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A Sonic Biography of an Afterlife: The Expelled Liberation Leader Uria Simango in Mozambican Rap

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This article focuses on two interlinked trends in public memory in Mozambique: the rise of alternative heroes and parallel invocations of seemingly incompatible heroes, particularly as they relate to invocations of Frelimo's ousted Vice President, Uria Simango, in Mozambican rap. The empirical material was produced by listening to rap music, attending shows, and through interviews and conversations with hip hop musicians in Beira, Chimoio and Maputo. This material is examined in relation to historical documents and situated alongside other types of public and private remembering. I argue that critical rap music allows insightful examinations of the links between young peoples' perspectives on liberation history, present experiences and visions of the future. Rap performances also help to examine how the hegemony of official memory is weakening in Mozambique. These performances are a potentially generative source of alternative history; because they are deeply intertwined in public discussions as well as social activism, I argue that they potentially disrupt and transcend state-sanctioned historiographical frameworks. Taking an ambiguous stance towards historical figures, rap also differs from the opposition meta-narrative, which tends to simply reverse the official canon of heroes and traitors. I find that rappers use a variety of techniques to intervene in disputes around history in creative ways. Regional variations in performed histories draw upon both the local and global wisdoms of hip hop communities, improving their accessibility to the public.

Keywords: memory; rap; politics; Mozambique; Uria Simango; dissidence

Introduction

The first edition of the annual hip hop festival, Punhos no Ar (Fists in the Air), held in Mozambique's capital Maputo in 2016 was exceptional in that it included performers from several provinces. Having done extensive field research in Maputo on how rap reflects and shapes public political memory, I was astonished to hear rapper Duplo V perform 'Sagrada Munhava' (Sacred Munhava) about the disadvantaged urban district Munhava in Beira. He paid tribute to President Samora Machel, as many Maputo tracks do, but also to three other controversial historical figures: Uria Simango, André Matsangaissa and Afonso Dhlakama. All three participated in the armed liberation struggle in Mozambique between 1964 and

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1974 but were, for different reasons and at different times, expelled from the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo) and labelled as reactionaries, traitors of the people and instruments of colonialism. These now deceased men are represented in 'Sagrada Munhava' in a manner contrary to the dominant national narrative, in relation to the celebrated resistance against 'national tyranny', which refers to Frelimo's monopoly of political power since independence. The performance resonated with the findings of earlier research concerning urban popular memory in the capital of Sofala province, Beira, which has been less shaped by Frelimo's hegemony than Maputo.[1]

Despite the invocation of these controversial figures, the audience remained attentive and quiet, with the exception of one man who loudly claimed to be from Munhava, verbally interrupted the performance and then walked away theatrically. In southern Mozambique, in both official and to a certain extent also popular remembering, figures like Frelimo's ousted Vice President Simango and Renamo[2] guerrilla commanders Dhlakama and Matsangaissa are conventionally treated either as traitors of the Mozambican people or are simply 'forgotten' together with other unpalatable pages of history such as re-education camps and the killing of dissidents.[3] In their place, as in Maputo rap too, other liberation fighters such as Machel, Frelimo's military commander since 1966 and the first president of independent Mozambique, are remembered and honoured.[4] A great number of negative personal and family memories of Machel's time complicate the wider picture. In moments and spaces such as this festival the dominant narrative and its established heroes can be publicly contested.

This article's empirical material draws on rap tracks that invoke alternative heroes, focusing on Uria Simango, whose heroism and revolutionary legacy are strongly rejected in dominant Frelimo remembering. In an earlier article I analysed a dozen Mozambican rap tracks out of the hundreds that invoke Machel.[5] Rap tracks that pay tribute to Simango are currently far less numerous, but no less significant as a signal of an interesting trend that is also visible in other types of public remembering. I have included all nine tracks I found in 2019 which explicitly refer to Simango (Table 1). I identified these tracks through listening to and engagement with Mozambican rap while living in Maputo for over a decade, and frequent field trips to Beira and Chimoio since 2018. By including these cities with seemingly different political memory I pay special attention to central Mozambique, which has received less scholarly attention. I concentrate on public remembering in these three provincial capitals rather than the surrounding provinces.

