

# Ruy Duarte de Carvalho's Neo-Animist Project: An African Approach to Posthumanism

Alice Giroto

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

**Abstract** The literary project of the Angolan writer Ruy Duarte de Carvalho, from the collection of poems *Chão de oferta* (1972) to the metafictional trilogy *Os filhos de Próspero* (2009), along with his work as an anthropologist, filmmaker and intellectual, is animated by a research for a conjunction between subject, geology, landscape and politics, which rejects Western epistemological categories and their underlying powers. At the end of his life, this trait of his personality and work took the form of an unfinished neo-animist project, based on a decalogue in which he criticises the humanist paradigm for the sake of recovering an "equilibrium politics" relying on "[o]ther paradigms set aside and hidden from consideration because they originate in cultures dominated or annihilated by the Western world". The aim of this essay is both to trace the origins of Carvalho's neo-animist project in his early poetry and narrative and connect it with a broader African criticism, both literary and philosophical, in order to include his thought within the African approach to posthumanism.

**Keywords** Neo-animism. Posthumanism. Ecology of knowledges. Southern epistemologies. Angolan literature. Ruy Duarte de Carvalho.



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted	2020-07-15
Accepted	2020-09-11
Published	2020-12-22

## Open access

© 2020 | Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License



**Citation** Giroto, A. (2020). "Ruy Duarte De Carvalho's Neo-animist Project: An African Approach to Posthumanism". // *Tolomeo*, 22, 203-218.

DOI 10.30687/Tol/2499-5975/2020/01/029

In a 2005 talk at the University of Coimbra, given in occasion of the presentation of his second novel, the Angolan writer Ruy Duarte de Carvalho, reasoning around the historical time in which his multifaceted work was born and evolved, declared it as being

um tempo em [que] a modernidade e as suas expressões se projectam na negação do seu próprio projecto..... em que a fé e a confiança no projecto humanista, renascentista e iluminista de colocar a regulação do mundo ao alcance do homem através da ideologia totalizante e totalitária do progresso e da complexificação tecnológica, e de uma verdade e de uma liberdade que dão cobertura a toda a ordem de arbitrariedades e de crimes, se negam como saída e resolução óbvias para os problemas da espécie..... (Carvalho 2008, 24-5)

a time in [which] modernity and its expressions project themselves in the negation of their own project..... in which the faith and confidence in the Humanism, Renaissance and Enlightenment project of putting the regulation of the world within man's means through the totalizing and totalitarian ideology of progress and technological complexification, and of a truth and a freedom that act as a front for any kind of arbitrariness and crime, negate themselves as obvious way out and solution for the species' problems.....<sup>1</sup>

With these words he highlighted a common thread underlying his whole literary project, first as a poet and then as a novelist, and indeed his own life and work as an anthropologist, filmmaker and intellectual, that is a restless research for a conjunction between subject, geology, landscape and politics, which, in a postcolonial fashion, rejects Western epistemological categories and the powers they are the mirror of (Carvalho 2019). As stated earlier in the same text, the explanation for this attitude must be traced back to his own experience as a

sujeito em situação no contexto de uma configuração social e formal, política, fora da geografia humana e física que [o] viu nascer. (Carvalho 2008, 20)<sup>2</sup>

**1** All the quotations from Ruy Duarte de Carvalho's works, except those from his *Neo-Animist Decalogue*, and from Boaventura de Sousa Santos's *A cruel pedagogia do vírus* are translated into English by the Author of the essay.

**2** As a matter of fact, these words are also a proof of the deep influence of post-modern anthropology on Carvalho's literary work for the extreme relevance in it of the ethnographer's own subjectivity and perception within his/her field research (Miceli 2011, 15).

situated subject in the context of a social and formal (political) configuration outside the human and physical geography that saw [him] to be born.

