

## The island of Muipíti: memory in the poetry of Mozambican poets

Rui Knopfli and Luís Carlos Patraquim /

*A ilha de Muipíti: memória na poesia dos poetas moçambicanos*

*Rui Knopfli e Luís Carlos Patraquim*

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### ABSTRACT

Poets Rui Knopfli and Luís Carlos Patraquim, both from Mozambique, are known for the way in which memory is configured in their poems. The poem “Muipíti”, published by Knopfli in *A ilha de Próspero* (1972), is based on his memories about the island of Mozambique, called Muipíti by the Macuas Africans, before the arrival of the Portuguese. Indeed, it is noted that the poem in question aims to mix individual experiences with those of Mozambique, the country where the island was the former capital. Subsequently, in the section “Os barcos elementares”, published in *Vinte e tal novas formulações e uma elegia carnívora* (1991), Patraquim takes up Knopfli’s poem in “Muipíti”, whose spelling of the island’s name now gains an “h” more. In the poetic text, it is noted that memory is, once again, the central point. However, it is evident that the poem aims to take up another, the one written by Knopfli, whom Patraquim pays homage to on other occasions. Therefore, the purpose of the communication is, from a theoretical-comparative perspective, to investigate the way memory is configured in the two proposed islands of Muipíti, Knopfli and Patraquim, considering the intertextual aspect that it involves the two poetic texts.

**KEYWORDS:** Rui Knopfli; Luís Carlos Patraquim; Memory; African literature.

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## RESUMO

Os poetas moçambicanos Rui Knopfli e Luís Carlos Patraquim são conhecidos pela maneira como a memória se configura em suas obras. Nesse sentido, chama-se a atenção para o poema “Muipíti”, publicado por Knopfli em *A ilha de Próspero*, de 1972, em que, a partir das recordações do sujeito poético vividas na ilha de Moçambique, chamada pelos africanos macuas, antes da chegada dos portugueses, de Muipíti, tem-se uma série de reflexões acerca do colonialismo e da memória. Com efeito, nota-se que o poema em questão tem por propósito misturar as vivências individuais com as de Moçambique, país onde a ilha fora a antiga capital. Posteriormente, na seção “Os barcos elementares”, publicada em *Vinte e tal novas formulações e uma elegia carnívora*, de 1991, Patraquim retoma o poema de Knopfli em “Muiphiti”, cuja grafia do nome da ilha ganha agora um “h” a mais. No texto poético, nota-se que a memória é, mais uma vez, o ponto central. Contudo, evidencia-se que o poema tem por intuito retomar outro, o escrito por Knopfli, a quem Patraquim homenageia em outras ocasiões. Assim sendo, o intuito do artigo é o de, a partir de uma perspectiva teórico-comparativa, investigar a maneira como a memória se configura nas duas ilhas de Muipiti propostas, a de Knopfli e a de Patraquim, tendo em vista o aspecto intertextual que envolve os dois textos poéticos.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Rui Knopfli; Luís Carlos Patraquim; Memória; Literatura Africana.

## 1 Introduction

In the poem “Rui Knopfli”, published in *Pneuma*, 2009, the Mozambican Luís Carlos Patraquim seeks to evoke elements which are part of the work of the poet to whom homage is paid. Thus, attention is drawn to the final verses, in which it is seen the rescue of the past of Rui Knopfli, a deceased Mozambican writer, known for the way memory is discussed in his poetic work: “Invoco-te os jacarandás no túnel da avenida alta / Atapetando-nos as sensações, / Para que te visitem onde escreves, acororado, / Na erna savana com os rios ao longe / Inhambane ou Pasárgada, Vila Viçosa, a Londres mítica, / Joeburg e a terra desolada” (PATRAQUIM, 2011, p. 197).<sup>1</sup>