My starting point is that death and what follows can profoundly change the political and symbolic significance of a public figure. I refer to these figures, participants in the liberation struggle and political figures, as 'political ancestors'. My aim in this article is twofold. First, I examine how these historical figures, who have gained new layers of political significance in their afterlives, are invoked in Mozambican rap to make various contested claims about history, to comment on present-day society and envisage alternative futures. Second, by developing my original concept of political ancestors to further nuance understandings of these invocations, I ask in what complicated ways are people's relationships with dead heroes conceptualised.[6]

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1 V. Igreja, 'Politics of Memory, Decentralisation and Recentralisation in Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39, 2 (2013), pp. 313–35; C. Darch and D. Hedges, 'Political Rhetoric in the Transition to Mozambican Independence: Samora Machel in Beira, June 1975', *Kronos*, 39, 1 (2013), pp. 32–65..

2 Resistência Nacional de Moçambique (Mozambique's National Resistance).

3 An important example of this vilification is the textbook, J. de Negrão, L. Palma Ramos, N. Hofisso, and L. Sitói, *A História da Minha Pátria: Historia 5ª Classe* (Maputo, INDE – Editora Escolar, 1991 [1986]); for an example of critical analyses, see E. Cahen, 'Unicidade, Unidade ou pluralismo do Estado?', in J. Magode (ed.), *Moçambique. Etnicidades, Nacionalismo e o Estado. Trancição Inacabada* (Maputo, Centro de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais, 1996), pp. 18–39.

4 J. Rantala, '"Hidrunisa Samora": Invocations of a Dead Political Leader in Maputo Rap', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 42, 6 (2016), pp. 1161–77.

5 *Ibid*.

6 *Ibid*.

Table 1. Discography of analysed rap tracks in order of appearance

Track title (no.)	Details	Other political detainees	Matsangaíssa	Dhlakama	Machel	Other dead heroes	Dead villains	Not personated heroes/ victims/ martyrs
Sagrada Munhava (6)	Duplo V (produced by Mr Get), 2015.		√	√	√	Mondlane	Pieter Botha, Ian Smith	Inhabitants of Munhava and other poor neighbourhoods
Apenas liberdade de expressão (1)	Inspector Desusado, featuring W-Joker (produced by El Capo), 2019.		√	√	√	José Craveirinha, Carlos Cardoso, Sebastião Mabote		
Tempo que passou (2)	Y-Not (produced by Drifa), from the double album *As Últimas Palavras* (Last Words), Zalde Records, 2010.	Joana Simião, Sebastião Sibinde			√			Workers of the CFM, Jehovah's Witnesses[a]
Superhéro (3)	Inspector Desusado featuring Ray Breyka (produced by Proofless), forthcoming.		√		√	Mondlane, Cardoso, Nelson Mandela, Muammar Gaddafi, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Mabote, Adelino Nguambe	Salazar, Mugabe, Batista	
Homem bomba	Azagaia featuring Macross Maguguana and Miguel Cherba (produced by Milton Gulli), from the album *Cubaliwa* (Birth), Kongolote Records, 2013.		√		√	Mondlane		Citizens who revolted, poor parents, victims of corruption and police repression, street kids
A Narrativa	André Cardoso (produced by Ice Rapper), 2018.	Lazaro Nkavandame, Joana Simião	√	√	√	Cardoso, Cistac		Victims of Mueda massacre
Dia dos Heróis Moçambicanos	Batalhão da Inteligência, (produced by Djano), from the album *A Luta de Libertação Nacional* (National Struggle of Liberation), 2018.				√	Mondlane, Josina Machel, Dias Alfandega Santos, Abasse Mussa		Workers and peasants, heroes of the nation, former combatants, children, women
Apocalipse 13 (4)	Tuz MC (produced by Kds), 2019.			√		Artur Canana		Abused young women
Um Cobarde vivo, um herói morto (5)	Y-Not, featuring 4 Ases, Azagaia and Stupa Serious (produced by Fechadura), in *As Últimas Palavras*, 2010.	'Heroes in the camps'	√		√	Mondlane, Mandela, Jesus	Judas, Mugabe, Dos Santos	'simangos'

Notes: Underlined check marks in columns 3 to 5 refer to ambiguity of invocation.
[a]CFM refers to *Caminhos Ferroviários de Moçambique*, the public railway company.