A hybrid subject, indeed, but in the opposite direction in comparison with the hybridity postulated by Bhabha (1994): in fact, Ruy Alberto Duarte Gomes de Carvalho (1941-2010) was born in Portugal and moved to Angola with his family in his early childhood, being among the more than 170,000 Portuguese that between 1945 and 1960 emigrated there, pushed by the colonization politics of the Salazarist regime and attracted by the growing wealth produced by the coffee-driven economy of the colony (Castelo 2007, 177). Realizing his own 'Angolanness' after reading Luandino Vieira's most known work *Luuanda* (1965),<sup>3</sup> he took part in Angola's freedom fight and finally became an Angolan citizen in 1975. From 1975 to 1981 he directed films for the State television and Film Institute of the newly independent country. In 1982, with the film *Nelisita*, he graduated at the School of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences in Paris and in 1986 obtained his PhD in social anthropology and ethnology, with a thesis about the production of cultural difference between fishermen in Luanda's coast. From 1987 he taught social anthropology at the universities of Luanda in Angola, São Paulo in Brazil and Coimbra in Portugal, and developed his field inquiries mainly with pastoralist and agro-pastoralist societies in South-western Angola and North-western Namibia. It is precisely in this context that his meta-fictional trilogy *Os filhos de Próspero* (2009) was born and is mainly set - a 'South in the South' which is not surprisingly and programmatically the subject of the poem that opened his career as a writer<sup>4</sup> and the geography to which he definitively and irreversibly consecrated himself since, at least, the '70s.<sup>5</sup> And also his neo-animist project, developed at the end of his life and left unfinished, arose from the lengthily ruminated on observations made during his field work among the Kuvale, being thus a testimony of an "ecology of knowledges" (Santos, Nunes, Meneses 2007) that has as its cornerstone a peculiar "Southern epistemology" (Santos 2009).

Carvalho's neo-animist project was conceived, as described by the author's son in a publication resulted from a commemorative congress about his work held in Lisbon in 2015, as an investigation to

<sup>3</sup> Among his other influences in this sense, he cited also Viriato da Cruz, Aires de Almeida Santos and Ernesto Lara Filho, Angolan writers and nationalists.

<sup>4</sup> I am referring here to "O sul" (The South), the first poem of Ruy Duarte de Carvalho's first poetry collection *Chão de oferta* (1972).

<sup>5</sup> References to this consecration can be found in other poems of *Chão de oferta* and in the short stories of *Como se o mundo não tivesse leste* (1977).

be carried out by a team of philosophers, anthropologists, filmmakers and other intellectuals on the limits and contradictions of humanism and the criticism it had received until that moment in various historical periods and contexts, on the one hand, and on animist practices, on the other, to get a concrete understanding of them and of their alterity to humanism and Western categories; to this theoretical groundwork an action programme with its own manifesto and movement would follow. The two sides of the project are made clear in the very first point of his *Neo-Animist Decalogue*, written in 2009 and published few months before his death:

1 - Although coming from an animist conception that everything in the world has a soul that each existence expresses according to its body and substance, the term neo-animism occurs to name an action program made to question the humanist paradigm that dominates and conducts the march of the world, enlarged to the whole human species' practices and responsibilities but exclusively under the imperative and enforced grammar made by a small part of it. To the Neo-Animists the proposal and the implementation of said program is the first task. This program, however, does not seek to only take references coming from the grammar of the animist paradigm but also from all the cultural or civilizational paradigms from past and present everywhere in the world where human species has produced or is producing interrogations, reflections, inventions, concepts, rules and ways of action. (Carvalho 2010)

The very first sentence puts this decalogue at that crossroads, or convergence, between post-humanism and post-anthropocentrism that for Braidotti (2019, xi) defines posthuman thought. By recognizing that each existence has a soul and through the terminology used for referring to human beings, that is as a 'species' - assuming thus that it is but one among many others -, Carvalho can be said to integrate post-anthropocentrism as a critic of the human supremacy over the whole planet, which derives from granting to the *anthropos* "an ontological privilege in the large majority of the historical accounts on the human" (Ferrando 2019, 54). Yet the emphasis, not only in this opening paragraph but all along the decalogue, is on the "imperative and enforced grammar" of only a small part of human beings, namely European and, more broadly, Western culture and discourse. Sinking their roots in the humanist, universalist ideal of 'man as measure of all things', they "turned into an exceptionalist civilizational standard" (Braidotti 2019, xii) and claimed for themselves the exclusivity of determining, from the top of a hierarchical scale, the "ways, measures and disposals necessary to life in society" (Carvalho 2010) all over the world, disrespectful towards other paradigms. This ech-