With this, it is perceived how locality is one of the central points to think about the poetry of Rui Knopfli, in the conception of Patraquim, since, at the end of the text, the reader is introduced to an overview of scenarios associated with the work of the Mozambican writer, be it London, where the honoree was forced to move due to the tensions which preceded the process of independence of Mozambique, or even Pasárgada, mythical locality imagined by the Brazilian modernist Manuel Bandeira, evoked by Knopfli in “Terra de Manuel Bandeira”, published in *País dos outros* (1959), with the verses: “Também eu quisera ir-me embora / pra Pasárgada, / também eu quisera libertar-me / e viver essa vida gostosa / que se vive lá em Pasárgada” (KNOPFLI,

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<sup>1</sup> I invoke the jacarandas in the tunnel of the high avenue/ Carpeting our sensations/ So that they visit you where you write, squatting, / In the desert savannah with the rivers in the distance/ Inhambane or Pasárgada, Vila Viçosa, the mythical London and the desolated land.

2010, p. 87)<sup>2</sup>. Attention is drawn to the mention of Vila Viçosa, where the Portuguese ancestors of Knopfli lived, and to the abbreviation of Johannesburg, in South Africa, the city where the poet went to high school. Finally, it is noticed how, among the names of cities, – real or imaginary–, Patraquim inserts the title of the book *O escriba acororado*, published by Knopfli in 1978, in the verse: “Para que te visitem onde escreves, acororado, / Na erma savana com os rios ao longe” (PATRAQUIM, 2011, p. 197)<sup>3</sup>.

Initially written in 1971, in the city of Lourenço Marques, former name of Maputo, capital of Mozambique, *O escriba acororado* is only concluded in 1977, in London, where Knopfli moved to in March of 1975. It is important to note that concerning the book whose title is evoked by Patraquim in “Rui Knopfli”, it is precisely in it that the poet places himself as a kind of scribe of History, as indicated by the first text of the publication, “Proposição”, a sort of introduction of his literary project in the volume in question. Because of this, by reading the final verse of that poem, the reader acknowledges Knopfli’s intention of acting himself as the scribe of History announced in *O escriba acororado*: “A História que há-de ler-se é por mim escrita” (KNOPFLI, 1982b, p. 362).<sup>4</sup>

In fact, it needs to be taken into consideration the way Knopfli acts as a scribe of History, condition rescued by Patraquim in the homage-poem dedicated to the deceased writer. In this sense, another poem by Knopfli stands out, “Muipíti”, present in *A ilha de Próspero*, 1972, which, in also some kind of homage, is evoked by Patraquim – this time in the section “Os barcos elementares”, de *Vinte e tal novas formulações e uma elegia carnívora*, 1991. As in “Rui Knopfli”, in which the cities have essential importance in the poetic construction of this author that places himself as a scribe of History, “Muhipíti”, whose name is written with “h”, unlike Knopfli’s Muipíti, Patraquim rescues the events that took place on the island of Muipíti, today called island of Mozambique, former capital of the country that owes him its name.

In this scenario, then, there are two poems. In the first, “Muipíti”, Knopfli mixes his individual experiences with the historical events that took place on the island, in order to weave a critique of colonialism, still a reality of the country that only gained its independence on June 25, 1975 – three years after the composition of *A ilha de Próspero*, where the poem was published. Second, in “Muhipíti”, Patraquim resumes the poem of Knopfli, in order to pay homage to him and

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<sup>2</sup> I would like to leave too/ to Pasárgada/ I would also like to be free/ and live this pleasant life/ that people have in Pasárgada

<sup>3</sup> so that they visit you where you write, squatting, / in the desert savanna with the rivers in the distance.

<sup>4</sup> The History you are about to read was written by me.

weave other comments, since, at the moment of his writing, Mozambique was, in theory, free from Portuguese domination, but beset by a civil war, which only ended in October 1992.

For the study proposed in this article, it must be taken into consideration the way memory is configured in both texts. If, in the first, the intention is thinking about a Mozambique that dreams of its freedom, from the experiences lived by Knopfli on the island of Muipíti, as the macuas called the place before the arrival of the Portuguese, in “Muhipíti” there is the rescue of the memories lived by the honoree poet, in a way adding severe critics against colonialism. From the intertextuality between the two poets, whose writings take place at different moments of the History of Mozambique– Patraquim is still working, it is valid to mention –, the purpose of the article is to present reflections on memory and how it is linked to the discussion of colonialism in African literature.

