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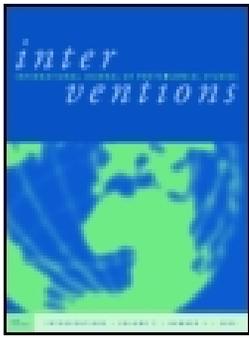
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RECODING PAULINA CHIZIANE'S VERNACULAR POETICS

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Chiziane
Paulina
literary
circulation
Lusophone
circulation
Mozambican
literature
peritext
vernacular poetics
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This essay explores the gendered, geopolitical and material conditions of Mozambican literary migration into the contemporary Portuguese-speaking circuit, by paying special attention to the treatment of the internationally known writer Paulina Chiziane. More specifically, the essay addresses how vernacular features in Chiziane's literary expression (e.g. a locally situated female perspective, oral narrative tradition, African cultural memory of myths and traditions, and use of national languages) are conceptualized and highlighted in the materiality of literary marketing and circulation processes. The analysis is theoretically informed by Venkat B. Mani's thoughts on bibliomigrancy (whereby the circulation and translation of literary works performs a switch from one code to another, on travelling into new geographical contexts), and Ana Margarida Martins and Hilary Owen's gender and postcolonial close readings of Chiziane's early circulation paths. Furthermore, the analysis will consider how gender difference manifests itself in, and influences, the circulation processes. The study thereby traces how Chiziane's vernacular poetics become recoded in circulation into other (niche) markets, from representing a counterhegemonic social critique in the local literary discourse, into an anthropological "authentic" (exotified) literature, written by a Lusophone

African (black) woman in Portugal. In the Afro-Brazilian diaspora, Chiziane’s writing is recoded as African collective memory and epistemology underpinning social and cultural empowerment, while in translation her work is recoded as a more universally relatable narrative of women’s conditions under patriarchy in the cosmopolitan circulation.

The Mozambican writer Paulina Chiziane’s work is recognized and circulated internationally. All of her narratives in novel form depart from an explicit, vernacularized women-centred perspective from below, dealing with Mozambican everyday life. Her writing is intrinsically informed by a deep political and social commitment to the history of Mozambican society formation, as well as issues of identity formation and racial and gender relations. This essay will explore the gendered, geopolitical, and material conditions of Mozambican literary migration into contemporary literary circuits, by paying special attention to the trajectory of Chiziane’s writing career. More specifically, the study will trace the circulation path of Chiziane’s writing by following how vernacular features of her literary expression are recoded and transformed as they migrate into international circulation and recognition.

The analysis is theoretically informed by a combination of recent world literary studies, focusing on how literature circulates across geographical and cultural borders, and Lusophone gender and postcolonial studies. In the framework of revitalizing the research area of world literature, scholars such as Mani (2017) and Damrosch (2003) have defined world literature as a literature that travels, in original or translation, beyond its circuits of geographical and linguistic origin. Mani defines this physical and virtual migration of books as *bibliomigrancy*, a concept that incorporates the idea that literary works become decoded and recoded, and acquire new transformed identities as they migrate in the original (national or regional), or in translation into new literary landscapes. Mani (2017) stresses bibliomigrancy does not occur in a historical, sociocultural, or political vacuum, and literary scholars need to pay greater attention to these situated processes and the very materiality of the institutionalization of world literature (10–12). Mani argues further that this encompasses a need to “relocate world literature in the public sphere where it is institutionalized in ways that are not always the same as its modes of institutionalization in the university” (14). However, these world literature studies, concerned with geopolitical asymmetries of power and institutionalized processes of the market, have yet to include a gender and ethnicity perspective on the literary circulation processes. As such, these studies fail to grasp how the authors’ gender and ethnicity can guide their access to niched literary markets, or influence publishers’ marketing

strategies, thereby acting as an intermediary in the circulation paths of their literary production.

Lusophone postcolonial and gender studies, highly conscious of uneven gendered, racialized, and geopolitical conditions in cross-border literary circulation, have, on the other hand, paid little attention to the material conditions of literary markets and publishers in this process. Concentrating mainly on close readings of literature in combination with a perspective on literary circulation as reception, restricted to processes taking place in, or through, other academic studies and critical reviews from institutionalized prestige media, these studies fail to grasp determinate factors taking place outside the academic sphere. In relation to studies offering perspectives on Mozambican literary circulation, it is common to compare Chiziane's authorship with that of the globally successful Mia Couto. In many ways (as will be addressed below), this comparison is a fruitful methodology for exploring various strands and dimensions of racialized and gendered power implications operating in the literary field, following different discursive identity positions for Couto (white, male, of Portuguese descent), and Chiziane (coloured, female, of African descent). On the other hand, this binary academic perspective of a comparison of Couto and Chiziane's esthetics and reception risks leading scholars mechanically to conclude that Couto's success in global circulation automatically hampers the wider circulation of the work of Chiziane and other Mozambican female writers. This can only be evidenced after researching the specific circulation paths of an author, and cannot be concluded based on a literary close reading of, for example, Mia Couto's esthetic alone (Stennett 2017).