oes the foundations of postcolonial thought and studies, whose specific contribution to the genealogy of posthumanism intended in its three developments (critical, cultural and philosophical posthumanism) is indeed quite relevant among the other “studies of the difference” (Ferrando 2019, 2). It is at least since Césaire’s ‘humanist’ bourgeois and Fanon’s Europe “rushing to her doom” (Fanon [1961] 1963, 9) that the limits and contradictions of the founding myths of Western power, in other words its “‘spiritual’ exhaustion” (Carvalho 2019, 14), are questioned and belied.<sup>6</sup> Actually, the first justified, supported, absolved, legitimized, nurtured and exercised “*the crime in itself, the crime against man, [...] the humiliation of man as such*” (Césaire [1955] 2001, 36) identified with Nazism,<sup>7</sup> while the second one was a continent “where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men [...] in all the corners of the globe” (Fanon [1961] 1963, 311).

But if we accept Braidotti’s previously mentioned definition of the broader, non-hyphenated posthumanism, and even more precisely Ferrando’s post-humanist, post-anthropocentric and post-dualist philosophical posthumanism, the contrast between it and the still anthropocentric anticolonial post-humanism is patent. Fanon’s words are crystal clear in this sense: to “try to resolve the problems to which Europe has not been able to find the answers [...] there is no question of a return to Nature” (Fanon [1961] 1963, 314) but rather of “try[ing] to set afoot a new man” (316).<sup>8</sup> As poignantly highlighted by Iheka (2019b), the focus, in Fanon’s but also other anticolonial and postcolonial intellectuals’ writings, remains on human beings, in a certain sense confirming the colonialist dualism that opposed nature and culture, the latter being the human’s modifying touch on the first that, even if devoid of the so inherently colonial domination trait, still configures itself as the core action of a humanist *homo faber*. Iheka’s argument is not only an acute examination of the texts of the postcolonial ‘founding fathers’, but also a critique of what he reads as a distinct absence in later postcolonial studies that based their analysis on those seminal texts, particularly as far as African literary works are concerned:

**6** Cf. also the archaeology of the definitions of ‘Blackness’ and ‘race’ made by Mbembe (2017, 2); other references to Western founding myths and “social teleologies”, with particular reference to development as an expression of Western episteme, cf. Sarr 2019.

**7** The connection between humanism and eurocentrism, and between this and the hierarchical and racial concept of humanity promoted by both colonialism and Nazi-fascism, is well evidenced in Mellino’s (2014) introduction to the latest Italian translation of *Discourse on Colonialism* (Mellino 2014).

**8** The anthropocentric character of anticolonial thought must not be generalized, however, as Mbembe’s reference to Césaire’s poetry proves: “Some saw in the Black Man the salt of the earth, the vein of life through which the dream of a humanity reconciled with nature, and even with the totality of existence, would find its new face, voice, and movement” (2017, 7).

If human imbrication with nonhumans has always been a feature of African societies and the literary expressions that emerge from them, why then has African literary criticism not paid much attention to the interlinkages and their ecological significance? Why have human concerns remained at the heart of literary criticism in Africa? (Iheka 2018, 6)

His remarks are based on the assumption, which is central in his *Naturalizing Africa. Ecological Violence, Agency, and Postcolonial Resistance in African Literature*, that Africa is maybe the most important place to understand “human imbrication with nonhumans”, not just from the ecocritical perspective that has become paramount in the recent “environmental turn in African literary studies” (Iheka 2019a, 203),<sup>9</sup> but more significantly in consideration of “the primacy of nature in African cultural systems” and its “imbrications with *Homo sapiens* in Africa’s ecologies” (203) – an aspect highlighted also by Moola (2016, 9), who emphasizes the long-term presence and agency of the natural world and animals in African cultural forms, being as they are the condition of existence of cosmologies, texts and artistic expressions of the latter, when compared to the much more recent appearance of ecocritical scholarship.

