# A Struggle for Place: African migration to Europe in Paulo Moura's *Passaporte para o Céu* (2006)

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# A Struggle for Place: African Migration to Europe in Paulo Moura's *Passaporte para o Céu* (2006)

**Abstract**

This paper explores African migrants' fight to reach Europe, as witnessed and narrated by Portuguese reporter Paulo Moura in *Passaporte para o Céu* (2006). An immersion experience involving observation and interviews denounces the tragic reality of all the victims of organized crime and gives them voice, visibility, and dignity. True (un)successful stories of millions of ordinary (in)visible people seeking a safer, better life in a place imagined as Heaven. This article is grounded in theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches for literary journalism studies. Drawing on concepts from narrative journalism and social justice theory, the analysis delves into Moura's storytelling techniques, thematic explorations, and the ethical considerations inherent in his portrayal of marginalized individuals. Through this dual theoretical and methodological lens, the paper offers insights into the ways in which Moura's work transcends traditional journalism to become a powerful tool for social critique and advocacy.

*Keywords:* Literary Journalism, Paulo Moura, *Passaporte para o Céu*, Migrants.

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## At the forefront of Narrative Journalism

Paulo Moura is a Portuguese freelance reporter and author who was born in 1959 in Oporto. He has published several books and has won a number of prizes for his work as a reporter around the world. His book *Depois do Fim: Crónica dos Primeiros 25 Anos da Guerra de Civilizações* (2016) (After the End: *Crónica* of the first 25 years of the War of Civilizations) consisting of pieces of reportage in crisis and conflict areas in different parts of the world (1991 to 2016), is illustrative of his work as the 'reporter on the loose'. For the author of *Passaporte para o Céu* (2006), (A Passport to Heaven) the book scrutinized in this paper, literary journalism is sound journalism that makes use of artistic, stylistic, and literary resources, in line with Bak and Reynolds (2011) and Hartsock (2009, p. 5) who describes it as "a 'narra-descriptive journalism' with literary ambition". In an interview, Moura explains that this journalism is "more effective in reaching people emotionally and affectively, involving them in events, and that supposes an attitude of working on (…) human suffering, reality, the stories of people who didn't ask or choose to be there"[1]. He adds that immersion means going to a place not just to collect information but to stay and experiment, to feel the situations as the protagonists live them. His implicit subjectivity shows the reader how the story was obtained.

The decades of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States of America played a pivotal role in the formalization of Literary Journalism as a distinct genre within the realm of journalism. Renowned writers such as Truman Capote, Norman Mailer, and Gay Talese were instrumental in integrating narrative techniques borrowed from literature into their journalistic practices, thereby enriching the portrayal of war chronicles and the everyday experiences of ordinary individuals. Notably, in 1973, Tom Wolfe made significant contributions to this emerging fusion of journalistic and literary styles through his seminal work "The New Journalism." Within this text, Wolfe undertook a comprehensive examination of various journalistic pieces from the era, correlating them with the increasing paradigm of unconventional journalism. Presently, Literary Journalism is recognized as an autonomous genre characterized by its distinct methodologies and defining attributes. Mark Kramer succinctly encapsulates the essence of literary journalism as "the kind of nonfiction where the arts of style and narrative construction,

[1] Carla Martins. Interview to Paulo Moura 'Literary Journalism'. In *Jornalismo e Jornalistas*, No. 52, Oct/Dec. 2012, pp. 26–32. Entrevista_a_Paulo_Moura_O_jornalismo_li.pdf.