For the above reasons, the objective of this study is primarily to map out the circulation of Chiziane's work in different niche paths by engaging with its material aspects. Taking into account the recent developments in the global literary industry with corporate concentration and diversification, its material organization no longer reveals a single market, "but rather a fragmenting and proliferating set of niche audiences" (Brouillette 2007, 24). Most printed and digital books find new circulation paths by tapping into new literary markets, intermediated by a publisher who identifies, targets, and creates these new possible reading audiences. By paying special attention to the materiality of literary circulation and targeted niche audiences, it is possible to examine the circulation path of Chiziane's literary production beyond the reducing academic binary of a comparison with the work of Couto. Thus, this essay will argue Chiziane's circulation paths, which in some cases differ from those of Couto, enter into niche audience circuits not even open to Couto. Furthermore, it is argued that the fostering of a gender and ethnicity perspective is at the core of understanding the complexity of the material processes of literary circulation.

Considering the still modest number of novels by Chiziane circulating on the Lusophone circuit and in transnational translations, the author has been the

topic of an impressive number of academic theses and scholarly articles from the Lusophone academic world (Mozambique, Portugal and, especially, Brazil), as well as from Luso-Afro-Brazilian institutions at universities worldwide. This, in itself, both acknowledges the richness of Chiziane's literary world-making, as well as pointing to the scarcity of accessible narratives by politically conscious female writers of colour from developing countries in the global market. Two comprehensive studies of Chiziane's authorship stand out as highly relevant with regard to topics and perspectives for this study: Owen (2007a, 2007b), and Martins (2012), who both provide outlines of Chiziane's early circulation path, focusing on publishing's materiality and Chiziane's own agency in this trajectory, as well as on how gendered and ethnicity conditions are mediated in the process (as addressed below).

Following the rationale of Mani's argument that we need to investigate the materiality of literary circulation outside the institutionalization of the universities, the material in focus for this discussion consists of paratextual material (publishers' epitexts and peritexts,¹ such as webpages, book covers, and blurbs), and interviews conducted with the authors in literary programmes (for television, or at book fairs), and in journals. For, as Brouillette points out, the persona of the author has become increasingly important in the process of marketing literary texts in the global cultural industry, and the development of commercial media has facilitated and increased the ways a book can be promoted (2007, 66). Today, one would have to add to this list the importance of promoting authorships through different kinds of social and digital media. Interviews are of double interest here, being both parts of the promotion and marketing strategy of the author and publishing house in disseminating and branding the literature, and the representation of the author's own voice and agency, giving the author the opportunity to reflect on his/her literary works and creative processes (Brouillette 2007, 68).

In what follows, the questions guiding the analysis are how Chiziane's vernacular poetics are recoded when they migrate into the different circulation paths of the Lusophone circuit (Portugal and Brazil), and transnational cosmopolitan publishing, and how gender and ethnicity mediate in these processes. First, however, it is necessary to address the features of Chiziane's vernacular poetics and highlight their functioning as social resistance in Mozambican literary discourse, as well as her trajectory to recognition on the Mozambican literary scene.

1 From Genette's (1997) definition of *peritexts* as paratextual elements placed in the same volume as the literary work, e.g., prefaces, epigraphs, etc. (5), and 'the publisher's epitext' as basically marketing and promotional textual elements located outside the book (347–348).

Chiziane's vernacular poetics as social resistance in local circulation

Viewed through the lens of a world literature perspective, Chiziane's novels emerge as interwoven elements of cosmopolitan and vernacular

2 It is not an objective of this essay to define the boundaries between the 'cosmopolitan' and 'vernacular' topographies in Chiziane's literary works. Instead, it adheres to the viewpoint that these features are relational, in as much as they function as 'two modes – vectors – of literary worldliness features that may interact, merge or contest each other' in one's literary poetics (Helgesson 2018, 1–2).

3 The etymological origin of the Latin word *vernaculus* referred to slaves born in the household and, by extension, *vernacular* has encompassed a situated spatial dimension of resistance to power and the ruling elite, as well as a localized 'discursive configuration of knowledge' about the world (Kullberg 2018, 24).

features,² creating an interrelated dynamic that taps into different literary circulation paths. Cosmopolitan features such as the language choice of Portuguese, genre-choice of the "global novel", intertextuality with western narratives, ethical preoccupation with universal human conditions (a gender-conscious universalism, in Chiziane's case), and the topic of love relations are all prominent in Chiziane's authorship. These easily translatable, cosmopolitan features and topics coexist in her novels, together with a strong engagement in vernacular sociopolitical and historical issues, locally situated in the Mozambican reality. The vernacular features in Chiziane's writing consist of the incorporation of narratives of locally situated knowledge and cultural memory, such as local African myths, traditions, customs, and beliefs, glossaries of African and colloquial language, and a strong presence of the oral tradition, both in form and language use.

