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The third man argument by João Maria Gusmão and Pedro Paiva

When we stopped filming, the old woman went crazy. We'd asked the drunken couple to dance a bit in front of the camera. Why did they give me this man, if I had my way, I'd have another, she turned to face us, opened her eyes wide, waved her hands in the air and in a lewd gesture grabbed the brightly printed cloth between her legs, put her hand on her crotch and shouted that she was on fire, on fire in there, and with that she started to dance by herself and arse into our trousers, I want a white man to get myself a mulatto, give me a white man and I'll make a mulatto. Behind her, Zebndequias was explaining to Pedro, drinking alcohol every day doesn't hurt you, drinking every day doesn't hurt you, how many languages do you speak, parlez-vous français? Ich spreche 27 Sprachen, dialects and whatever; Ich spreche 27 Sprachen, drinking every day doesn't hurt you, unless you overdo it, not every day, if you drink too much water, you die, a lot of water's a bad thing, it's like laughing, if you laugh too much you can fall over and hit your head on the ground, and die, but drinking every day is good. The old woman sang, panting for breath, she opened her eyes, give me fire or money.

It was the last day of our stay in Mozambique. We'd seen enough to realize that there's nothing here to understand. A French woman once told us that a European should be ashamed to go to Africa, it was criminal to return to the scene of colonialism. She was right. There's always a third man, the colonizer, the colonized and the mulatto. With FRELIMO in power and the armed struggle dating back to '64, first against the Portuguese rulers, until '75, and then against RENAMO, in a civil war, until '92, with a death toll estimated at 1 million, Mozambique looks at first sight as if it escaped unscathed from the worst wounds of colonialism. We asked an albino guy if he could tell any jokes about the Portuguese, he laughed and said, a Portuguese man arrived here in Maputo, couldn't believe his eyes, and asked a smart and friendly looking native what they called motherfuckers in Mozambique. But sir, we don't call them, they come from Lisbon of their own accord. And there we were, two motherfuckers in Maputo, 38 years after independence and 20 years after the civil war, the old drunk woman shouting, her eyes irradiating blood and misery, give me a mulatto, give me a mulatto or money, motherfucker. We stayed for a week in the house of a Portuguese man who had settled in the outskirts of Maputo, who one day told us, there's one thing you have to understand, you don't need to feel sorry for the blacks, only today I had to give Silva a dressing down, and told him in no uncertain terms, my wife and I give the orders round here, we're the boss, then the kids, and then the dogs, OK? Say it after me. And Silva repeated, the dogs are the boss, there's always a third man.

What came first, the chicken or the egg? In Mozambique, there are two breeds of hen, the African and the white hen, and two beers, one dark and one pale. The African hen is hard to catch, the white chicken is always first into the pot, it's lazy and the meat's not so tough. Our joke-telling albino went on, round here everyone calls me *portuga*, I've never been to Portugal, but I like it; my brother-in-law worked there for a year, one day he went to get his ID photo taken, he went to the counter to complain, excuse me but it looks a bit dark to me, the lady replied, it's dark because you're black, if you were white it would be lighter, what do you want me to do?, you're black. That's engraved on my memory, I'll never forget it, he laughed and laughed, we laughed too, he went back to the shop because the photo looked dark, but you're black, and he laughed. That was in Lisbon, motherfuckers. We met a crazy guy who wouldn't answer anyone's questions, he would just write numbers and multiplication problems on the ground, when he saw the school kids he would shout after them, you don't know your maths, you idiots! MA-THE-MA-TICS! We showed him the symbol for π , and asked him if he could write the number while we filmed, he stared into the distance. Write this number and then carry on and we'll film you, OK? We'll give you a cigarette and then we'll film you, OK? So he took the cigarette and got up, took hold of a stick,

squatted in the shade and started to write. *Pi* is infinite.... Hang on, it's 3.14 and then 1592653589793, he just carried on writing numbers, not *pi* any more, but another unending number, accepted another cigarette, are you thirsty?, thirst is infinite. Remember who's boss Silva, and between ourselves, I've been here 24 years and never drunk tap water, here at home we only drink bottled water. Drinking too much water will kill you. Not alcohol, drinking every day won't hurt you, quite the opposite. Do you want a cigarette, there's one thing you have to understand, it's 3.14 and then a lot more numbers, it never ends, do you see, it's like counting the stars, there's lots of them, each one points to another and an infinity of more stars... We wanted to film an African hen, they told us, oh, but that's tricky, you'll need to be cunning, Pedro can wait there behind the hut and I'll go round this side, when it comes out, make a grab for it. Have you tried our national dish? Barbecued chicken with piripiri and chips, don't eat the salad, and when you get home you'll need to take deworming tablets. The hen got away and hid under the oil cans. Then the camera broke down.