These imbrications and primacy of nature – animals and plants, but also landscapes and climate elements (rocks and waters, winds and rains), in a word “earth-beings” (Cadena 2010, 336) or “other-than-human beings” (341) – in relation to the human, which are the premises of Ruy Duarte de Carvalho’s neo-animist project, are a constant presence in his literary works from the very beginning, which can hence be considered an important contribution to African posthumanism. The title of his first poetry collection, *Chão de oferta* (Land of offer), modulated in the title and recalled in the verses of the poem “A terra que te ofereço” (The earth I offer you), combines in itself maybe the most archetypal of all other-than-human beings (the earth, the land) and an act, a practice that inherently and anthropologically distinguishes the human from all the other species and beings (the offer). In “Nas praias do sul” (In Southern beaches) there is a sort of exchange of reciprocal attributes, in particular relating to fertility, between the human element (a feminine ‘you’) and nature:<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ecocriticism focuses in particular on the intersections between social and ecological issues and violence; among the scholars who adopt this lenses to interpret African literary texts, cf. Caminero-Santangelo 2014; 2015.

<sup>10</sup> It is, indeed, a trait that can be observed also in the previously mentioned poem, which follows in the collection: “da lua que transportas | com a sólida | e materna nudez do horizonte” (Carvalho 2005, 20) (of the moon that you carry | with the solid | and maternal nakedness of the horizon).

instalas-te embrião  
no útero da rocha  
e inventas-te filha  
do rosto do mar.  
(Carvalho 2005, 15)

you settle embryo  
in rock's uterus  
and invent yourself daughter  
of sea's face.

Inanimate beings such as the 'rock' and the 'sea' have the power to generate a human offspring thanks to usually mammalian organs and functions, in the same way as the moon that menstruates ("menstrua-se a lua" - Carvalho 2005, 15). On the contrary, human organs and body are referred in their mineral substance, made of air and salt as they are:

circulam-te as brisas e teus ossos  
de sal  
filigranam-se iminentes de puro mar.  
(Carvalho 2005, 15)

breezes circulate in you and your bones  
made of salt  
imminent filigree of pure sea.

We cannot talk of a personification in the classical (and Eurocentric) sense with which we understand this figure of speech, that is the attribution to inanimate objects of prerogatives proper to the human, which consequently end up acting as human beings - and of a non-defined figure of speech complementary to personification.<sup>11</sup> Actually, we are in front of an intermingling that can be interpreted in the light of Iheka's "aesthetics of proximity" (2018, 21), namely in its second connotation, of a nearness "brought about by similarities and shared characteristics" (22) and that implicates "multispecies entanglement [...] the enmeshment of human and nonhuman lives" (23).

There is another poem of this collection in which the aesthetics of proximity emerges in a particularly gritty fashion: "Chagas de salitre" (Saltpeter sores), a tragic ode to the hard and cruel history of

---

**11** We cannot talk here, for example, of 'objectification' as this is a concept of the field of social philosophy that, moreover, has a negative meaning (cf., for example, Mbembe 2001; 2017), while the attribution to human beings of prerogatives proper to inanimate beings as a figure of speech, in "Nas praias do sul", is neutral.

slavery and colonial subjugation. Here, an action proper of the vegetable kingdom is attributed to organic but human material (“[...] vegetar | da urina e do suor | da carne virgem [...]” – Carvalho 2005, 22; [...] the vegetate | of urine and sweat | of virgin flesh [...]), while human beings, or their remains, are reduced to an anonymous flowing of waters: “marés vazantes de gente amordaçada” (22) (tides of the gagged at a low ebb) and “[...] rios renovados de cadáveres” (23) (rivers refitted with corpses). Lastly, the nineteenth parts and thirty-seven stanzas of “Novembrina solene – Transmutação das águas” (Solemn November rain – Waters transmutation) stage the enchantment of the sequence of seasons in Southern Angola, in which the bush, the acacia, the cactus take the scene; in which the cycle of animals’ life succeeds with its migrations, selections of the weak, herds that get lost; in which everything follows the rhythm of dewy mornings, low clouds and the direction of the wind. It is the triumph of natural elements:

Era novembro  
 um mês de cargas raras  
 húmido ardor  
 goma indecisa  
 sobressalto de ar.  
 De atenção às nuvens e à direcção do vento  
 consulta às luas e à ligeira referência  
 de um alado brilho de insecto  
 precursor  
 de um novembro a derramar-se em chuva morna.  
 (Carvalho 2005, 41)

November was  
 a month of rare downpours  
 humid ardour  
 uncertain ngoma  
 unease of the air.  
 Of attention to clouds and the direction of wind  
 enquiry into the moon and the slight reference  
 of a winged insect shine  
 harbinger  
 of a November slopping out in warm rain.