A prevalent element in Chiziane's vernacular narratives is the anthropological discourse and the recovering of African cultural memory, which include systems of beliefs, customs, traditions, and the wisdom inherent in oral tradition. As observed by Passos (2003, 194), this urgent recovery of memory is not of nostalgic or essentialist interest. Rather, collective memory coexists with the discourses of western modernity, traditions, and beliefs (religion and customs), all in equal measure subject to her gendered social critique (for example, as displayed in *Niketche* [Chiziane 2002]). Equally characteristic for Chiziane is the female-narrative perspective which, together with vernacular features, merges into a storytelling from below to encompass social critique and resistance, denouncing the hegemonic and centred perspective of society. It is precisely in this strong connection between vernacular elements and viewpoint and the ethical social concerns in her authorship that it is justifiable to speak of a vernacular poetics.³ As both Owen (2007a) and Martins (2012) have shown in their comprehensive studies of Chiziane's authorship, it is precisely through this politically gender-informed perspective that her narratives provide a powerful rethinking of male-constructed political systems and the transition processes that Mozambique has undergone. This is a counterhegemonic discourse that targets the structural inequality of Mozambican post-independent society, a patriarchal order which did not necessarily change in the transition from colonialism to post-independent nationalism, or to the present democratic liberal period (Owen 2007a, 170; Martins 2012).

In 1990 Chiziane published her first novel in Mozambique, *Balada de Amor ao Vento* (AEMO Mozambican Writers Association), about polygamy, written from a woman's critical perspective. In interviews and texts, Chiziane has repeatedly testified to the difficulties she experienced initially in the process of establishing herself as a black woman writer on the national literary circuit. She talks of how her novel caused a moral scandal in the local establishment, mainly in breaking taboos by portraying, openly and without shame, women's intimate life-experiences of sexual desire, passion and love

(Chiziane 2013b, 203). However, as painful a personal experience as this critique must have been for Chiziane, her sexual shaming could also be understood as a strategy to domesticate and dismiss the severe political critique her novel launched on contemporary society.

After the negative experience Chiziane endured with the publishing of her first novel, she privately published her second novel, *Ventos de Apocalipse*, on a small scale in Mozambique in 1993. This novel marked her breakthrough into transnational circulation when it was first translated into German and launched at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1997 (for a description of this process, see Owen 2007a, 218). Two years later, in 1999, the Portuguese publishing house Caminho published the novel on the Portuguese book market. Martins (2012) describes how Chiziane’s third novel, *O Sétimo Juramento*, published by Caminho in Portugal and Ndjira in Mozambique in 2000, was not well received by the literary elite in Mozambique, being considered as representing “a betrayal to the national cause” (94–96). Following this negative reception in Mozambique, Chiziane decided to publish her fourth novel, *Niketche: Uma História de Poligamia*, first with Caminho, and then in Mozambique, in 2002. The metropolitan recognition of this novel boosted her popularity and also increased sales in Mozambique (Martins 2012, 87). In 2003, together with Mia Couto, Chiziane received the Mozambican José Craverinha Literary Prize for *Niketche*. Consequently, this novel would render Chiziane the most domestic and international recognition in the form of translations and public and academic interest. In 2008 Chiziane published her fifth novel, *O Alegre Canto da Perdiz*, with Caminho/Leya and Ndjira/Leya, published simultaneously in Portugal and Mozambique. Thus, Chiziane’s path to literary recognition in the local literary discourse of Mozambique follows upon her novels being first circulated and recognized in Germany and Portugal, and then back again to Mozambique. This circulation pattern is clearly determined by the politically gendered reception and critique of her novels in Mozambique.

Owen points out how the international publishing of Chiziane’s work further increased the gender tensions “back home”, exemplified by the words of an established male writer, Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa: “I hate gender discourse. There is a lot of material that gets into the limelight simply because it is written by a woman ... it is an obsession of the Nordic countries.” Owen concludes by highlighting the paradox of the gendered circulation pattern Chiziane takes in Mozambique and Portugal, respectively: “In this [Mozambican] context, the marketability of gender discourse denotes a lack of authenticity as truly ‘African’”, while “in Portugal, in contrast, the woman writer is often excessively Mozambican, indeed quintessentially physically African *because female*” (2007a, 216). Owen’s example indicates the importance and marketability of “authenticity”, functioning as both a legitimizing factor and a battleground in the literary circulation process. The male

author, in this case Ba Ka Khosa, expresses frustration at being excluded from a literary circulation path because of his gender. The recoding and transformation of Chiziane's vernacular poetics, when migrating into new circulation paths, does not entail a wholesale depoliticization of her narratives. Instead, it activates some strands and qualities while overlooking or transforming others, as will be seen on the Lusophone circuit, represented by Portugal and Brazil.