## 2 The island of Rui Knopfli and Luís Carlos Patraquim: the individual memory

In *Do alheio ao próprio: a poesia em Moçambique*, the researcher Manoel de Souza e Silva (1996) draws the attention to the fact that, in the poetry of Rui Knopfli, the notion of belonging is always a delicate matter. In the conception of the scholar, Knopfli is the author of what can be understood as ambiguous poetry, a condition that “seems to be the recurring trait of the intellectual production within the processes of colonization” (SOUZA E SILVA, 1996, p. 103). For the researcher, ambiguity is present in Knopfli from a contradictory agony, for at the same time it seems to characterize his poetry, it is also a theme the poem seeks to overcome. Related to his own identity, this agony is clear, for example, in “Naturalidade”, poem present in the first book of the author, *O país dos outros*, 1959.

In the poetic text, Knopfli seems to acknowledge his lack of place in the Mozambican society, considering that he, a white man, descendant of Europeans, perceives his origin this way: “Europeu, me dizem / Eivam-me de literatura e doutrina / europeias / e europeu me chamam” (KNOPFLI, 1989, p. 378)<sup>5</sup>. In another poem, “As origens”, this time in *O monhé das cobras*, 1997, last book published in life, he faces verses that seek to detail his origin, as well as the relation with Mozambique: “Paro diante do jazigo de família, / Vila Viçosa, Alentejo profundo. Afinal tudo / principiou aqui.” (KNOPFLI, 2010, p. 184)<sup>6</sup>. While the poetic voice contemplates the

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<sup>5</sup> European, they tell me/ Stain me of European literature and doctrine/ and European they call me.

<sup>6</sup> I stop before the family grave/ Vila Viçosa, deep Alentejo. After all everything/ started here.

family grave in Vila Viçosa – one of the places mentioned by Patraquim in “Rui Knopfli”, it is valid to remember–, the agony commented by Souza e Silva (1996), is evident in the following verses:

[...] O apelido seria,  
puramente como outros, alentejano,  
não fora a incursão oportunista

do estrangeiro, que perturbaria o resto,  
confundindo o futuro e as interpretações.

[...]  
(KNOPFLI, 2010, p. 184)<sup>7</sup>

In the words of the poetic subject, such “opportunist incursion of the foreigner” would result with the family from the Alentejo seeking adventure in African lands. According to the poet, the act of moving to another country is the responsible for disturbing all the order, leading to confusing the future and the interpretations, what has as a consequence, then, the agony of belonging or not to the African continent. Finally, the poetic voice concludes: “[...] Feita de lavras / em pousio e esperança adiada, / pertencemos todos a esta África lusitana // que pelas outras se expandiria” (KNOPFLI, 2010, p. 184)<sup>8</sup>. With these verses, it can be seen an attempt to think of a Lusitanian Africa, written in small letters, as if, in the way of reading the world proposed by Knopfli, the African continent were united to the European, utopic thought, but justified if taken into consideration that the central point of the poem is exactly thinking the origin of the poet’s family.

Therefore, Knopfli concludes, if his ancestors had not moved to another country, his life would be immensely different: “Não fora isso e seria apenas o poeta local, sobrenome / Rosa, aguardando o lugar que lhe caberia” (KNOPFLI, 2010, p. 184)<sup>9</sup>. Thus, it is valid to perceive the way that the place has strong relation with the poetic work to be developed by Knopfli, what, after this brief reflection, it is provoked to discuss the text “Muipíti”, later used as the initial point for Patraquim in his “Muhipíti”. In it, it is evident the way how the island of Mozambique, there called Muipíti, is presented as an environment marked by memory, connected to the events occurred in Africa. As it can be seen in the following part:

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<sup>7</sup> [...] The nickname would be, purely as the others, *alentejano*, if it were not for the opportunist incursion of the foreigner, that would disturb the rest, confusing the future and the interpretations.