long associated with fiction, help penetrate the rapidity of what is happening." (Kramer, as cited in Tulloch & Keeble, 2012, p. 3). In his seminal work "The New Journalism" (1973), Tom Wolfe delineates a framework for characterising the genre, identifying four key tools employed by literary journalists: scene-by-scene construction, dialogue transcription, third-person verb conjugation, and meticulous attention to detail. Subsequently, in 1984, Norman Sims expanded upon these foundational elements, introducing additional features such as immersive reporting, factual precision, authorial voice, symbolic representation, and authorial responsibility. Several authors have highlighted content related to real-life and exhaustive research committing to the authenticity of the experience. Beyond mere dissemination of information, literary journalism seeks to engender emotional engagement among both its audience and practitioners by imparting narratives that evoke empathy and introspection. The use of first-person verb conjugation serves not only to permeate the text with a sense of personal involvement but also to establish relatable focal points. This personalized narrative approach, coupled with the genre's humanitarian foundations, underscores the immersive research methodology embraced by literary journalists. The immersive nature of literary journalism, along with the humanization of the author within the narrative, combined with the faithful depiction of real-life events and the narrative structure employed, collectively contribute to its impactful nature as a communicative vehicle. By appealing to the reader's conscience and fostering a nuanced understanding of societal issues, literary journalism cultivates empathy and prompts a deeper understanding of relevant social issues. Moreover, the historical backgrounds of literary journalism in England during the late 19th century, as exemplified by publications as the Pall Mall Gazette, and its subsequent influence on notable Portuguese journalists as Eça de Queirós, Ramalho Ortigão, Oliveira Martins, Jaime Batalha Reis, and Fialho de Almeida, served as catalysts for the emergence of literary journalism in Portuguese.

Isabel Nery, Raquel Ochoa, José Luís Peixoto, Miguel Sousa Tavares, Pedro Coelho, Susana Moreira Marques, Catarina Frois, Alexandra Lucas Coelho, Miguel Esteves Cardoso, Ana Cristina Pereira have been identified as contemporary literary journalists. They are immersed in portraying the lives of real people they encounter and “continue this heritage of non-fiction writing or reportage” (Amorim & Baltazar, 2021, p. 38) in formats such as *crónica*, reportage, and books. These authors are concerned with the Other(s), relegated or in the periphery. Their purpose is to take these subjects from the

margins into public attention. Similarly, Paulo Moura makes use of narrative techniques, blending journalism and literature, in his work *Passaporte para o Céu*, with a focus on how this amalgamation enhances the depiction of real-life events and individuals.

The aim of this study is to place *Passaporte para o Céu* on the shelves of Literary Journalism and to delineate the distinguishing features of Moura's approach to literary journalism and its departure from conventional reporting, elucidating how his storytelling technique contributes to a more informed and deeper understanding of migration, displacement, and identity issues. The underlying question is how its narrative techniques contribute to the portrayal of the plights faced by marginalized individuals, notably African migrants seeking refuge in Europe. Mark Kramer writes in the preface to the book: “It's all here, on a human scale. To read Moura is to know cruelty -to know manunkind, as the poet E.E Cunnings jokes. To read Moura is also to know the grace, the emotion, the courage, the determination of a journalist who is both modern and completely trustworthy.” (Moura, 2006, p. 19). For Kramer, Moura’s secret is to “join the practice of absolute truth finding with his extraordinary skills of storyteller” placing him one step ahead of conventional journalism (Moura, 2006, p. 19).

The methodology used in the article is qualitative, focusing on textual analysis and interpretation. It encompasses primarily textual analysis by examining narrative techniques, storytelling approach, and use of literary resources. This analysis involves scrutinizing excerpts from Moura's work to identify themes, stylistic elements, and narrative strategies employed. Critical analysis was used to interpret Moura's work, examining the social, cultural, and political implications of his storytelling choices. It engages with Moura's representation of marginalized communities and evaluates the effectiveness of his narrative journalism in challenging societal norms and fostering empathy among readers.

Furthermore, the article references scholarly literature on literary journalism, immersion reporting, and narrative techniques to contextualize Moura's work within the broader field of communication studies. It draws on theoretical frameworks proposed by scholars such as Bak, Reynolds, and Hartsock to analyse Moura's approach and its significance in journalism practice.

