-mythify” the history of the five PALOP countries stand out, as well as the contribution of Mia Couto and

Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa, both Mozambicans. This attempt to “re-mythify” or rewrite the past can be considered a strategy against the stereotyped distortions developed by the European colonizer, see Joseph Conrad's *No coração das trevas* (1902) as an example.

Some of the best examples of this re-mythification can be found in the novels of Mozambicans Mia Couto and Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa. *Ualalapi*, the tsonga term for “the sleeping person”, Ba Ka Khosa's first novel, bears, within the framework of postcolonial re-mythifications, stylistic and thematic elements of Latin American magical realism. And Mia Couto, in her *Terra Sonâmbula*, re-mythifies, through surrealistic scenes and fantasy situations, an episode of Mozambique's recent postcolonial history (HAMILTON, 1999, p. 18).⁷

This re-mythification is a guiding component of neotraditionalism (HAMILTON, 1999) that characterizes important elements of the postcolonial condition. Paradoxically, in these new literary discourses, the question arises about the inherited structures of colonialism and, behind it, the questioning of the regimes of administration that were established in the PALOP countries, after their respective independence.

Cutting the analysis for Mozambican literatures, for Fátima Mendonça (2008), the emergence of literature in Mozambique actually occurs in the late 1940s. After the first manifestations, literature as a system is already remarkable (a group of authors, readers, circulating works and a critique). It is important to highlight that the literature that was developing in Mozambique does not break with the Portuguese literature, but with the colonial literature, that produced by the Portuguese on African soil. This colonial literature overvalued the white man, his presence and his actions in Africa. In the 1940s, the gentile “Mozambican” and the pretense of an idea of nation began to circulate, notably in the poetry of José Craveirinha and Noémia de Souza. The literature produced at that time was mainly engaged literature, not only culturally but politically: “The claim that was made was the claim of a cultural territory, which obviously implied a political territory, clearly bearing in mind that it was a subjugated space, a dominated space” (NOA, 2014, p. 348).

In the analysis of Inocência Mata (2010), “[...] literature is a product of social life, and is therefore linked to specific contexts and in dialogue with other social series” (MATA, 2010, p. 299). However, Inocência Mata lists the fallacy related to the historical method, which has been widely practiced in the United States. This method could summarize literature as a

⁷ Alguns dos melhores exemplos desta re-mitificação verificam-se nos romances dos moçambicanos Mia Couto e Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa. *Ualalapi*, o termo tsonga para “aquele que dorme”, o primeiro romance de Ba Ka Khosa, ostenta, no âmbito das re-mitificações pós-coloniais, elementos estilísticos e temáticos do realismo mágico latino-americano. E Mia Couto, no seu *Terra Sonâmbula*, re-mitifica, por meio de cenas surrealistas e situações fantasiosas, um episódio da recente história pós-colonial de Moçambique (HAMILTON, 1999, p. 18).

“cultural object” (MATA, 2010), reducing literature to an expression of culture, however, it is necessary to think about what is outside the text. In this sense, Inocência Mata analyzes the concept of literature under two questions, or a double point of view: ”1) from the context of its production; 2) that their relationship with knowledge derives” (MATA, 2010, p. 300).

The complementarity of literary, cultural and social studies occurs from three perspectives, according to Inocência Mata, responding to studies of literature in general and peripheral literatures more specifically. The first would be related to the extratextual aspects that express a reality lived by the writer. Even when writing a fiction there is historical reality in that text that will somehow be grasped by the reader. The second perspective refers to meeting a need of the common reader, formed within the Western canonical literature, who does not have the basic knowledge about the countries where these literatures develop, which turns the study of these literatures into a source of knowledge about their production sites. Finally, from this, we owe a debt that the historical conscience illuminates the problematic of the knowledge of the society regarding the alterity with the peripheral margins (MATA, 2010).

About the use of the postcolonial category for the analysis of the literature produced in the Portuguese colonization countries, the author will list in her text, *Estudos pós-coloniais desconstruindo genealogias eurocêtricas* (2014), a destabilization of the colonizing perspectives calling attention to the perverse character from certain perspectives of the sciences like "Canon and Universal", "Cosmopolitanism or Globalization":

This is why it is essential to discuss some ideas taken as acquired among the scholars of peripheralized literatures, such as African in Portuguese, or minor, such as that of Brazilian afro descendants, and their agents and actors (...) in view of the tendency to the judicative classification that derives from the process of hierarchy based on criteria considered as “universalists” that propose the identity rarefaction resulting, according to their heralds, from the dynamics of globalization (MATA, 2014, p. 38).⁸

These categories, from a Eurocentric perspective, can be understood as a universalism in which “ex-colonized spaces continue to be named according to signs of the former colonizer” (MATA, 2014, p. 38), which proposes to all an imitation of the Western model as the only way out for explanation of the issues of our time. Discussions about postcolonial perspectives, especially those arising from former empires, converge on two aspects, the first on the need for

⁸ Eis porque se torna fundamental discutir algumas ideias tidas como adquiridas entre os estudiosos das literaturas periferizadas, como as africanas em português, ou minorizadas, como a de brasileira afro descendente, e seus agentes e atores (...) tendo em conta a tendência para a classificação judicativa que decorre do processo de hierarquização com base em critérios tidos como “universalistas” que propõem a rarefação identitária decorrente, segundo os seus arautos, da dinâmica da globalização (MATA, 2014, p. 38).

dialogue with southern epistemologies for the construction of knowledge. Cultural studies are reorganizing themselves on foundations other than the linearities and dualisms of the classics, which would function as an element of perpetuation and supremacy of an ideological and historical structure of societies. This aforementioned structure that is affirmed in current power relations, called postcolonial relations, is related to the social sciences, the humanities and literary studies, despite the fact that their (western) destinies are imaginary entities, discursive constructions while object and subject of speech.