<sup>8</sup> Made of extractions and postponed hope, we all belong to this Lusitanian Africa that would expand through others.

<sup>9</sup> If it were not this and I would be just the local poet, last name/ Rosa, waiting for the place that would be his.

Ilha, velha ilha, metal remanchado,  
minha paixão adolescente,  
que doloridas lembranças do tempo  
em que, do alto do minarete,  
Alah – o grande sacana! – sorria  
aos tímidos versos bem comportados  
que eu fazia.

Eis-te, cartaz, convertida em puta histórica  
minha pachacha pseudo-oriental  
a rescender a canela e açafraão,  
maquilhada de espero m'siro  
e a mimar, pró turismo labrego,  
trejeitos torpes de cortesã decrépita.  
[...]  
(KNOPFLI, 1982a, p. 334)<sup>10</sup>

In this first moment, it is highlighted the way how the poetic voice considers the island his teenage passion, condition able to reveal the tenderness for the place in his youth. Although in the first verse the text focus on presenting the perspective of the poetic subject, from the point of view of his personal experience, as it can be seen in “shy well-behaved verses” (KNOPFLI, 1982a, p. 334) created by him, the reflection there proposed is not connected only to his own experiences. It can be seen as an example the fact that Allah, followed by the adjective “the great bastard!” (KNOPFLI, 1982a, p. 334), said by the poet, smiled before the verses there presented.

It is therefore perceived the evoking of an individual memory, established from his relationship with the space in which the poetic text takes place, the island of Muipíti, here understood from the experiences of the subject, the young Rui Knopfli, whose teenage verses were reason for the shy smile of Allah. There is here the evoking of a historic past of the island, now mixed with the own experience of the “lyric self”. It is interesting to highlight the saying of Michael Pollak (1989), when he understands that collective memory involves a process of “negotiation” and not only the selectivity of the memory. In this case, taking into consideration that each member of the group has their own individual memory, it is precise that both “agree”, in the absence of a better term, in its content.

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<sup>10</sup> Island, old island., restrained metal, my teenage passion, painful memories from the time When, from the top of the minaret, Allah – the great bastard! – smiled to the shy well-behaved verses that I did.

Here you, sign, converted in historical whore my pseudo-eastern *pachacha*, smelling like cinamon and saffron, wearing makeup of waiting *m'siro* and spoiling pro tourism *labrego*, behaving as a decadent courtesan.

Corroborates such affirmative with the following reasoning by Maurice Halbwachs (2013), responsible for coining the term collective memory:

For our memory to profit from the memory of others, it is not enough that they present us their testimonies: it is also necessary that it has never ceased to agree with their memories and that there are a lot of points of contact among them so that the souvenir they make us remember gets to be rebuilt over common ground. It is not enough to rebuild piece by piece the image of a past event to obtain a memory. It is necessary that this reconstruction works from data or common notions that are in our spirit and in the one of the others, because they are always passing from these to that and vice-versa, which will only be possible if they had been part and continue to be part of the same society, the same group (HALBWACHS, 2013, p. 39).

At this point, it is drawn the attention to the way as the individual memory of Knopfli in absorbed in “Muhípiiti”, a series of poems, sometimes in prose, sometimes in verses, published by Patraquim. Dedicated to the Mozambican poet, in an enigmatic way, through the sayings “For You, with the island, to Rui Knopfli”, it is noticed that the poetic text presents a very different structure from the one observed on the island of Knopfli, focused on presenting the island from one single poem in verse, which is different from Patraquim’s proposal. However, although the poetic composition is significantly different, it is noticed that “Muhípiiti” proceeds with the intention of presenting the island from the poem of Knopfli, as it can be seen in the first part that composes the set:

É onde deponho todas as armas. Uma palmeira  
harmonizando-nos o sonho. A sombra.  
Onde eu mesmo estou. Devagar e nu. Sobre  
as ondas eternas. Onde nunca fui e os anjos  
brincam aos barcos com livros como mãos.  
Onde comemos o acidulado último gomo  
das retóricas inúteis. É onde somos inúteis.  
Puros objectos naturais. Uma palmeira  
de missangas com o sol. Cantando.  
Onde na noite a Ilha recolhe todos os istmos  
e marulham as vozes. A estatuária nas virilhas.  
Golfando. Maconde não petrificada.  
É onde estou neste poema e nunca fui.  
O teu nome que grito a rir do nome.  
(PATRAQUIM, 2008, p. 91)<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> It is Where I lay down all the weapons. A palm tree harmonizing our dream. The shadow. Where I am. Slow and Naked. Over eternal waves. Where I have never been to, and the angels play with boats carrying books in their hands. Where we eat the acid last part of useless rhetoric. It’s where we are useless. Pure natural objects. A palm

It draws the attention to the fact that, in the poem, there is the rescue of the memories of Knopfli, once that the poetic voice clarifies, in two verses: “Onde eu mesmo estou. Devagar e nu. Sobre / as ondas eternas. Onde nunca fui e os anjos / brincam aos barcos com livros como mãos” (PATRAQUIM, 2008, p. 91)<sup>12</sup>. It is observed that the poetic subject seeks to present other people’s individual memories, possibly Knopfli, having in mind that it is constantly clarified that it is related to an event that does not take place in the present, as it can be seen in the verses “onde nunca fui” (where I have never been) and, further ahead, in “É onde estou neste poema e nunca fui” (It is where I am in this poem and I have never been).

It can be seen that there is the rescue of events that were not experienced by the poetic subject of the poem of Patraquim, but there certainly is an attempt to feel them, as it is possible to perceive on the description of the sensations: “Puros objectos naturais. Uma palmeira / de missangas com o sol” (PATRAQUIM, 2008, p. 91)<sup>13</sup>. It is evident, then, that Patraquim, in the proposed setting, seeks to feel close to what was lived by Knopfli, with his personal memories. This hypothesis can be proved when one thinks that, in the construction of the verses, the poetic voice seeks to use the first person in the plural, as it can be seen in “Onde comemos o acidulado último gomo / das retóricas inúteis. É onde somos inúteis. / Puros objectos naturais” (PATRAQUIM, 2008, p. 91)<sup>14</sup>.

For this reason, there is the hypothesis that the “somos” (“we are”), in the poem, is related to a junction between Patraquim e Knopfli, as if the first one was, at that moment, beside the honoree poet. Therefore, from the memories of Knopfli, present in the poem that inspired him, Patraquim seeks to rebuild the island of Muipíti. This principle is evident when one thinks about how the History of Mozambique itself is presented on two poetic texts, seen on the next section.

### 3 The reconstitution of the history of Muipíti

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tree of beads with the sun. Singing. It’s where at night the island collects all the isthmi and the voices splash. The statuary in the groins. *Golfando*. Non petrified Maconde. It’s where I am in this poem, and I have never been. Your name I shout as I laugh at the name.

<sup>12</sup> Where I am. Slow and Naked. Over eternal waves. Where I have never been to, and the angels play with boats carrying books in their hands.

<sup>13</sup> Pure natural objects. A palm tree of beads with the sun.

<sup>14</sup> Where we eat the acid last part of useless rhetoric. It’s where we are useless. Pure natural objects.



In the beginning of the poem of Knopfli, it was seen that the poetic voice addresses Allah – “Alah – o grande sacana! – sorria / aos tímidos versos bem comportados / que eu fazia” (KNOPFLI, 1982a, p. 334)<sup>15</sup>. This mention of Allah can be understood as an attempt to rescue the historical past of the island itself. This because, as explained by the researcher Carmen Lúcia Tindó Ribeiro Secco (2013), for many years the islands, located on the North coast of the country, were not inhabited. Such reality changes in the middle of the century VII, when Arabs started living on the eastern African coast, concerned about Islamizing the region. This situation generates a series of consequences: “when the Portuguese arrived, in the end of the century XV, on the island of Mozambique – called Muipíti by the African macuas who lived there–, they found an Arab domain. They undertook, then, the conquest, trying to impose their power.” (SECCO, 2013, p. 158).