Inner circulation on the Lusophone market

One way of theoretically approaching the unevenness of cultural capital in the circulation processes of the publishing industry has been through systemic theory, conceptualizing the Lusophone literary system as “poly-centric”, in the sense that its centre–periphery division operates with two centres, Portugal (Lisbon) and Brazil (São Paulo). This means that Brazilian authors do not need to be recognized in Portugal, and vice versa, while African literatures written in Portuguese still need recognition in one of these centres to reach a larger readership (Moura 2010, 31; Sapega 2011, 107). Nevertheless, how the mediating categories of authors' gender and ethnicity can destabilize this systemic model is exemplified by the migration path of Chiziane's works, as they did not enter into a wider circulation through the centres of Lisbon or São Paulo, but through the Frankfurt Book Fair. The value of these theories for analysing geopolitical power relations may be useful, yet it calls for a critical (re)thinking in relation to literary circulation and translation. As universalizing systems are based on quantitative truths configured from an unquestioned normative perspective, world-system models often become skewed when other analytic criteria and parameters are brought into the discussion of which authors are translated and why – for instance, the writer's gender and ethnicity and (semi)peripheral cultural perspectives.

However, there is still a strong element of dependency between the dissemination of African literature written in Portuguese and the Portuguese institutional literary system. The main market for this literature has normally been the Portuguese market, although Brazil has recently been catching up. Even though Mia Couto's books are now circulating in more than twenty-four countries, the Portuguese linguistic circuit remains his biggest-selling market. Factors such as the economic subsidies provided by Portuguese cultural institutions (e.g. Instituto Camões) for publishing translations of a writer's works in other countries, and the impact of Portuguese literary awards, function as a metropolitan mechanism of recognition, opening ways for wider literary circulation (on literary awards, see Macedo, Brugioni, and Passos 2016).

In relation to this, it is worth taking a brief look at the recent transformation in the Portuguese publishing industry. As elsewhere, larger publishing companies are formed through purchasing smaller or prestigious publishing houses. Created in 2008, the publishing company LeYa now incorporates the two largest publishers of Lusophone African literature in Portugal, Editorial Caminho and Dom Quixote, as well as the most prestigious Mozambican publisher, Ndjira (and the Angolan publisher, Nzila). Caminho and Ndjira are the publishers of Paulina Chiziane and Mia Couto in Portugal and Mozambique, respectively. LeYa is the leading publisher of Lusophone African literature in the Portuguese-speaking world, with an interest in increasing activity further in Brazil. LeYa's corporate promotion copy (epitexts) on their websites engages in a societal rhetoric that in many ways adheres to the apolitical version of a Portuguese discourse of a common Lusophone community (lusofonia).⁴ LeYa claims to operate in the larger Portuguese-speaking community as a cultural and literary mediator and disseminator in the areas of education, literacy, and literature: "The presence in Mozambique is strategic for fulfilling the mission of making the authors known throughout the Lusophone space, with the additional objective of being a publishing group of reference in the Portuguese language" (LeYa's Mozambican website, 6 July 2018; my translation). In spite of these claims of functioning as a mediator and disseminator of all written literatures on the Portuguese-speaking circuit and beyond, ten years later there is no evidence of an increase in book circulation. In Chiziane's case, her latest publications in Mozambique after 2008 have not been published in Portugal, and only two of her printed novels are to be found on the Brazilian book market (which will be addressed below). Mia Couto comments on this issue in an article from 2018: "the typical colonial triangle continues to exist", which means that you need to go to Portugal to know what is published in other Lusophone countries. He laments that the initiative for literary circulation is now "completely in the hands of the market" (*Ipsilon*, 10 February 2018; my translation). The positive effects from major transnational corporations enabling more diversified and niche publishing, due to their economic and cultural resources required for global distribution, that Brouillette (2007, 50–60) detects for the Anglophone market, are yet to be implemented in the Lusophone market.

It is interesting to consider the paratextual features of Chiziane's books published on the Portuguese market, such as cover designs and blurbs, and the question of her vernacular poetics' transformation in the publishers' display. In general, many of the book covers of the African Lusophone writers illustrate well what Huggan has problematized as the discrepancy between "the progressiveness of postcolonial thinking and the rearguard myths and stereotypes that are used to promote and sell 'non-Western' cultural products in and to the West" (2001, 25). If anything, Caminho's

4 The concept of lusofonia is important for the question of inner circulation. As problematized by several scholars, institutionalized lusofonia, also operating in the Lusophone literary system and market, harbors inherent colonial patterns of hegemony and inequality related to cultural and symbolical value, as well as economic capital. On decolonizing lusofonia, see Almeida (2004); Martins (2012).

recent (as of this decade) changes in the packaging of the new editions of the novels of Chiziane, and also Couto, enhance the stereotyped packaging of African literature. The latest editions are no longer serialized under titles signalling their geo-marginal status, as, for example, “Outras margens” (Other Margins), using the uniform blue colour from Malangatana’s artworks (in Chiziane’s case). Nevertheless, the new designs are strongly gendered and ethnicized in presenting a stereotyped, exotic pastiche of “Africanness”. As I have analysed elsewhere, new editions of Mia Couto’s novels are designed in a strong colour (different for each book) with a graphic figure (in black) of a person, fauna, or item that unmistakably connotes a masculine sphere of rural, vernacular (exotic) Africa. Equally, the new editions of Chiziane’s books (published in 2016) display variations of a graphic pattern of a traditional African cloth, transmitting a traditional African women’s sphere. The new design of Chiziane’s book covers then highlights the “Africanness” and “femaleness” of her literature at the expense of its possible universal and cosmopolitan qualities (Edfeldt 2018, 378). Tellingly, this development on the Portuguese market of giving each author an individualized cover by emphasizing the vernacular specificities of a geographical origin to reinforce their brand and to facilitate audience identification is not exclusive to the African authors writing in Portuguese. Rather, it relates to the strategies of the capitalist global industry to identify particular reading communities (niche markets) and target them with very specific marketing (Brouillette 2007, 55–56).