This article consists of three sections. First, I will briefly discuss my central theoretical concepts: political ancestors, public memory and remembering. I will also reflect on how multi-layered listening to rap and examination of other subaltern and overlooked materials assist in interrogating questions of public remembering. Second, I will offer a brief overview of Frelimo's internal conflict in the late 1960s and the subsequent remembering and silencing of Simango, its most high-profile victim. Third, focusing on rap tracks which invoke Simango and other alternative heroes, I analyse alternative popular remembering in the most recent decade of the conflict's long aftermath. In concluding, I will situate rappers' invocations to Mozambique's contemporary political scenario in the context of southern African popular remembering.

Political Memory and Ancestors

There have been numerous studies on dead heroes and public memory in southern Africa, where governments often promote, evoke and convey selected liberation struggle memories and silence others in state-sanctioned memorial practices and sites.[7] Official ceremonies, memorials, monuments and heroes' acres pay tribute to selected liberation heroes and serve to legitimise the current politics and politicians of dominant parties, who claim to represent the legacy of liberation struggles. These public ceremonies do not include tributes to officially condemned figures such as Simango. Popular memory, on the other hand, is often examined in relation to its ethnic and local character in rural environments, in contrast to official national memory imposed from the capital.[8] My contribution to discussions on public memory is to focus on less-studied figures, and often ambiguous and fragmented urban forms of popular remembering through field-based research on Mozambican rap tracks, lyrics and performances that invoke political ancestors.[9] I do this by cross-examining primary material with academic literature, historical documents and written and oral counter-memories. The ambiguity of these materials makes Mozambican rap music a rich source for questioning contemporary remembering, particularly as old Cold War 'Manichaeanisms' are losing currency within the contemporary public realm.[10] Furthermore, the political ancestors invoked in these tracks reveal generational and regional variations in memory, sometimes in surprising combinations.

I use 'public memory' not only for state-imposed narratives constructed through official national remembering. Public memory is any memory shared through acts of public

7 R. Werbner, 'Smoke from the Barrel of a Gun: Postwars of the Dead, Memory and Reinscription in Zimbabwe', in R. Werbner (ed.), *Memory and the Postcolony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power* (London, Zed Books, 1998), pp. 72–3; N. Kriger, 'The Politics of Creating National Heroes: The Search for Political Legitimacy and National Identity', in N. Bhebe and T. Ranger (eds), *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (London, James Currey, 1995), pp. 139–62; R. Kössler, 'Public Memory, Reconciliation and the Aftermath of War: A Preliminary Framework with Special Reference to Namibia', in H. Melber (ed.), *Re-Examining Liberation in Namibia: Political Culture Since Independence* (Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2003), pp. 99–112.

8 R. Kössler, 'Facing a Fragmented Past: Memory, Culture and Politics in Namibia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 33, 2 (2007), pp. 361–82; H. Melber, 'Namibia's Past in the Present: Colonial Genocide and Liberation Struggle in Commemorative Narratives', *South African Historical Journal*, 54, 1 (2005), pp. 91–111. Rare exceptions work against this dichotomy; see P. Israel, 'The Formulaic Revolution: Song and the "Popular Memory" of the Mozambican Liberation Struggle', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, 197, 1 (2010), pp. 181–216.