## 1. Unearthing the plights of Others

Moura is driven by a spontaneous, natural, sometimes incomprehensible impulse to observe human beings in extreme situations and build on chaos the narratives that reveal something of the human condition in a more universal sense[2] . The "human interest story as a social parable" (Kerrane, 1997, p. 17) is the keystone of *Passaporte para o Céu*. Like other literary journalists, Moura resorts to thorough research of dossiers with numbers and statistics, close observation, and interview techniques. The author tells the true, (un)successful stories of millions of African migrants fleeing poverty and persecution in search of a safer, better life in heavenly Europe, as testimonied by interviewees *Benjamin* and *Jennifer* respectively: "You Christians believe in Heaven, right? Well for me, Heaven is Europe" (Moura, 2006, p. 135), and "In Europe, after this disease is over, I will study" (Moura, 2006, p. 94). In literary journalism, "the principal sources are typically interviewees, including participants in or witnesses to the events which constitute the central narrative" (Mitchell, 2014, p. 3). Vargas (2018, p. 734) confirms that in the interview method, "the participant observer enters the reality of his research subject through empathy".

*Passaporte para o Céu* is literary journalism that shapes and reflects "larger social, cultural, and political currents" at a regional, national, and international level, as described by Abrahamson (2011, p. 80) as Moura "opens windows to let the public see beyond stereotypes. In this, by paying attention to the Other" (Soares et al., 2002, p. 268). He becomes the storyteller converting human life as the raw material of experience (Benjamin, 1936) or the "storyteller who touches and transforms the ordinary" (Amorim & Baltazar, 2020a, p. 69). The book offers pictures of the *camarades* (by Nacho Doce), and detailed descriptions of everyday happenings that question readers' cultural assumptions (Hartsock, 2016, p. 22). In the preface to *Passaporte para o Céu* (Moura, 2006, p. 13), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, defines Moura's narrative as eloquent and persuasive in dealing with issues about the movement of populations and presenting the intolerance and difficulty to identify the real asylum seekers in "the trafficking of utopias" (Moura, 2006, p. 119). *Father Pateras*, another interviewee, believes these migrants have paid the mafias a lot of money and "are not the

[2] Carla Martins. Interview to Paulo Moura 'Literary Journalism'. In *Jornalismo e Jornalistas*, No. 52, Oct/Dec. 2012, pp. 26–32. Entrevista_a_Paulo_Moura_O_jornalismo_li.pdf.

poor Africans. Those never leave Africa" (Moura, 2006, p. 56). *Mohammed*, a migrants' handler, observes: "They have to go to Europe. Or rather: they think they have to go to Europe. It's all in their imagination. They are idiots, they don't know what they are doing. They won't get rich. (…) It's all in their imagination" (Moura, 2006, p. 118).

In the words of Bak (2011, p. 1), literary journalism is a significant form of writing that "often raises our sociopolitical awareness about a disenfranchised or underprivileged people". These migrants qualify as subjects of discrimination (Giddens, 1997) in that access to opportunities in their countries/places of origin is denied. *The Master* explains: "I ran away because I had big problems in Nigeria. I come from an oil region, very rich, but where the people, my brothers, live in poverty. There is no food or drinking water" (Moura, 2006, p. 102). He further clarifies the contrast:

> I have been to many African countries. Some are rich, others poor, but misery is the same. Only those connected to the Government enjoy the riches. Others don't have a chance (…) It is a suffering that Europeans will never be able to understand. For all these people, Europe is a land of opportunity. There's freedom, jobs, a good life (Moura, 2006, pp. 104–105).