The only human traces are some tools (here the drums, the *ngoma*), actions (paying attention, enquiring, visiting), body parts (hands, feet, mouths) and few others; a presence, however, that at no time stands out and that enacts a real “equilibrium politics” (Carvalho 2010).

This concept is crucial when we talk about African cultural systems: it is the “mutual belonging (cobelonging) to a common world”



discussed by Mbembe (2017, 1), a “system of exchange, reciprocity, and mutuality [in which] humans and nonhumans [are] silt for one another” (181).<sup>12</sup> The Cameroonian philosopher traces back the birth of this concept of connection between beings to ancient Africa, explaining it as a celebration of life and as an act of care towards a both fragile and hostile environment, in order for it to be propitious to the development of life itself, born out of a seed. This relationship between the human and the environment needed to be constantly negotiated:

[N]ature was a force in and of itself. One could not mold, transform, or control nature when not in harmony with it. And this double labor of transformation and regeneration was part of a cosmological assembly whose function was to consolidate the relationships between humans and the other living beings with which they shared the world. (Mbembe 2017, 180-1)

“As águas do Capembaua” (Capembaua’s waters), one of the three short narratives that compose Ruy Duarte de Carvalho’s first prose work *Como se o mundo não tivesse leste* (As if the world had no East), depicts exactly the search for restoring the “cosmological assembly” and its harmony disrupted by a deliberate act of men. The narrative is divided in two parts, in which the story of the establishment of a *fazenda* in South-western Angola, of a long period of drought, of a South African killed by a leopard and of the coming back of the rain is told from the two points of view of R, a white manager of the *fazenda*, and José, a black (presumably Kuvale) foreman in the same *fazenda* and member of a pastors’ clan affected by its establishment. The story is told by a narrator that seems to overlap with the author’s figure, inaugurating here that auto-fictional mode of narration that will later characterize all Carvalho’s novels and that brings about a circular relationship between life and text (Miceli 2011, 27).

In the narrative, the centrality of nature - which in Carvalho, as we have already seen, is often substantiated not in single animals, plants or inanimate beings, but in a more comprehensive ‘landscape’ or ‘geography’ - can be immediately understood from the brief introduction to the twofold story, where the narrator relates the circumstance in which he came to know José’s version of it; it is the narrative itself, the words that humanly make sense of the world, that ‘demands’ an exact reference to the surrounding environment: “[E]nquanto a narrativa se vertia, as frases demandavam, nas anha-

<sup>12</sup> Sarr, too, talks of the second legacy of Africans after the first, ancestral one for the whole *Homo sapiens* species as “a different perspective of social life, emanating from other mythological universes and lending it to the common dream of life, balance, harmony, meaning” (2019, 15) in a time of crisis of the technical paradigm and civilization.

ras, a exacta referência a que aspiravam” (While the narrative poured, sentences demanded, in the savannahs, the exact reference to which they aspired, Carvalho [1977] 2003, 14).<sup>13</sup> Moreover, since the beginning we know about the active role played by a leopard, which at the end of the story kills a seemingly randomly appeared South African character whose death could have some connections, according to the narrator, with R’s rush fleeing from the *fazenda*. Lastly, the description of the drought, a distinct section of the first part of the short story, deploys on the pages devoted to it the role played by each element in this cyclically repeating tragedy: the arrogant ostentation of the sun, “[a] soberba passividade da lua, a demitir-se de ordenar as águas” (the superb passivity of the moon, which resigns from commanding waters, Carvalho [1977] 2003, 30), the earth that does not participate to this suspension of time and continues its movement and the movement of life, the grass that darkens, the cattle that dies, men and women that break themselves of their habits to try and find a different way for surviving. The juxtaposition of all the elements establishes their respective place in this comprehensive picture; humans come last and are dependent on the signs given by all the other elements to take their decisions.