If these stereotyped covers follow new market requirements and selling strategies, the blurbs on websites and dustjackets, on the other hand, offer the publisher an opportunity to present and inscribe the author’s literary importance on the global and domestic market. Arguably, Paulina Chiziane and Mia Couto form part of a Lusophone postcolonial canon on the Portuguese market, with both published by the main publisher Caminho/Leya. Owen (2007a, 2007b), Martins (2012), and others have pointed out how the literary establishment has rendered them very different subject positions, based on gendered and ethnicized perceptions on what they are perceived to bring from the Lusophone margins into the metropolitan centre. In comparison with Couto, on various occasions, the literary establishment criticizes Chiziane’s language for lacking quality and innovation, and stresses her emotionalism (Martins 2012, 140). This question is directly connected to the larger crucial inequality problem of the relationship between African oral expression and the written Portuguese language, as well as Couto’s (with Portuguese as first language) and Chiziane’s (with Portuguese as the second/third language) uneven access to written literary Portuguese (originating from colonial politics).⁵ Also related is a gendered and racialized critique regarding how to perceive and interpret their different literary expressions. Owen points out that one “important corollary of Chiziane’s female-voiced

5 For thorough research on restricted access to Portuguese

literacy and literary or political agency (in a symbolic and materialistic sense) for female identity in twentieth-century Mozambique society, see Owen (2007a).

reclamation of the oral sphere has been the reluctance of critics to validate in her work the linguistic innovation and oral hybridization that is the trademark of Couto” (2007b, 487).

The dustjackets of Couto’s books emphasize his international recognition by listing translations and literary prizes (Couto 2015, cover) and, already in early editions, his quality as a renewer of the Portuguese literary language: “profoundly marked by the art of re-creating the Portuguese that characterizes all writing by this African author” (Couto 1987, cover; my translation). By contrast, the author’s description in the blurbs on all of Chiziane’s covers – from the first edition up to the most recent – consists of the same text, originating from an actual quote by Chiziane:

They say that I am a novelist and that I was the first Mozambican woman to write a novel (*Balada de Amor ao Vento*, 1990), but I say: I am a storyteller and not a novelist. I write books with many stories, big and small stories. I am inspired by the tales from the bonfire, my first school of Art. (Chiziane 2008, cover; my translation)

This quote reinforces Chiziane’s role and trademark as an “authentic”, black African woman storyteller, acting as a cultural mediator between the Lusophone geographical margins and its centre. It is only in the very latest editions by Caminho, published in 2016, that Chiziane’s presentation is extended, with a line on her being awarded the José Craverinha Literary Prize and about translations of her work into other languages. Remarkably, the author’s description on Caminho/Leya’s website has not been updated, remaining the same as in the citation above (as of 26 January 2019). Thus, Caminho/Leya’s presentation of Chiziane’s authorship accompanying her five novels⁶ has not changed or evolved in content from her first novel, *Ventos de Apocalipse*, published in 1999, until the recent editions in 2016.

In addition to this discussion are the interviews conducted with Chiziane, mainly in Portugal, where the questions asked form part of the paratextual apparatus, while Chiziane’s answers are interpreted as an act of agency over how her works are perceived, received, and marketed. Both the blurbs and the most frequently asked questions in the interviews seem to adhere to a traditional literary critique reinforcing the gendered and racialized particularities in Chiziane’s literature. Hence, an illustrative example from the introduction to Chiziane in a Portuguese literary programme (published on Youtube):

If literature written by a female hand already refers to a different world, the letters by the hand of an African woman – who knows the people, richness and diversity of her country – are a guarantee of a magical universe and the paths of traditions. (“Paulina Chiziane A Páginas Tantas” 2009, my translation)

6 The order of publication in Portugal differs from that in Mozambique: Chiziane’s first novel, *Balada de Amor ao Vento*, was published by Caminho in 2003, after the success of *Niketche*.

In the interviews conducted with Chiziane (mainly in Portugal) over the past twenty years, the author is seldom asked specific questions about the content of her novels or her writing process. She may be asked some general questions about social issues and current developments in Mozambique, but no questions directly concerning her subversively situated gendered political critique. Her targeting of the historical processes of Portuguese colonial rule and post-independence, which are embedded in her vernacular writing, goes largely ignored.