Cook and Butz (2019, p. 4) refer that circulation, the ability to move, or not, is a "fundamental social organizing principle" which is socially advantageous. It generates valuable social resources that are unevenly accessed by, or have different effects for, certain groups, thus reproducing new opportunities or inequalities. In the case of these African migrants, social inequalities are (re)produced. Kramer refers: "Unlike conventional reporters, (Moura) was able to draw this unbelievable portrait from neglected materials, due to his sophisticated adoption of the best methods in a new form news coverage called narrative journalism" (Moura, 2006, p. 18). Sims (2007, p. 309) believes literary journalists "take their chances by crossing the uncomfortable cultural boundaries between social groups". Moura immerses to be there, to experiment, feel, and live the circumstances as truthfully as possible. He engages in "first-person accounts of life" (Hartsock, 2011, p. 40), and exposes his subjectivity:

> I spent days with the sub-Saharan immigrants, in the stealthy hostels of Tangier, slept in the village of Rah Rah, in the Forest of Missnana, visited the forest of Ben Yunes, on the border of Ceuta. I attended Sunday Mass in a clearing in Missnana, listened to those who became sick or injured, those who were robbed or deported ten times and returned on foot. I interviewed the evangelical pastors, the African leaders and the Moroccans. I followed the Nigerian women sentenced to prostitution for their contracts with the mafia to the Estrada de Marbella in Andalusia and to the Intendente Square in Lisbon. For me, my news and

> statistics' folder has become the story of the "camarades". The story I cannot finish (Moura, 2006, p. 27).

At the whim of the police and the mafias' tolerance, this is a life-threatening experience:

> Days later, in fact, I would be followed for an entire afternoon by a luxurious Audi with Belgian license plate. And then by a Moroccan on the street, and then interrogated by the police (…) A strange element like a journalist on the loose, asking questions and casting suspicions, can trigger a war (Moura, 2006, p. 114).

For Ted Conover (2018b, p. 170) immersion reporting takes place when: "The journalist asks: Is there conflict, is there challenge? (…) are there links to larger issues? Is there a way for me to meaningfully participate in that world?". Moura confesses: "Emotionally, what affects me the most are the stories of people who get to a point where there is no way out, their lives no longer make sense. That is what is most shocking, and also what interests me"(Martins, 2012, p.28). The author states that he looks for the human side: "I am interested in observing human beings. There is this dimension of observing life, observing behaviour in what is the construction of a narrative", and is keen to: "tell the stories of human beings in extreme, rare situations, where some sides of the so-called human nature come to the surface, their best and their worst"( Martins, 2012, p.29). This type of engaged journalism is about exciting "the reader both intellectually and emotionally" (Wolfe, 1973, p. 15). For Soares et al. (2022, p. 261) literary journalists: "are interested in stories that challenge the perceptions of readers; often these are stories that question the social status quo and are both challenging to do and challenging to tell". For the authors, literary journalism is "a journalism of pushing boundaries: those of the journalist, those of the research, those of the topic which the journalist wishes to illuminate and bring to public attention" (Soares et al., 2022, p. 261).

The theoretical basis of this analysis is significantly influenced by the work of narrative theorists such as Walter Benjamin and his ideas on storytelling. Benjamin's concept of the storyteller, who imparts not just facts but the essence of human experience, aligns with Moura's approach of blending journalism with literary techniques to capture the lived realities of migrants. This perspective is crucial for understanding how Moura's immersive reporting provides a deeper, more empathetic portrayal of his subjects. In his essay "The Storyteller," Benjamin (2007, p. 83) articulates a vision of the storyteller as a figure who conveys more than mere facts: "The storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers; he is not a teacher, but a man who tells a story, a tale from the past, and in

doing so, shows his readers something about the present." Benjamin emphasizes that storytelling involves a deep connection between the narrator and the narrative, where the storyteller imparts the essence of human experience. This concept resonates with Moura's method of intertwining journalism with literary techniques to capture the lived realities of African migrants. Moura's work goes beyond traditional reportage by engaging with his subjects on a personal level, thus enriching the narrative with emotional and experiential depth.