But it is in the second part of the short story, the one reconstructed by the narrator from José’s interpretation of the events (that is, from a Kuvale point of view), that we understand the cosmological order within which the whole story must be read and the final “reorganização do cosmos e [...] reintegração dos homens no mecanismo das funções astrais” (reorganization of cosmos and [...] reintegration of men in the mechanics of astral functions, Carvalho [1977] 2003, 65). This is possible thanks to a precise attitude, adopted by the narrator himself, which implies broadening the perspective that the whites usually have on reality to encompass a wider consideration in terms of time and space; these are dimensions that must be ‘auscultated’ complicitly in order to be able to translate the energies deeply hidden in them and, thus, see the whole sequence of events as “uma harmoniosa e lógica articulação de forças inseridas num conteúdo de serena continuidade, sem sobressalto ou estranheza” (a harmonious and logic articulation of forces inserted in a content of serene continuity, without unease or strangeness, Carvalho [1977] 2003, 53). While in the first part of the story the only, somehow mysteriou-

---

**13** In another passage, the facts occurred in the story are illustrated not only by characters, but also by geography (“as personagens e a geografia que ilustravam os casos” – Carvalho [1977] 2003, 21) and the development of R’s adventure is determined by the conflicts and contradictions proper of a semi-arid region, so by all the elements, human and nonhuman, that equally contribute to environmental equilibrium: “A acção desenrola-se numa região semi-árida. E toda a aventura de R decorre de conflitos e de contradições ligados a isso” (24).

sly connected events appear to be the South African's death, R's fleeing from the *fazenda* and an invasion of its delimited, irrigated land by pastors and their herds after one year and a half of drought, José's tale testifies broader relationships among facts and (present and past) living beings:

'[S]e abririam para nós os sinais de que a ordem se alterava nas razões mais fundas, onde se excede a limitada interferência dos homens vivos'. (Carvalho [1977] 2003, 58-9)

'Signals would open for us that the order was altering in its deepest reasons, where the limited interference of living humans is surpassed'.

The transfer of the local clan's most important habitational centre (*onganda*) from its original, ancestral establishment due to the delimitation of the *fazenda* land leaves an intimate wound in the clan's chief, who dies shortly after; with him, the sacred cow that represents him in the hierarchy of animal belongings inside the clan almost immediately dies, too; the leopard appears as a sign of ancestors' rejection of remedial sacrifices; and the rain stops to fall. The only solution to this inauspicious chain of events envisioned by the subsequent diviners consulted by the clan is the introduction of the whites, who are responsible for the initial offence, that is the *onganda* transfer, into the sacred mechanisms that govern existence. Actually, their immunity to the occult forces that had always regulated not only the blacks' lives, but the entire cycle of existence, had always allowed them the privilege of not respecting neither any kind of law nor human and nonhuman beings, and of considering themselves the legitimate conquerors and lords of the land and of everything inhabiting it. But this exclusivity now puts them in the position of finally entering "no último reduto do poder dos negros" (in the ultimate redoubt of the black's power, Carvalho [1977] 2003, 67); this is why, when R decides to hunt the leopard during the last night of his stay at the *fazenda*, José suggests that he, a white indeed but (before this) a man respected by the pastors, brings with him a Boer ambiguously appeared in the area few weeks before. This would lead to the end of the drought (and of the story):

Perseguida a onça, abate-se o animal sobre o sul-africano e cumpre-se a vontade dos defuntos. As contas estão saldadas e a chuva chove, abundante e clara. (Carvalho [1977] 2003, 70)

Chased the leopard, the animal kills the South-African and fulfils the dead's will. The bill is paid off and the rain falls, abundant and light.

The intersection, in “As águas do Capembaua”, between what I called the ‘Kuvale point of view’, which brings together all living beings in its consideration, and the narrator’s positive attitude towards a wider perspective, able to embrace a non-Western paradigm of interpretation of reality, anticipates in the literary text what would be later defined the epistemological practice of the “ecology of knowledges”, that is

an invitation to the promotion of non-relativistic dialogues among knowledges, granting ‘equality of opportunities’ to the different kinds of knowledge engaged in ever broader epistemological disputes aimed both at maximizing their respective contributions to build a more democratic and just society and at decolonizing knowledge and power. (Santos, Nunes, Meneses 2007, xx)