As a result, according to Secco (2013), the Portuguese started building churches and fortresses on the island of Mozambique, as an attempt to impose their culture on a territory controlled by the Moors. Due to the evoking his historical past, one can see the way the memory of a country is evoked on the island of Knopfli. This way, it is relevant to see, one more time, the words of Maurice Halbwachs (2013), quoted below. From his considerations, one can see that it is dangerous the use of the expression historical memory, being better, then the concept of collective memory. One must, however, be careful not to mix the concepts of history and collective memory, because they are different. The scholar explains that the expression historic memory ends up associating two terms that can be opposite in several fronts. In this scenario, history can be considered as a species of a group of occurred events, in a way occupying a space the author calls “memory of men”.

Collective memory, on the other hand, is associated to another principle, much different from history considered by Halbwachs (2013) from a more traditionalist approach, as the selection of events introduced to students still at school. As Halbwachs (2013) understands,

Collective memory differs from History at least in two aspects. It is a chain of continuous thought, of a non-artificial continuity, for it retains only from the past what is still alive or capable of living in the consciousness of the group that maintains it. By definition, it does not exceed the boundaries of that group. When a period ceases to interest the following period, it is not the same group that forgets a part of its past: in reality, there are two groups that succeed each

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<sup>15</sup> Allah – the great bastard! – smiled to the shy well-behaved verses that I did.

other. History divides the sequence of centuries into periods, how we distribute the material of a tragedy into many acts (HALBWACHS, 2013, p.102).

With Halbwachs's words in mind (2013), one can perceive that the memory evoked by Knopfli in the verses presented is the collective one, for it is kept in the consciousness of the group. This way, by mentioning Allah, as a reference to the Muslim religion, as well as in other matters related to the East one can see how the past of the island of Mozambique is evoked by the poet. The same way, it is drawn attention to the fact that the questions debated by Knopfli are published exactly on *A ilha de Próspero*, a book in which the island of the North is converted on stage of “sign of plurality – sign of passage in which West and East are in friction; Arabs and Christians; Portuguese caravels and Moor ships, Portuguese and Indians” (SAID, 2010, p. 194). This principle is clear, especially, on the second verse of the poem, in which the poetic voice makes a strong effort to comment the process of colonization that took place on the island of Mozambique and– why not? –in the whole country.

By addressing the island, as if standing before a person, the poetic voice comments: “Eis-te, cartaz, convertida em puta histórica” (KNOPFLI, 1982a, p. 334)<sup>16</sup>. It can be seen in his approach, started from the micro, in which there are the personal experiences with his shy verses, soon goes to macro, with a critic to the process of colonization of the island which, in the conception of the poet, was transformed into a courtesan. Abandoned to the taste of ignorant tourists that know little of its history, the island of Mozambique, which the poet addresses and characterizes as a woman, is associated to the expression “pachacha pseudo-oriental” (KNOPFLI, 1982a, p. 334)<sup>17</sup>. It is known that *pachacha* is a word used in European Portuguese to name the feminine genital organ, which makes it possible to think about the pejorative way how the island in “Muipíti” is mentioned.

In this perspective, it is important to remember that the poem is present in a book whose title is exactly *A ilha de Próspero*, in which, by addressing the central character of *The Tempest*, by the English writer William Shakespeare, Knopfli intends to comment on the island of Mozambique. It is important to highlight that it is known that on Shakespeare's play, possibly written around 1610, the Duke of Milan, Prospero, ends up exiled, against his will, on a remote island with his daughter. It is there where the character, a foreigner, settles down, and gets to know the native Caliban – one must remember that the relation between Prospero and Caliban is

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<sup>16</sup> Here you, sign, converted in historical whore.

<sup>17</sup> Pseudo-eastern *pachacha*.

usually evoked on texts destined to debate the colonial relation of Portugal with Africa, being “Entre Próspero e Caliban: colonialismo, pós-colonialismo e interidentidade”, by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, one of the best-known texts.