The west in the author's view is, like the east, an imaginary construction, however, due to the ideological aspects already listed, the west becomes a “historical fact” (MATA, 2014), an evidence to the detriment of non-western elements, deemed mythical, unworthy of the canon. In this sense, placing the postcolonial as ideology was an attempt to bring to light elements of epistemological discourse that are eminently Eurocentric, formulating explanations that help clarify the ways in which hierarchical relations of power and domination occur (MATA, 2014). This is configured for Inocência Mata as a way to “walk the trails that lead to a geocriticism of eurocentrism” (MATA, 2014, p. 32).

When analyzed between the lines, these cultural geographies also allow a reflection on the process of nation formation, in a cultural course. In the case of literary studies, it is important to highlight, before any local and regional label, that the writer is a subject of his time and that “literature is a social production, an integral part of a never neutral reality and history” (POLAR, 2000, p. 20). There is here, in the analysis of literatures from a postcolonial perspective, a claim to the social and historical dimension of the literary work, and thus there arises a claim of theoretical autonomy linked to the idea of cultural dependence, especially in the field of sciences, especially as regards relates to identities. The history of literature and literary criticism should be concerned, according to the author, with past relations and present relations, thinking about what may come next.

It is this deviation towards another sense, which proposes the inclusion of other rationalities, which have traversed many scholars of these spaces, with special emphasis on those of Latin American literatures and cultures, when considering, between the lines of their diverse and varied body of reflections on productions of these cultural geographies, that the study of the place of each aesthetic production also involves a reflection on the cultural path of a generation or a nation (MATA, 2014, p. 32).⁹

⁹ É esse desvio em direção a um outro sentido, que propõe a inclusão de outras racionalidades, que têm percorrido muitos estudiosos desses espaços, com especial ênfase para os das literaturas e culturas latino-americanas, quando consideram, nas entrelinhas do seu diverso e variado corpo de reflexões sobre produções dessas geografias culturais, que o estudo do lugar de cada produção estética passa, também, por uma reflexão sobre o percurso cultural de uma geração ou uma nação (MATA, 2014, p. 32).

On the epistemological possibilities of the postcolonial, Inocência, in her text *Localizar o "pós-colonial"* (2016), lists the possibility of such theories to invest in the canon's question, to deconstruct the hierarchical and unequally globalizing analyzes that do not consider relevant African writers who are not published in Portugal. Several critics and journalists rely solely on what is published in Portugal. This is also part of a much larger structure linked to academia, when studies of a particular author end up giving this academic legitimacy. Studies about some writer end up giving this passport to the canonical system. It is also the academy that provides the hierarchy of the place of a given author in the literature system when he/she claims that he/she was influenced by other authors. It is not that this disregards that literary influences exist, since the postcolonial perspectives themselves argue that they all start from a place of enunciation, but the idea of the influence of a writer of high literature on the work of a new writer guarantees this validity, such as a passport of literary quality. This type of approach ends up reifying the subaltern place of the literature produced in African countries and criticism plays a fundamental role in this process. According to Inocência, journalistic criticism

[It is characterized by] an ostensibly Eurocentric basis and hierarchical intent, which seems to obey a globalizing logic, but also fulfilling group interests, stems from the fact that much criticism of African literature is still made through “center” mediations. Strictly speaking, it continues to function as a “metropolitan center”, to which the rarefaction (or fading) of the historical real and the disregard of the identity factor, the boundary of “borderless” literature, which proposes the dissolution of cultural diversity - which is, it is said, postmodern and postcolonial reality (MATA, 2005, p. 13).¹⁰

Still on the legitimacy of the authors who are producing these literatures, Inocência states that we always fall into the same colonial relationship of domination: “the study of a given author in academia gives him the passport to the canonical system” (MATA, 2016. p. 38). It is now well known that the Coloniality of Power is not just political and economic, but a Global Coloniality, first of all epistemological. And in order to counteract this hegemony that arises the need for contextualization of the production of knowledge, so that it seeks to translate new forms of knowledge and rationality, for the understanding of contemporary sociocultural phenomena: observable through the power relations between realities and cultural objects, seen as socially constructed and historically located, according to the assumptions of cultural studies.