Benjamin (2007, p. 91) also highlights the importance of the storyteller's immersion in the subject matter, noting: "The storyteller's gift is to be able to open up the story and make it transparent, enabling his listeners to see beyond the surface and into the underlying reality." Moura's narrative technique involves living among his subjects, experiencing their hardships first hand, and conveying these experiences with a level of authenticity that Benjamin believes is essential to effective storytelling.

The notion of immersion reporting, as discussed by Ted Conover, complements Benjamin's ideas and provides further context for Moura's methodology. Conover (2018a, p. 172) describes immersion reporting as involving the journalist's active participation in the subject matter, stating: "The journalist must become part of the world he is investigating, not just as an observer, but as a participant, to gain a genuine understanding of the circumstances and convey them to the audience." By living among the migrants and sharing their experiences, Moura exemplifies Conover's principles of immersion reporting, allowing readers to gain a more nuanced and empathetic understanding of the migrants' plight.

## 2. I shall write about reality

Isabelle Meuret (2012) believes that there is today an appetite for real, true stories, a "total dedication to collect voices unjustly heard, to bear witness to events we are unaware of, and to share heart-breaking testimonies from both survivors and dreamers" (Meuret, 2019, p. 109). Susana Moreira Marques states in an interview with Alice Trindade and Isabel Nery (2020, p. 157) that nowadays, "non-fiction is pushing more boundaries than fiction" and that Portuguese writers such as Paulo Moura have an interest and a duty to narrate reality. The literary journalist, "informed and animated by the central journalistic commitment to the truth" (Yagoda, 1997, p. 13), is a reporter, an "eyewitness who

acknowledges the primary quality of a phenomenological experience and accepts the responsibility to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves" (Sigg, 2022, p. 70). According to Soares (2021, p. 64), the literary journalist takes on his role as a reporter in his commitment to understanding the real, as truthfully and completely as possible. Trindade (2020, p. 31) states that the true literary journalist immerses in the bare truth to uncover the unknown and "delve beyond the surface of the issues." Moura (2006, p. 25) is committed to the truth: "This is not a fiction book and so every new element had to be considered, confirmed, completed, and included in the text". Amorim and Baltazar (2020a, p. 67) establish "the uniqueness of literary journalism is about being on the ground, careful observation and notetaking, realistic dialogue, the possibility for readers to be inside subjects' minds", which typifies *Passaporte para o Céu*:

> More than the dirty and gloomy streets of Algeciras, the Black prostitutes in miniskirts on the street corners, the North African drug dealers on the esplanades, the bearded and veiled women, silent mysterious characters in parks, sleeping on benches, imperceptible nationality (Moura, 2006, p. 41).

The first-person narrative, another feature of literary journalism present in Moura's narrative, shortens the distance between writer and reader:

> The city is ugly. In its alleys, passers-by walk in circles and have no face. They look like mutants and everything they do is inexplicable. They are not who they are but what we can imagine. Or what we can't imagine. They live in the limits of the hypothetical, they exchanged the uncertain for the impossible (Moura, 2006, p. 14).

As is akin to a literary journalist, Moura (2006, p. 41) describes sceneries in great detail, resorting to his feelings: "the scorching and humid, dangerous, impenetrable, mysterious, foreign, bastard streets of Algeciras". His viewpoint is consistently evident: "We are in the cartoon setting of the great human drama. The rich world and the poor world facing each other, separated by the distorting mirror of the Strait of Gibraltar" (Moura, 2006, p. 42). The story of the *camarades* is described as: "unattainable to us, because we cannot make any sense of it. (…) We are too close and too far. (…) We are its sense. The European dream, which has escaped Europe itself" (Moura, 2006, p. 29). Their reality is "unknown because it is endless. It is not a story. The full stop is missing. They came looking for Heaven and found a never-ending story. They found Hell." (Moura, 2006, p. 29). This critical perspective brings us closer to what Herrscher (as cited in Soares, 2017, p. 131) denominates as "theatre of reality", reinforced precisely by the author himself: "I

shall write about reality (…) the reality of this meeting between life and utopia" (Moura, 2006, p. 35). The author testifies to the imagined mobility of these (in)visible *camarades'*, as many never reach the imagined community. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* called attention to the dynamics of socially and culturally organized imagination as processes of political culture and even solidarity. In order to understand social imaginaries, Anderson presented nationalism as a way of imagining and thereby creating community. The nation "is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 2006, p. 9), and adds: "ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings." (Anderson, 2006, p. 7). Moura (2006, p. 35) witnesses the refugees' will to risk their lives and questions their social imaginaries unveiling his subjectivity and critical opinion:

> I try to imagine what a newly arrived North African or sub-Saharan immigrant feels. This is Europe, he will think. And what will he see that is so sublime or divine? (…) This is Heaven, he'll cry, searching avidly among the rubbish on the streets and the remains of his illusion. (…) He will walk over the ruins of his own dream and the city he sees will not be this one. But another, Pure fiction. That is the reality of Algeciras.

Moura's conventional sense of storytelling (Amorim & Baltazar, 2020a, p. 67), is disrupted by the subjects/characters' reluctance to let him finish their story. The *camarades* keep calling him to change the details; they would be deported to the desert, or become mafia, or be arrested, or get robbed, or have children, or become ill, or die: "Stop!, I would shout" (Moura, 2006, p. 25), "I'll hang up the phone, I would think (…)They were not just in my book. They were in my life" (Moura, 2006, p. 26). For Amorim and Baltazar (2020a, p. 67), "The personality of the literary journalist emerges by the use of subjectivity and partiality in the style of speech". This community or brotherhood of invisible, forgotten *camarades* shadowed by Moura are *Benjamin, Lazarus, Livingstone, Isaías, Emmanuel, Juliete, Aimee, Elly, Magdalene, Charity, Mohamed, o Mestre (the Master), o Americano (the American), Father Pateras, Asmaa and Siham, and the babies: Success, Destiny, Lucky, Biggy, Blessing, Emmanuel, Josef.*: "men and women, thrown into the African immensity. their destination on hold and their return barred (…) lucky nomads in a desert of reason" (Moura, 2006, p. 46). Moura develops empathy towards these migrants, pregnant women, prostitutes, human

traffickers, drug dealers, addicts, and priests: “I too could not let them leave and brought them handcuffed to my mind”, an instance Isabel Soares (2018) would name narrative journalism, from the perspective of its tone, and journalism with a literary flair, from the perspective of its style. In sum, a journalism of embellished writing: “No! No! No! shouted the Moroccan, wrenched out of his steel dream by the police, handcuffed and crying” (Moura, 2006, p. 40).

## 3. Looking at refugees in a (in)different way

The fate of the African-filled zodiacs reaching the Southern European coasts has lessened in the media spotlight. *Passaporte para o Céu* is an effort “to inform the world accurately and honestly about the magical in the mundane, the great in the small, and above all, the us in the them” (Bak, 2011, p. 2), to raise social awareness, and write a lasting reportage about Africans ‘European Dream. *The Master* explains:

> I’ve been to many African countries. Some rich, some poor, but the misery is the same everywhere. Only those connected to the Government enjoy the riches. The rest don’t stand a chance. I have a degree in Marketing but I’ve never worked in Nigeria, my family doesn't belong to the elite. This suffering the Europeans will never understand. For all these people, Europe is a land of opportunity. There's freedom, jobs, a good life (Moura, 2006, p. 105).