9 Earlier studies on urban memory include B. Bertelsen, 'Effervescence and Ephemerality. Popular Urban Uprisings in Mozambique', *Ethnos*, 81, 1 (2015), pp. 25–52; N. Brandt, '"Practices of Self": Embodied Memory Work, Performance Art, and Intersectional Activism in Namibia', *Memory Studies*, 16, 3 (2023), pp. 533–45; Igreja, 'Politics of Memory'; A. Pitcher, 'Forgetting from Above and Memory from Below: Strategies of Legitimation and Struggle in Postsocialist Mozambique', *Africa*, 76, 1 (2006), pp. 88–112.

10 H. Bhabha, 'Foreword: Framing Fanon', in F. Fanon (ed.), *Wretched of the Earth* (New York, Grove Press, 2004), p. xiv.

remembering – official as well as popular – in public locations, through different mediums. Consequently, public memory is always a contested terrain.[11] It is a fragmented, disputed and negotiated terrain, with some fluidity. It is not a level playing field and different groups rely on diverse resources to shape it. One way in which this is manifested is through the mobilisation of dead anti-colonial heroes whom I theorise as political ancestors: deceased, often controversial figures, who gain a new political role posthumously and whose significance becomes indispensable for contemporary disputes over history.[12] Through their calls for justice and vengeance these wronged political ancestors are traces of the past that guide contemporary listeners towards particular futures. This concept has gained traction among researchers of the region[13] as it resonates better with the spiritual and social realms and realities of southern Africa than more corporeal metaphors like Katherine Verdery's notion of 'the political lives of dead bodies' of post-socialist Europe.[14]

At least two qualities of principal political ancestors are addressed here. They all participated in violent internal conflicts during or after the genesis of Mozambican nationhood and the liberation struggle, followed by formal Marxist-Leninist rule and its authoritarian memory politics. Second, local spiritual ideas about the involvement of the dead in the lives of the living and the ambiguous nature of these spirits as both protectors and avengers can further empower their legacy. In this sense, the political ancestor is an analytical concept which has emic resonance to the dead person's ambiguous social significance in the region.

Facts, Rumours and Songs

The dominant historical narrative in Mozambique, which Track 1 disputes (see Figure 1), is often described as the 'liberation script',[15] following the concept put forward by João-Paulo Borges Coelho. The liberation script, or 'fable',[16] follows a teleological, victorious tune, an anti-imperialist attitude and rhetoric, using a positivist rhetorical style while claiming to focus on seemingly undeniable historical facts.[17] Such official practices of remembering history do vary through time and should not be confused with other meanings of the word 'history' as an academic discipline or critical historiography, even if nationalist historiography and its epistemological apparatus might, at times, have contributed to and legitimised Frelimo's self-justifying narrative.[18]

Emphasising narrowly understood historical facts tends to benefit dominant groups. Graça Machel (the first First Lady of independent Mozambique and former Minister

11 Kössler, 'Facing a Fragmented Past'.
12 Rantala, '"Hidrunisa Samora"'.
13 M. A. Guissemo, 'Hip Hop Activism: Dynamic Tension Between Global and Local in Mozambique', *Journal of World Popular Music*, 5, 1 (2018), pp. 50–70; S. Longford, 'The Un/timely Death(s) of Chris Hani: Discipline, Spectrality, and the Haunting Possibility of Return' (PhD thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2021); V. Martins, '"A nossa lâmpada não se apaga": The Mnemonic Return of Angola's Jonas Savimbi', *African Studies Review*, 64, 1 (2021), pp. 242–65; J. Pearce, 'Simango, Gwenjere and the Politics of the Past in Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 47, 3 (2021), pp. 387–404.
14 K. Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1999).
15 J. P. Borges Coelho, 'Politics and Contemporary History in Mozambique: A Set of Epistemological Notes', *Kronos*, 39, 1 (2013), pp. 10–19; see also the special issue: R. Assubuji, P. Israel, and D. Thompson (eds), 'Liberation Script in Mozambique History', *Kronos*, 39, 1 (2013).
16 J. P. Borges Coelho, 'Abrir a Fábula: Questões da Política do Passado em Moçambique', *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 106 (2015), pp. 153–66.
17 An example of recent contestation of these is the alleged 'first shot' in E. Mondlane, *The Struggle for Mozambique* (London, Zed Press, 1983), pp. 13–4; P. Israel, 'A Loosening Grip: The Liberation Script in Mozambican History', *Kronos*, 39, 1 (2013), p. 10.
18 See Y. Adam, 'Trick or Treat: The Relationship Between Destabilisation, Aid and Government Development Policies in Mozambique 1975–1990' (PhD thesis, Roskilde University, 1996).