In Carvalho’s short story, it would be impossible for the narrator himself – even before his narrative act to actually take place – to fully understand the complex framework represented in the text without the dialogic attitude implied by the ecology of knowledges, which requires both the rational, ‘Western’ explanation of the facts (R’s account) and the non-Western one (the Kuvale point of view). The latter is interpreted through other epistemological lenses and derives from different prior knowledge. These, in turn, come from a worldview, or cosmology, that is alternative to Western (and Eurocentric, though allegedly universally valid) modern science, and in their difference they represent an epistemological challenge to its dominance within the realm of the knowledge produced by human beings all around the world. In this sense these alternative knowledges and cosmologies are “Southern epistemologies” because, in their act of resisting their own suppression and claiming their righteous place on the same playing field of modern science, they question the epistemological premises of the global North dominance over the global South<sup>14</sup> in the form of colonialism, justified through the equation between (the ‘right’) knowledge and power. The operation of giving voice, through the ecology of knowledges, to these “[o]ther paradigms set aside and hidden from consideration because they originate in cultures dominated or annihilated by the Western world” (Carvalho 2010) is essential to deactivate the epistemological privilege of scientific knowledge, one funded on the drastic separation of nature from society.<sup>15</sup> The link that con-

<sup>14</sup> The global South, which partially but not necessarily coincides with the geographic Southern hemisphere of the earth, is defined by Santos (2009; 2020) as a political, social and cultural space-and-time experienced by those subject to capitalism in its colonial and patriarchal relationship with the world.

<sup>15</sup> Santos, Nunes and Meneses talk, in this respect, of “substituting a monoculture of scientific knowledge” (2007, xlviii). It is not casual their use of terms referring to

nects indigenous, non-Western, Southern epistemologies' struggle to survive the hegemonic, colonial, subalternizing attempts to destroy their cosmologies, and their relationship with nature, which they do not consider as a resource to be exploited and set aside from the human, civilized world, appears thus to be the only possible "way out and solution for the species' problems", the only one able to ensure, at the same time, the "reproduction and maintenance of the species and personal expression and knowledge" (Carvalho 2010).

Ruy Duarte de Carvalho's neo-animist project had the purpose of overcoming, in a posthumanist fashion, Western "'spiritual' exhaustion". It was written at a time, in 2009, when this depletion had but begun to show its material signs, in the form of the financial crisis started the year before in the United States and of the Great Recession that followed. Reading it (and all Carvalho's work) again in these days, in the meantime and shortly after the lockdown enforced by the outbreak of a pandemic caused, as many experts affirm, by the consequences of the imposition of Western economic and societal model on the entire planet and its disruption of ecosystem balances, reveals how much needed and vital the contribution of an African, non-aligned and reflexive intellectual is, in order for us, human beings from any part of the Earth, to "assuma[mos] uma posição mais humilde no planeta que habita[mos]" (Santos 2020, 31) (assume a humbler position on the planet we are living on) and

[nos] habitue[mos] a duas ideias básicas: há muito mais vida no planeta do que a vida humana, já que esta representa apenas 0,01% da vida existente no planeta; a defesa da vida do planeta no seu conjunto é a condição para a continuação da vida da humanidade. (31)

get accustomed to two basic ideas: there is much more life on the planet than human life, since this represents just 0.01% of the existing life on the planet; defending the planet life in its entirety is the condition for humanity to continue to live.

Because, as Ruy Duarte de Carvalho concluded his decalogue,

10 - we are all together, all in the same boat, all the men and all that exists in the whole universe. And if there are other univers-

---

nature and environment ('ecology', 'monoculture') in relation with knowledge, as they recognise biodiversity as both a 'contentious area' and a concrete example of an ecology of knowledges, because the discourses produced on ecosystems, living species and organisms are not a prerogative of hegemonic scientific institutions and alternative discourses produced mainly in the global South are part of the network of knowledge on biodiversity.

es, so will them, still, be with us on the same boat. And god is not an entity... it is the totality of a non-understandable creative process in the becoming which each one of us, Person, Animal, Rock, Grass, Star, Asteroid, Wind, Blow and Whisper, Pain and Grief, Joy and Glory, is an unbreakable and inseparable part... (Carvalho 2010)