Kramer writes: “And because they are foreigners at a time when international news coverage is declining, and poor at a time when it is the rich who fascinate us, and because their terrible dilemma has become routine, in a news-hungry press, not much has been said about them- until Moura took an interest” (as cited in Moura, 2006, p. 17). Concerned with social justice and paying respect to ordinary people with extraordinary lives (Sims, 1995, p. 3), the literary journalist immerses and gains the trust of those involved so that their behaviour is natural (Sims, 1984), and so out sidedness is curtailed (Soares et al., 2022, p. 274). This is testified by Moura (2006, p. 134): “Once initial distrust is broken, everyone wants to talk, tell their story. They show injuries, illnesses, torn clothes, and shoes.” This insider perspective reveals real people broken by organized crime networks, persecution, prostitution, drugs, and human trafficking: “Charity with her two passport babies, and Edith so ugly that no mafia wants to exploit her, eight months pregnant, begging in the streets to pay the rent for the most sordid boarding house in Tangier (…) Dirty, alienated, in transit to Heaven” (Moura, 2006, p. 86). The illegal

migrants are business merchandise vulnerable to blackmail and exploited by politicians, policemen, judges, informants, recruiters, intermediaries, transporters, and collaborators, who "live off the poorest, those who have nothing" (Moura, 2006, p. 91), or better put: "They only have the strength of their mistake. This is where the much-desired wealth comes from. The future is priceless and hope is an immense capital. This is the treasure, the most prodigious human treasure." (Moura, 2006, p. 91). The reader is led to educate, to sharpen his (in)different look at the millions who live like animals: "They are thousands at the mercy. They are an unlimited reserve of victims, of the undisclosable, the arbitrary, the unpunished, the obscene" (Moura, 2006, p. 135). Moura just listens. *Jonathan* wonders: "Does the world know we are here? (…) Is there anyone living in bushes in Europe? Does the world know we are starving? (...) that we are objects of hunting and killing?". *Solomon* states: "People in the rich world have no idea what it's like to live in Africa. They don't understand, we have no alternative but to escape" (as cited in Moura, 2006, p. 134). *Benjamin* pleads: "please take me with you, hidden, anyhow, take me (…) I know if I reach Europe I'll have everything" (Moura, 2006, pp. 134–135).

On their way to Europe, Africans endure "a long Purgatory secretly disputing Heaven. And in an unfair competition with Hell" (Moura, 2006, p. 46) in "a station in Hell (…) a remote place where you could live without documents, money, or anything which identifies you as a creature of the human race" (Moura, 2006, p. 47). The *camarades* are described as starving zombies, a cloud of grasshoppers, dumped in no man's land:

> a community, a country. A world within the world, a time within time. They coincide but do not touch. They cover the territory, they walk, they fly, they are masters in Geography, they are everywhere, they exchange codes and tasks like ants (Moura, 2006, p. 153).

*Michael* is very ill, he has been hiding and waiting for two years. *Jonathan*, *Lazarus*, *Benjamin*, and some three thousand other illegal sub-Saharans survive, trapped in bushes. They are the helpless, easy prey of Missnana "where death is a light sleeper" (Moura, 2006, p. 144). *Solomon*, twenty-three, has been in Missnana for a year looking at Europe, a few dozen kilometers away; "Everyday life is filled with survival. But he doesn't intend to give up" (Moura, 2006, p. 134). Pregnancies and marriages are scams, and 'bosses' tell women to get pregnant. Mothers who deliver in Spain get a passport and life insurance, as confirmed by *Edith*: "When I have the baby and, because of him, no one will deport me" (Moura, 2006, p. 199). Once in Europe, passport babies are abandoned to the care of

others or given up for adoption. Trafficking migrants is a profitable business in Morocco and Nigeria:

> The camarades are not always aware that they are manipulated for the benefit of the mafias, like puppets. It is not always clear to them that when they suffer and fight, when they dream, love, have children, all of this has an added value and a purpose in the great business where they are the raw material. These are all steps of an abominable assembly line (Moura, 2006, p. 98).