Consequently, in an astonishingly large number of interviews, Chiziane is introduced “as the first Mozambican woman to write a novel”. In essence, three main topics appear in all of the interviews: (1) Why does she not want to call herself a novelist? (2) Why does she not want to call herself a feminist? (3) Variations on the question of what it is like for her to write in Portuguese. In a Portuguese metropolitan framework, these frequently raised topics completely overlook the situated gendered political critique and vernacular epistemology of Chiziane’s narratives. Often ignored are her literary representations targeting racism and a shared violent history of inequality in colonial Mozambique, as demonstrated, for instance, in her novel *O Alegre Canto da Perdiz* (2008). The literary summary in Caminho/Leya’s blurb for this novel concentrates on describing it as “the history of an African woman” in agony, searching for love in a racially unequal society, without mentioning the setting of Portuguese colonial rule (Chiziane 2008, my translation). Given such a metropolitan dehistoricized conception of Chiziane’s vernacular poetics, what remains is an exotified shell of a black woman’s narrative as “a mixture of imagination, fantasy, mysticism, in a powerful and peculiar portrait of African society and women” (Chiziane 2008, blurb; my translation).

Nonetheless, with impressive patience, Chiziane responds to these tedious questions by claiming an uncompromising artistic freedom for her writing process. Two representative responses from the interview in “Páginas Tantas” are as follows: “I do not like labels ... the novel is something European ... I am African, I tell stories ... I want to write freely.” To the question of why she always challenges the feminist label, Chiziane replies: “I write about the feminine world, but not a traditional feminist feminism, none of that, I tell stories of women because I am a woman, that’s all” (“Paulina Chiziane A Páginas Tantas” 2009).⁷ Questions about the issue of lusofonia and her use of Portuguese in her writing often irritate Chiziane: “I want to write the Portuguese I want ... language is an intimate thing ... there seem to be people who want to own the language ... I do not like to discuss the Portuguese language” (“Paulina Chiziane Tv Brazil” 2012).

Chiziane reveals an image of a writer repeatedly demanding that her literature remain liberated from western metropolitan labels, presumptions, and genre forms. She persistently refuses labels and claims an absolute freedom

7 Much has been discussed, in academia and the media, about Chiziane’s alleged feminism and her constant refusal to acknowledge a feminist position. The issue is multi-layered

and cannot specifically be addressed here, but it is clear that Chiziane’s feminism functions as an important mediating factor in the circulation paths of her writing. For interesting thoughts on this subject, see Martins (2012, 87).

and “authenticity” for her literary expression, as representative of her situated woman-vernacular poetics and self-construction as a woman writer. She persists in doing so in spite of the danger that such claims to “authenticity” might reinforce western and metropolitan conceptions of gendered cultural differences, so easily exotified and turned into a valuable commodity in the marketplace (Huggan 2001, 157–158). Chiziane’s subversive social critique, problematizing the realities of women’s day-to-day experiences in her vernacular situated expression, is transformed into an (exotified) depoliticized narrative of an African Mozambican woman in the Portuguese market.

Circulation in the Brazilian market

The trajectory of Chiziane’s narratives and vernacular expressions into circulation in the Brazilian market, over the past two decades, differs from its progress in the Portuguese market. If the latter is characterized by a stagnated and uniform way of disseminating her printed works by the major publisher Caminho/Leya, the Brazilian market displays an interesting development regarding the representation of her literary production, as well as methods of dissemination. In a time of technological innovation, this opens up new multiple meanings of literary migration and new transformation media (e.g. virtual, transliteration, oral into written language, etc.) active in literary circulation (Mani 2017, 34–35). This section examines alternative forms of literary dissemination for Chiziane’s authorship as they occur outside the traditional printed book market.

The recently increased interest in Chiziane’s narratives in Brazil coincides with a recent development in her authorship, which reinforces her interest in the recovery of Mozambican African epistemology and history. Interestingly, her latest publications are not narratives in the “global novel” form, but focus more on the topics of Mozambican vernacular, contemporary reality and cultural memory – for example, *curandeiros* (healers). The titles *Na Mão de Deus* (2012), *Por quem vibram tambores do além?* (2013c), *Ngoma Yethu: O Curandeiro e o Novo Testamento* (2015), and *O Canto dos Escravos* (2017) are only published in Mozambique, while *As Andorinhas*, a collection of short stories about three Mozambican historical personalities, was published in Mozambique in 2009 and Brazil in 2013, by Nandyala. These works have not yet circulated in Portugal, which might indicate that they are no longer considered as marketable as her previous publications in the genre of “global novels”, or a decreasing and stagnating interest from the Portuguese publisher in disseminating Chiziane’s work.

Of the five novels by Chiziane published by Caminho/Leya in Portugal, only two are published in Brazil: *Niketche* in 2004 and *O Alegre Canto da Perdiz* in 2018. Chiziane was introduced to the Brazilian reading public (with

Niketche) by one of Brazil's largest publishing groups, Grupo Companhia das Letras. This publisher also publishes successful African Lusophone authors such as Couto, Agualusa, and Ondjaki. In many ways, its publication of *Niketche* follows Caminho's edition, using a painting from Malangatana and reprinting its peritext on the book cover (Chiziane 2004). The print edition is now unavailable, but the novel is still available as an ebook. While Couto continues to be published frequently by this major mainstream publisher, it only published *Niketche*, Chiziane's most successful novel, thus providing Couto a mainstream editorial path of a successful writer, very different from the niche circulation paths of Chiziane in Brazil.