## Bibliography

- Bhabha, H.K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London; New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203820551>.
- Braidotti, R. (2019). "Preface. The Posthuman as Exuberant Excess". Ferrando, F. (ed.), *Philosophical Posthumanism*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, xi-xvi.
- Cadena, M. de la (2010). "Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes. Conceptual Reflection beyond 'Politics'". *Cultural Anthropology*, 25(2), 334-70. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2010.01061.x>.
- Caminero-Santangelo, B. (2014). *Different Shades of Green. African Literature, Environmental Justice, and Political Ecology*. London; Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Caminero-Santangelo, B. (2015). "Witnessing the Nature of Violence. Resource Extraction and Political Ecologies in the Contemporary African Novel". DeLoughrey, E.; Didur, J.; Carrigan, A. (eds), *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities. Postcolonial Approaches*. London; New York: Routledge, 226-41.
- Carvalho, L. (2019). "Ruy Duarte de Carvalho e o neanimismo". Lança, M. (ed.), *Diálogos com Ruy Duarte de Carvalho*. Lisboa: BUALA (Associação Cultural); Centro de Estudos Comparatistas (Faculdade de Letras – UL), 14-18.
- Carvalho, R. Duarte de [1977] (2003). *Como se o mundo não tivesse Leste*. Lisboa: Edições Cotovia.
- Carvalho, R. Duarte de (2005). *Lavra (Poesia reunida 1970-2000)*. Vol. 1, *Chão de oferta*. Lisboa: Edições Cotovia.
- Carvalho, R. Duarte de (2008). "Falas & vozes, fronteiras & paisagens... escritas, literaturas e entendimentos... (2005)". Carvalho, R. Duarte de, *A câmara, a escrita e a coisa dita... fitas, textos e palestras*. Lisboa: Edições Cotovia, 11-26.
- Carvalho, R. Duarte de (2009). *Os filhos de Próspero*. 3 voll. Lisboa: Edições Cotovia.
- Carvalho, R. Duarte de (2010). *Neo-Animist Decalogue*. <https://www.buala.org/en/ruy-duarte-de-carvalho/neo-animist-decalogue>.
- Castelo, C. (2007). *Passagens para África. O povoamento de Angola e Moçambique com naturais da metrópole*. Porto: Afrontamento.
- Césaire, A. [1955] (2001). *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Fanon, F. [1961] (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Ferrando, F. (2019). *Philosophical Posthumanism*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350059511>.
- Iheka, C. (2018). *Naturalizing Africa. Ecological Violence, Agency, and Postcolonial Resistance in African Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108183123>.

- Iheka, C. (2019a). "African Literature, Audience and the Search for the (Non) Human". Adejunmobi, M.; Coetzee, C. (eds), *Routledge Handbook of African Literature*. London; New York: Routledge, 203-14. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315229546-14>.
- Iheka, C. (2019b). "African Literature, Ecological Interconnections, Theoretical Entanglements". *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, 6(2), 300-4. <https://doi.org/10.1017/pli.2018.57>.
- Mbembe, A. (2001). *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Mbembe, A. (2017). *Critique of Black Reason*. London; Durham: Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822373230>.
- Mellino, M. (2014). "Introduzione. La furia di Caliban: nell'occhio della grande tempesta". Césaire, A., *Discorso sul colonialismo seguito da Discorso sulla negritudine*. Verona: Ombre corte, 7-47.
- Miceli, S. (2011). *Contar para vivê-lo, viver para cumpri-lo. Autocolocação e construção do livro na trilogia ficcional de Ruy Duarte de Carvalho* [dissertation]. Lisboa: Universidade de Lisboa.
- Moolla, F.F. (2016). *Natures of Africa. Ecocriticism and Animal Studies in Contemporary Cultural Forms*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press. <https://doi.org/10.18772/22016069131>.
- Santos, B. de Sousa (2009). "Para além do Pensamento Abissal. Das linhas globais a uma ecologia de saberes". Santos, B. de Sousa; Meneses, M.P. (eds), *Epistemologias do Sul*. Coimbra: Almedina, 23-72.
- Santos, B. de Sousa (2020). *A cruel pedagogia do vírus*. Coimbra: Edições Almedina.
- Santos, B. de Sousa; Nunes, J.A.; Meneses, M.P. (2007). "Opening Up the Canon of Knowledge and Recognition of Difference". Santos, B. de Sousa (ed.), *Another Knowledge Is Possible. Beyond Northern Epistemologies*. London: Verso, xix-lxii.
- Sarr, F. (2019). *Afrotopia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctv105bb1g>.