Algeciras is "a colony of outcasts. A port for lost lives, a place you reach when you think you've lost everything, and not when you think you have everything to gain" (Moura, 2006, p. 35). Moura meets and mingles with hiding *camarades*, Spanish and African guards, mothers and pregnant women, prostitutes, addicts and dealers, evangelical priests, and many others in woods, bushes, cafés, cars, hotels, hostels, and squares. African migrants are determined dream chasers who, like Juja, believe this is their destiny: "I'm going to get to Europe, and they know I'm arriving" (Moura, 2006, p. 154). For *Benjamin*, Europe has become an obsession. *Livingstone* states: "We dream of being European but we never will be. But we don't feel good as Africans either. What does it mean to be an African? I don't know. No one knows" (Moura, 2006, p. 158). He adds: "It doesn't matter if we're in Europe or Africa. We are nowhere. Even if we can win, we will always be defeated. We are who we are and we are no one. It's as if we all arrived dead in Spain" (Moura, 2006, p. 159). And Moura (2006, p. 161) adds: "For Livingstone to emigrate is also to escape to a no-haven, to escape yourself". If lucky, they survive the endless, miserable wait, in the woods, where hopeful yet desperate, they remain for days, months, years. If lucky, once in Europe, men survive on menial jobs in construction or seasonal agriculture, the majority being sold to traffickers and slavery. If lucky, women fulfill their work i.e. prostitution contracts, for human traffickers in Lisbon: "Juliete, Aimee, Rita, have no papers, no identity, each one in their hole, away from the rain and the ágora impure, like embedded and blasphemous idols, in the holes, they only leave to provoke passers-by" (Moura, 2006, p. 66). *Aimee* contends: "it's only my body. I don't give my soul" (Moura, 2006, p. 71). Most of the migrants cannot swim, yet the crossing in overloaded zodiacs is done hands-tied or in chains, thus frequently deadly. *Charity* expresses hope in a different future: "When I get to Europe, these babies will be citizens of that Europe. They will be educated, they will be peaceful, they will not be like us. In our country, there are wars between Muslims and Christians, there is hunger and death,

there is suffering. These babies will not behave like Nigerians. These babies won't be like us" (Moura, 2006, p. 199).

## News that lasts

According to McDonald (2022, p. 226), Moura tells real stories behind enforced mobility or immobility, which are "at the heart of some of the world's most pressing issues and greatest instances of social injusti\ce". Moura's courage and solidarity to carry out his mission as a denouncer of injustices allocates his book *Passaporte para o Céu* a place on the shelves of literary journalism. The author's drive to immerse, shadow, observe, interview, and empathize with the Other, relegated and forgotten, makes him a practitioner of a genre that "intersects with social justice" (Soares et al., 2022, p. 259) and "often raises our sociopolitical awareness about the disenfranchised or underprivileged people" (Bak, 2011, p. 1). A non-fiction narrative that gives voice and visibility to imagined mobilities in the quest for imagined communities. The analysis carried out reveals it as a testimony to the power of literary journalism in shedding light on the plight of marginalized communities. Moura's storytelling transcends the traditional boundaries of journalism to become a true advocate for social justice. His work denounces the struggles of the disenfranchised and serves as a catalyst for raising sociopolitical awareness. As scholars such as Soares et al. and Bak noted, Moura's narrative journalism intersects with the pursuit of social justice, providing a platform for the stories of those whose voices are often silenced. *Passaporte para o Céu* is more than just a book; it is a lasting proof of the resilience of the human spirit and the enduring quest for belonging. As Kerrane aptly observes, it is 'news that lasts' (Kerrane, 1997, p. 20), immortalizing the stories of the invisible *camarades* whose struggle for a place knows no end. Through its pages, readers are reminded that the stories depicted are not merely confined to the realm of literature but are tangible realities that persist long after the final page is turned. In this way, Moura's work serves as a mirror reflecting our world's harsh realities and a beacon of hope for a more just and equitable future. As we grapple with the complexities of global migration and social inequality, *Passaporte para o Céu* serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative potential of storytelling in pursuing a more compassionate and inclusive society. Readers and author know this story has no ending or full stop. This is real life and real people whose plight lingers. Distressful yet fascinating to the end.

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