¹⁰ [ela é caracterizada por uma] base ostensivamente eurocêntrica e intenção hierarquizante, que parece obedecer a uma lógica globalizante, mas também cumprindo interesses de grupo, decorre do facto de muita crítica da literatura africana se fazer, ainda, por via de mediações do “centro”. Em rigor, este continua a funcionar como “centro metropolitano”, ao qual convém a rarefacção (ou desvanecimento) do real histórico e a desconsideração do fator identitário, divisa da literatura “sem fronteiras”, que propõe a dissolução da diversidade cultural – que é, diz-se, realidade pós-moderna e pós-colonial (MATA, 2005, p. 13).

From hegemonic denial emerges the concept of “universal history” that exists with the intention of ignoring “local histories”, one of the premises of knowledge coloniality (MATA, 2016).

The universalizing perspective of the theories and conceptual elaborations of Subaltern Studies, applied in the study of the cultural objects of societies that emerged from the colonial situation. It seems to the author, and rightly so, that universal history still boils down to European history. It was this dissatisfaction that led the author to work with the investigation of knowledge from ethnographic practices and records. From the observation of the context of the situation, not from pre-established theories.

With this perspective it was possible to analyze the meanings of the interactions of the subjects and their production in context, and work on the formulation of other critical concepts that would allow translating these contexts. For Inocência Mata it is necessary to provincialize epistemological paradigms, widening the field of representations marked by the ideas of southern epistemologies, as opposed to the “European compulsion” to fit the rest of the world other than Europe as colonial. Mata proposes, in contrast, an alternative reading of different historical experiences, in which we can locate some of the limits (disregarding historicism as a universal category). It is in this sense that from the African point of view, postcolonial studies must be challenged from their own matrix the "colonialism", defined here as the practice of imperialism.

But a point to be highlighted about the limits is one of the author's own questions: “will Africa continue to be thought from its colonial relations?” (MATA, 2016, p. 44). Some theorists refuse the postcolonial expression to refer to Africa, stating that it continues to be thought from the colonial, and there is a need to restore the history of African societies to counter the (neo)colonial ideology (MATA, 2016). Remaining critical of the historicist perspective, the author focuses on the ideas of transformation and continuity tracking that underlie change. It is precisely these ideas that do not seem to happen in studies related to Africa that are concerned only with the possible “shortcomings”, obsessive development-related theme when it comes to African realities. “Historicism is, in fact, a trap in studies of the South” (MATA, 2016, p. 45).

The question that arises from this relationship of inequality is: “To what extent will postcolonial studies work in this context as legitimation of the epistemological hegemony of the West?” (MATA, 2016, p. 46). Since the construction of the term “postcolonial”, which is more “pacifying” than expressions such as imperialism or neo-colonialism, this issue is necessarily linked to other fields related to Africa, such as its development options imposed by international “donors”, through a symbolic imposition of hegemonic values that eventually reproduce themselves in the North-South hierarchical perspective, which, in a way, would be

legitimized by the postcolonial categories themselves that would try to end them. Other methodological possibilities are being developed so far as alternatives to studies related to African literature, especially regarding the use of local narratives and ethnographic works that allow us to understand the specific reality that is revealed there, rethinking whether postcolonial theories would have, therefore, such a fundamental role in the analysis of the literatures produced in the African countries: “This situation, so different, has allowed me to proceed with many relativizations, operating in a shift towards alternative forms of rationality and thinking from previously places that were unknown to me” (MATA, 2016, p. 48).

Final considerations

It was evident from the beginning, the difficulty encountered in working with this category, since it is located in a field still under construction and within debates where there is hardly consensus. This makes it even more difficult to highlight the possibilities and limits that the present project had as its guiding proposal. Several postcolonial thinkers have divergent ideas about their uses, especially regarding the literatures produced in Portuguese language and, even more pungently, the literatures produced in Portuguese language in African countries that have gone through a Portuguese colonizer process. In an attempt to make some generalizations, we will highlight here some elements that still give us a picture of possibilities and limits regarding the use of this category.

The possibilities are already shown even before we enter the literature studies, since postcolonial theories have in common the struggle for the process of decolonization of the mind. A new way of seeing the world from places still considered peripheral by the global north. European canonical questioning in literary studies and the social sciences is still a taboo faced by postcolonial theories that are grounded in the overturning of canonical and homogenizing perspectives.

The limits were pointed mainly by an analysis of the trajectory of Inocência Mata in postcolonial studies for the analysis of Portuguese language literature produced on the African continent. In the most recent analysis by Inocência there is a clear questioning about the limit of the postcolonial category that she herself has used for years to analyze African literatures produced in Portuguese. For this author, there is a question that must be asked: would such a category not tend to reproduce its own aspects of coloniality, since Africa continues to be analyzed from its colonizing process? Another limit that also relates to the previous one is the construction of a vision about African countries always in the perspective of lack, as if the

African continent did not have the capacity to explore and overcome its own problems. In this sense, is a postcolonial theory or a look at Africa within Africa necessary?

Thinking about the boundaries requires further debate, as several already “canonical” contributions are being challenged within postcolonial theories, such as Inocência Mata's own works. I consider that the criticisms made by the Modernity/Coloniality group serve to deepen the reflections on the possible contradictions existing in postcolonial theories.

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