We went to the witch doctor, we took him the camera, told him we had tried to repair it and as it still didn't work it could only be witchcraft. He looked at us, he must have wondered how he could get us to pay more, and asked, how many people use the camera? Us two. He lowered his hand to the ground, gathered up a handful of that damp red sand, scattered the earth on the bench... there's one thing you have to understand, look at the van, it's clean, if I put my hands down here they get dirty, then when I use the car, whenever I touch it, it won't be clean, like this bench, I put my dirty hand on it and now anyone who sits down will ruin their trousers. The witchcraft isn't in the camera, it's in you, and it's you who need sorting out, not the camera. The camera's fine. To release the spirit of the camera I'll have to cleanse you too. That'll be 60,000 meticais, you don't need to pay it all at once, the first half before the work, and then, if it works, come back and pay the rest. It was very expensive. We told him we would think about it, and let him know. We asked our driver if there were also white wizards, he thought about it... he took my mobile phone, when the white wizard does his magic it's for development, you see, it works, he invented the mobile phone for us to buy, now we can talk to everyone, the black wizard uses bushes, what? he use them to make phone calls? No, he uses plants and herbs to make remedies. But the black wizard also kills a lot of people, he's not like the white wizard who's for development. He kills people, he really does. On the other side of the bay, in Catembe, the wizards kill with thunderbolts; a thunderbolts hits you from the sky, and you're dead. Samora didn't die from a spell, the ones that killed Samora knew he was protected on the ground, they couldn't do anything, no witchcraft could touch Samora, it had to be up there, that's how they killed him, because he was protected on the ground but not up there, that's how the plane crashed with Samora on board and he died.

At home we watched videos on YouTube of Samora Machel, the historic FRELIMO leader, making his post-revolutionary speeches: "Some feel proud because they were colonized by the English. The English are civilized and built a great empire. (laughter) And others because they were colonized by the French, they think they are intellectually superior, more civilized and advanced, because they were colonized by the French. (laughter) But as for me... I was colonized by the Portuguese, by the most underdeveloped country in Europe, but still colonialist (roars of laughter)." "The struggle continues! (and the people chanted back, the struggle continues), the struggle continues! (and the people chanted back, the struggle continues) against what?," asked Samora.

We then explained to the albino why we wanted to make a film with him. Vicente, that was his name. Vicente, we don't want to film people working in the fields, we haven't come to make documentaries, we came here because everything people think about themselves is a lie, because a person isn't just himself, he's also what he sees and transforms, by naming things, counting and adding them up, when he buys and sells, he only thinks of selling, of buying everything he sees, because he thinks life makes sense when it's a lie, buying and selling. Just like the writing on the wall over there: "the false genius", man is a false genius. Vicente, you're black, but at the same time you're not, because you're white, but you're not like white mulattos, you're like an alien, not white, not black, not a mulatto, you came from space like the cave man, neither white nor black, without representation, and that's our job, fighting against all representations, especially abstract ones. Vicente, if you knew how pathologically hypocritical art is, because it thinks so highly of itself, and is created by vain, self-regarding people, with their precious

sensibility, black cats in dark rooms, the problem is that our reasoning is too abstract to avoid what we're fighting against, there's an issue here of intellectual frailty that we should bring up, because however much we try the unrepresentable, something too human always persists, it's a paradox, a man is human if a second ideal man exists on whom he can reflect his humanity, but for this second man, looking at the first is not enough, he has to find a greater, more human third man, and this third man does the same, and so on to infinity, a paradox, so what do you say, will you do the film? What's in it for me? 700... I'll do it for a thousand.

Sitting in the fish market in Maputo, an old high school teacher told us about a diver he knew in Inhambane, who before independence used to catch the strangest sea creatures to sell to the Portuguese tourists who flocked there from all around. He would bring back animals never before seen, fishes with no name, and things with no name always lurk at the bottom; my fisherman friend was never afraid, he wouldn't fish anything else, just fish with no name. One day, he saw a tiny fish in the water, he so loved catching things that no one had a name for that he followed it and the fish, whoosh, swam into a grotto. In Inhambane, you've never been there, the water is as clear as glass, but the hole the little fish swam into was dark, you couldn't see anything inside, and my friend just swam straight in because he really wanted to catch that tiny fish, but the tiny fish swam into the mouth of a really big fish, and he went in right behind. Whoosh, the monster closed its mouth and he was stuck inside; it's what happens when you want things that have no name. The fisherman never again went into the water. But how did he escape from the fish's belly?, we asked. That I can't tell you, but he did, I often saw him on the beach after that, he never again went in the water, he was too scared, the fish had eaten his fisherman's spirit.