Track 1. 'Apenas a Liberdade de Espressão' (Only about Freedom of Expression) by Inspector Desusado, featuring W-Joker		
1	Assassinaram Mondlane quando arquitectava a unidade nacional	They assassinated Mondlane when he was designing national unity
2	E emboscaram Samora Machel, na conquista da independência completa e total	And they ambushed Samora Machel, in his journey towards a full and total independence
3	Uria Simango, chamaram-lhe de traidor, em pleno a luz dia o assassinaram e Mabote pelo poder o afogaram	Uria Simango, they called him a traitor and assassinated him during daylight and they drowned Mabote for the sake of power

Figure 1. Selected lines from Inspector Desusado's 'Apenas a Liberdade de Espressão' in the original Portuguese, with English translation.

of Education), for instance, in a conference keynote lecture[19] strongly condemned Mozambicans who question 'unquestionable historical facts', such as the official founding date of Frelimo, or 'undeniable propositions' such as 'Frelimo liberated the country, not Coremo'.[20] Similarly, amid the official oblivion of all except the armed fronts of the struggle, the battle for Simango's legacy is also a struggle between 'forgetting from above and remembering from below'.[21] However, as we will see, various types of forgetting, silencing, remembering and invoking of political ancestors are used by all sides in disputes around history, orienting participants toward specific ideas about the future.

Privileged narrators of the liberation history such as Graça Machel have their reasons for their obsession with the established facts, and hostility towards rumour, gossip and accusations concerning both events during the liberation struggle as well as responsibility for more recent political violence. These high-ranking former combatants still control access to valorised oral and written sources that claim to be witnesses of important historical events. In places like Mozambique, where access to the historical record is limited for most people, imagination can play an important role in history debates.[22] Despite its use by the secret services at times, rumour has also been shown to be a way that the 'common people' articulate their fears, aspirations and social insights in southern African liberation memory.[23] For certain issues these undervalued memory genres can be even more reliable sources than, for example, autobiographical accounts, which are often confined by the narrator's own interests. As Luise White has argued, gossip can be a useful means for interrogating these interests, while rumour can reveal the 'intellectual world of fears and fantasies, ideas and claims, that have not been studied before'.[24]

Similarly, studies of African praise poetry and song, which also include subaltern forms of remembering, have shown that songs that weave together different types of accounts and

19 G. Machel, 'O Legado da História da Luta de Libertação na Construção da Nação: Desafios de Pesquisa da História da Luta de Libertação Nacional na Actualidade' (Maputo, Centro de Pesquisa da História da Luta de Libertação Nacional, 2015).

20 The *Comité Revolucionário de Moçambique* (Mozambique Revolutionary Committee) was another liberation front, undertaking military activities in Mozambique with military and economic support from China and Zambia. Simango joined Coremo in 1971 after his expulsion from Frelimo.

21 Pitcher, 'Forgetting from Above'.

22 Borges Coelho, 'Abrir a Fábula'.

23 L. White, *Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Text and Politics in Zimbabwe* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2003).