It is important to have in mind that, on Shakespeare’s play, Prospero is the foreign character who goes to somebody else’s land, Caliban. Therefore, it is interesting to mention that, for the title of the book centered on the island of Mozambique, Knopfli thinks exactly about the foreigner as the owner of the place, since the title is not *A ilha de Caliban (The Island of Caliban)*, the native. In this sense, one can find one more justification for the use of the expressions “historical whore” and “decadent courtesan” to refer to the island. This principle is also noticed on the reading that Patraquim does of Knopfli’s poem, as it will be seen ahead.

However, it is drawn the attention to the critic against the process of colonization that, in spite of using the resource of poem written in prose, it is not different from the reading proposed by Knopfli:

Ilha, corpo, mulher. Ilha, encantamento. Primeiro tema para cantar. Primeira aproximação para ver-te, na carne cansada da fortaleza ida, na rugosidade hirta do casario decrépito, a pensar memórias, escravos, coral e açafraão. Minha ilha/vulva de fogo e pedra do Índico esquecida. Circum-navego-te, dos crespos cabelos da rocha ao ventre arfante e esculturo-te de azul e sol. Tu, solto colmo a oriente, para sempre de ti exilada. (PATRAQUIM, 2008, p. 93)<sup>18</sup>

It must be highlighted the way Patraquim evokes some expressions used by Knopfli in his poem, especially the relationship between the island and vulva, present in “Minha ilha/vulva de fogo” (“My island/vulva of fire”) that is similar to “minha pachacha pseudo-oriental” (“my pseudo-eastern *pachacha*”), previously analyzed. It is also mentioned the proposal of having on the island a “tired meat of the gone fortress” (uma “carne cansada da fortaleza ida”), which makes it possible to think about the place as a body, with memories and traumas. Therefore, it is interesting to reflect on the way how, shortly after the excerpt that has the island as meat, Patraquim has the island as the owner of a personality of its own, in order to “think memories, slaves, coral and saffron” (PATRAQUIM, 2008, p. 93). It can be seen, then, that in the same one done by Knopfli, the poet intends to propose a kind of historical panorama of the island.

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<sup>18</sup> Island, body, woman. Island, enchantment. First theme to sing. First approach to see you, in the tired flesh of the fortress gone, in the rigid roughness of the decrepit houses, thinking of memories, slaves, coral and saffron. My island/vulva of fire and Indic stone forgotten. I circle you, from the frizzy hair of the rock to the heaving belly, and I sculpt you in blue and sun. You, loose as the east, forever exiled from you.

Concerning this movement proposed by Patraquim, Secco (2018, p. 154), on another occasion, comments on the use of “this perspective that goes through a corrosive rethinking of the Mozambican history”. In this sense, it is necessary to mention the next fragment that composes the set focused on the island of Muipíti, written by Patraquim, in which, as well as Knopfli works with the idea of calling the island courtesan, in “trejeitos torpes de cortesã decrépita” (KNOPFLI, 1982a, p. 334), there is the evoking of the expression, now connected to the previously mentioned conflicts among Portuguese and Arabs. The fragment is the one that follows:

Foste uma vez a sumptuosidade mercantil, cortesã impossível roçagando-se nas paredes altas dos palácios. Sobre a flor árabe a excisão esboçada com nomes de longe. São Paulo. Fadário quinhentista de ‘armas e varões assinalados’. São Paulo e o rastilho do evangelho nas bombardas dos galeões. São Paulo rosa, ébano, sangue, tinir de cristais, gibões e espadas, arfar de vozes nas alcovas efémeras. Nas ranhuras deste empedrado com torre a espriar lamentos dormirão os fantasmas? Almas minhas de panos e missangas gentis, quem vos partiu o parto em tijolo ficado e envelhecido?

Ilha, capulana estampada de soldados e morte. Ilha elegíaca nos monumentos- Porta-aviões de agoirentos corvos na encruzilhada das monções. De oriente a oriente flagelaste o interior da terra. De Calicut e Lisboa a lança que o vento lascivo trilou em nocturnos, espasmódicos duelos e a dúvida retraduzindo-se agora entre campanário e minarete. Muezzin alcandorado, incoquistável.