Although only these two novels, plus the volume of short stories *Andorinhas*, are published in Brazil, the author has recently received much attention from Brazilian literary scholars, as well as on the public literary circuit. This increased interest in Chiziane's work has clearly not travelled through the printed book market, but principally through digital and social media, and through frequent appearances at cultural and academic events all over Brazil. Tellingly, Chiziane receives special attention from feminist black women's movements and the cultural Afro-Brazilian diaspora. She appears frequently at Brazilian book fairs and festivals, and literary and academic conferences, speaking and performing her literary texts and discussing her intellectual ideas. For instance, she participated in a panel representing Mozambican literature at the Book Fair *Flipoços 2017, 12 Feira Nacional do Livro e Festival Literário de Poços de Caldas*. In a representative interview from the festival, she states how she perceives a strong bond, both culturally (football and soap operas) and historically (slavery and Portuguese colonization), between Brazil and Mozambique. In the same interview, she was asked about her "storytelling" from a newer perspective, suggesting its functioning in our globalized modern world, and she replied by stressing "telling stories is a human act, it implies one human telling another person, a moment of affection" (Flipoços 2017). In November 2018 Chiziane was invited to the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR) to speak at the celebration of a month of Black Consciousness (*O Povo*, 11 November 2018). Her talks and panels are often devoted to topics such as "Women and Writing", "Africa and Women", and "Women, Literature and Resistance". As regards the latter she appeared together with the Afro-Brazilian black woman writer Conceição Evaristo at the XII Bienal Internacional do Livro do Ceará. The comparison between Chiziane and Evaristo, emphasizing the similarities of these writers, is also explored in academic articles: both speaking from the subaltern position of black women denouncing situations of racial and gender exclusion in Mozambican and Brazilian societies, or the importance of oral literature, etc. (Gomes 2015). Thus, the migration of Chiziane's vernacular poetics into Brazilian literary discourse has so far not travelled as much in printed book form as in the oral form of performance and storytelling. However, it is not possible to

measure the number of novels travelling in digital form (for example, illegal downloads) or the purchase of Caminho's editions from online booksellers.

Chiziane's *As Andorinhas* was published in 2013 with the new small-scale publisher Nyandala, whose web text expresses this new political grassroots context, which Chiziane's gender and racially conscious narratives fit into well:

NANDYALA Books is an editorial organization founded by black women who believe in the book as a strategic tool for social innovation. Yes, we want to contribute to a better and more respectful world. We do this as a kind of political-business activism, promoting the publishing, dissemination and circulation of writings and readings on diversity! (Nyandala website, July 6, 2018; my translation)

Nyandala's dustjacket highlights Chiziane's international recognition (literary prizes and translations) and her important "work for justice and equality". Furthermore, it describes her text as "a critical dialogue between traditional and contemporary Africa. For this reason, orality inhabits her literary writing naturally" (Chiziane 2013a). The local specificities of Chiziane's vernacular poetics – e.g. the ethics of political and social equality, oral tradition, and African epistemology – appeal strongly to the Brazilian diaspora audience, which recodes them into terms of cultural empowerment and authority. As such, Chiziane's narratives function in a similar way in this diasporic circulation path as in a Mozambican context: simultaneously as a discourse of social and political resistance as well as a source of women's empowerment. This arguably saves Chiziane's "authenticity claims" in relation to her vernacular expression from being domesticated through exotification.

The recent initiative by the Brazilian publisher Dublinense to publish Chiziane's novel, *O Alegre Canto da Perdiz* (2018), manifests a new direction in targeting a mainstream audience. The publisher serializes the novel in *Colecção Gira*, together with other bestselling or highbrow contemporary Portuguese authors such as José Luís Peixoto, Ana Margarida de Carvalho, and Gonçalo M Tavares. The cover portrays a graphic black woman's face in blue and black, with a realistic, sophisticated touch to it. The inner dustjacket displays the original dustjacket text (cited above) from Caminho/Leya, although the back cover includes a larger contextualization of the novel's content: an initial comparison with Alejo Carpentier, followed by the context of the Portuguese colonial era, etc. This amounts to an interesting opening for a broader circulation path for Chiziane in Brazil in the future.

Cosmopolitan circulation in translation

After the first translation of *Ventos de Apocalipse* into German in 1997, Brandes & Apsel published the first and third of Chiziane's novels, but for

some reason not *Niketche*, Chiziane's fourth and most successful novel. *Niketche* is translated into Spanish (Spain 2004), French (2006), Italian (2006), Croatian (2013), Serbian (2014), and recently also into English (USA 2016). Her fifth novel, *O Alegre Canto da Perdiz* (2008), is translated into Italian (2010) and Spanish (Cuba 2011, Colombia 2018). Additionally, Chiziane has short stories and extracts translated into Swedish and other languages published in anthologies. Besides Brandes & Apsel, only the Italian publisher La Nuova Frontiera has so far published more than one novel. The publishers are mainly smaller, often niched in foreign literatures, including Lusophone African postcolonial literature (e.g. La Nuova Frontiera), and/or Portuguese-speaking literatures (e.g. as serialized by the bigger publisher Actes Sud, France). In general, the situated political and social critique upheld by Chiziane's women-centred vernacular perspective is transformed into a more universally relatable narrative (although perceived as more severe) of women's conditions under patriarchy, in meeting with a gender-conscious cosmopolitan audience. At the same time, a tendency towards particularities is cultivated in the marketing, as Chiziane's vernacular features of recovering African memory (traditions and beliefs) are recoded as carriers of anthropological information on African customs and life conditions. As such, some of the blurbs inscribe themselves perfectly into western marketing strategy, referred to by Huggan, as the "anthropological exotic [that] allows for a reading of African literature as the more or less transparent window onto a richly detailed and culturally specific [other]" (2001, 37). Hence, the blurb from the Italian translation, *Il settimo giuramento*, states: "the author unveils a mysterious world populated by spirits and sorcerers that transport the reader into the syncretic and fascinating labyrinth of the African tradition" (Chiziane 2003, my translation).

In general, Mia Couto's publishers operate on a larger scale than Chiziane's, with the exception of the Serbian publisher Geopoetika, which publishes them both, together with other foreign literature. If the situated subversive gender politics of Chiziane's vernacular poetics, perceived as feminist or women-concerned, initially rendered her an ambivalent "specter of feminism" position in local discourse, it travels well – representing pertinent gender political questions – to a western cosmopolitan audience.

Final remarks

This essay has explored some aspects of how Chiziane's vernacular poetics are recoded and transformed in wider literary circulation. If representing a counterhegemonic discourse of social critique initially rendered it ambivalent in Mozambique, its gender-conscious critique travelled well into transnational

cosmopolitan audience formations. As such, it was transformed into a more universally relatable narrative of women's conditions under global patriarchy. As David Damrosch (among others) has pointed out, literary works crossing borders undergo a transformation in reception and cultural power in a way that mirrors the needs and interests of the target culture (2003, 18). It is important to bear in mind that the cultural, translational gap in literatures' migration between source culture and target culture has special implications when those cultures share a common and interrelated past. The shared history of a colonial contact zone, for Portuguese-speaking countries, lays the foundation for certain imagined, preconceived cultural understandings of African Lusophone literatures when circulating into the Portuguese and Brazilian readers' landscape. While in the post-imperial centre, Portugal, the marketing of Chiziane's novels enhances an anthropological cultural access to a mystified Africa mediated by an "authentic" African black woman, interest from the Afro-Brazilian diaspora, women's movement and academia instead highlights this same discourse as cultural empowerment, by connecting it with their own Brazilian history. The "authenticity" claim Chiziane demands for her vernacularized discourse of African knowledge and collective memory is depoliticized, hence exotified, in the Portuguese market, while enforced as politically subversive in the Brazilian niche circulation path.

As Hilary Owen points out, "both Couto and Chiziane have relied on their strategies of African vernacularization to mediate and invigorate the perceived singularity of Portuguese as Mozambique's rationalized, market language" (2007b, 488). With "different ends and effects", they both foster a vernacular poetics that encompasses an ethical and political dimension, forming a storytelling from below (on differences between Couto and Chiziane in this respect, see Owen [2007b]). Nevertheless, due to traditional gender-biased literary criticism, Couto and Chiziane's vernacular poetics are rendered different trajectories by reinforcing the universal in the male author, and focusing on particularities in the literature of the woman author. In a 2017 Brazilian literary programme, scholar Rita Chaves characterizes Couto's locally situated vernacular literature as "super regionalism" (following Antonio Candido's genre description of the famous Brazilian author Guimarães Rosa's work) "for its capacity to associate the local with the universal and treating the problems of the village as the problems of the world, and vice versa" ("Pedro Bial Entrevista Mia Couto" 2017, my translation). This is evident in Portugal, where Couto is considered a highly skilled imaginative storyteller and, foremost, a renewer of the Portuguese language, while Chiziane is considered an "authentic" African woman storyteller, acting as a cultural mediator between specific Lusophone margins and its centre. In Brazil these gendered conceptions are mirrored in the printed book market: while a major publisher publishes Couto, Chiziane has few books published and circulates in a niche market.

On the one hand, the trajectories of Chiziane's circulation from the local circuit into the wider linguistic Lusophone and western cosmopolitan landscapes could be considered as mediated by this gendered traditional literary critique. On the other hand, gendered mediation has opened up new circulation paths on the Brazilian and cosmopolitan market that not only differ from Couto's experience, but also, arguably, are not even open to him in the first place. Recent changes in the global literary marketplace and media of dissemination are opening up new niche markets and audiences, while actually offering new possibilities for important literary diversity. Chiziane's trajectory into the Brazilian black diasporic market is an interesting development in the global marketplace of virtual migrations, where blogs and authors' appearances at book festivals and on different media outlets are taking market share away from the traditional printed book market.

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