Porque no princípio era o mar e a ilha. Sinbad e Ulisses. Xerazzade e Penélope. Nomes sobre nomes. Língua em língua em Macua matriciadas. (PATRAQUIM, 2009, p. 94)<sup>19</sup>

It can be perceived that there is, on the highlighted fragment, an attempt to review aspects of the history of the island, as it can be noticed by the constant mention to the East, the

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<sup>19</sup> You were once mercantile sumptuousness, impossible courtesan rubbing against the high walls of palaces. On the Arabic flower the excision sketched with names from afar. Saint Paul. Sixteenth-century fairy of 'signed arms and men'. Saint Paul and the fuse of the gospel in the bombardments of galleons. Saint Paul rose, ebony, blood, the tinkling of crystals, jerkins and swords, the gasping of voices in ephemeral alcoves. Will the ghosts sleep in the grooves of this cobblestone with a tower spreading laments? Souls of mine with cloths and gentle beads, who broke your birth in leftover and aged bricks?

Island, *capulana* printed with soldiers and death. Elegiac island in the monuments- Aircraft carrier of ominous crows at the crossroads of the monsoons. From east to east you plagued the interior of the earth. From Calicut and Lisbon, the lance that the lascivious wind trilled at night, spasmodic duels and doubt retranslated now between belfry and minaret. Muezzin uplifted, unconquerable.

Because in the beginning it was the sea and the island. Sinbad and Ulysses. Xerazzade and Penelope. Names over names. Language in language in Macua matrices.

commercial issues, the Arab universe highlighted in “sobre a flor árabe”, besides the elements connected to Catholicism, such as a mention to a warrior Saint Paul. It can be seen, then, the evoking to a conflict between Muslim Arabs and Catholic Portuguese who shed blood and held swords, the same way done by Knopfli in his poem.

However, Patraquim goes beyond Knopfli by insering in his poetic text a reference to the Portuguese literary classic, the epic *Os Lusíadas*, by Camões, which starts like this: “As armas e os Barões assinalados / Que da Ocidental praia Lusitana / Por mares nunca de antes navegados / Passaram ainda além da Taprobana” (CAMÕES, 2000, p. 11)<sup>20</sup>. In the poem of Patraquim, the first verse is dislocated to the universe of the island of Muipíti, having Saint Paul as the central character: “São Paulo. Fadário quinhentista de ‘armas e varões assinalados. São Paulo e o rastilho do evangelho nas bombardas dos galeões” (PATRAQUIM, 2009, p. 94)<sup>21</sup>. With this reference, the Mozambican poet seeks to offer more elements to think about the history of the island that serves as the source for his composition, finding now the verses of Camões as source, which, even though not having been mentioned by Knopfli, illustrate the process to which were subjected the countries colonized by Portugal.

### Final considerations

From a comparatist perspective of the poetry of Rui Knopfli and Luís Carlos Patraquim, from the figuration of the island of Muipíti, one can perceive how the process of colonization is criticized by both poets. This because, by having the island as a reference, both make critical comments about the totality of the process of colonization to which Mozambique was subject, home of the two poets.

However, it is important to mention that the purpose of the two texts is different. If in “Muipíti”, published by Knopfli in *A ilha de Próspero*, there is an affective relation towards the teenage dream lived on the island, proved by the proposal of writing teenage verses, in the poem “Muiphíti”, by Patraquim, there is the intention to pay homage. In order to do so, the memories of Knopfli, not Patraquim’s, are used as a source for the poetic composition, which alters significantly the approach verified on both texts.

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<sup>20</sup> The weapons and the Barons identified / That of the Western *Lusitana* beach / Through seas never before navigated / They even passed beyond Taprobana.

<sup>21</sup> Saint Paul. Sixteenth-century faerie of marked weapons and men. Saint Paul and the spark of the gospel in the bombardments of galleons”.

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