24 L. White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000), pp. 81–6.

fragments can reveal both intimate and commonly shared dreams and nightmares, as well as long continuities of unresolved social tensions.[25] Public memory can also be studied through these largely non-textual research materials. Citing living or dead freedom fighters is also a global hip hop trope used, for instance, in the joint track 'Presidentes Mortos' (2016),[26] Prophets of da City's 'Neva Again' (1995)[27] and Stetsasonic's 'A.F.R.I.C.A.' (1986).[28] Invocations of liberation fighters are a widely recognised theme in hip hop studies, but mostly taken for granted and rarely interrogated.[29]

Despite disadvantages *vis-à-vis* mainstream broadcasting, making and listening to critical rap music has become an important way for young Africans to express opinions, comment on current issues and history, envisage futures, share information and feel empowered through reflection upon these themes.[30] Though rap music and hip hop culture are particularly popular among young men, growing interest can be seen among women who frequent hip hop events in Mozambican cities. Hip hop's sound and influence can be observed from public transportation to night clubs, *barracas* (shack bars) and private spaces. The 'hip hop generation'[31] in Africa includes a range of ages, from teenagers to citizens already in their forties. In many African countries the political elite is traditionally drawn from older generations.[32] This corresponds to the elevated age of cabinet ministers in Mozambique as well as members of Frelimo's committees.

In Mozambique, rap has taken root in a society with a long history of poetic protest relying on regional principles of 'poetic license'.[33] For example, when musician Simeão Mazuze[34] was released after three years of imprisonment, he recorded a sarcastic song about the Bilibiza re-education camp and two songs protesting the ongoing war, mixing rock'n'roll sounds with local *marrabenta* and *xigubo* rhythms.[35] There are some globally shared generic patterns particular to rap music, even if some originated in earlier genres. Among them are a characteristic vocal technique, rapping rather than singing, and sampling: composing instrumentals by putting together previously recorded sounds in novel ways. The attitude of many practitioners linked to hip hop culture's so-called fifth element, referring to socially

25 L. Vail and L. White, *Power and the Praise Poem: Southern African Voices in History* (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1991); K. Barber, *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics: Oral and Written Culture in Africa and Beyond* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 74–136.

26 Presságio featuring Flash Enccy and Azagaia.

27 Q. Williams, A. Haupt, H. Alim, and E. Jansen, *Neva Again: Hip Hop Art, Activism and Education in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2019).

28 See Rantala, '"Hidrunisa Samora"', p. 1167.

29 M. Barros and R. Lima, 'RAP KRIOL(U): O Pan-africanismo de Cabral na Música de Intervenção Juvenil na Guiné-Bissau e em Cabo-Verde', *Realis – Revista de Estudos Anti-Utilitaristas e Pos Coloniais*, 2, 2 (2012), pp. 89–117; G. Baker, '¡Hip Hop, Revolución! Nationalizing Rap in Cuba', *Ethnomusicology*, 49, 3 (2005), pp. 368–402; J. Prestholdt, 'The Afterlives of 2Pac: Imagery and Alienation in Sierra Leone and Beyond', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 21, 2 (2009), pp. 197–218; Guissemo, 'Hip Hop Activism'; M. K. Clark, *Hip-Hop in Africa: Prophets of the City and Dustyfoot Philosophers* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2018).

30 Eminent rappers I interviewed in Maputo between 2013–2016 were born between 1975–1985, and a group with a slightly younger profile was found in Beira and Chimoio in 2018 when I started my fieldwork in these cities.

31 J. Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York, Picador, 2005).

32 A. Honwana, *O Tempo da Juventude: Emprego, Política e Mudanças Sociais em África* (Maputo, Kapikua, 2013); J. Middleton, *Lugbara Religion: Ritual and Authority among an East African People* (London, Oxford University Press, 1960).

33 On this widely recognised and long-standing – if often threatened – regional practice of freedom of expression, which even allows criticism breaking conventional norms as long as it is addressed through poetic form; see Vail and White, *Power and the Praise Poem*, p. 43.

34 Later known as Salimo Mohamed. Interview with musician and re-education camp survivor, Matola, 28 February 2014.

35 S. Mazuze, 'Bilibiza', 'Xantima hi Bohlela', 'Sambrowera Fandango' (Maputo, Rádio Moçambique, 1983).

situated knowledge or 'knowledge of self,'[36] is a clear rupture from earlier, more collective forms of 'music as social intervention'. Because of these particularities, rap tracks often have rich narrative contents. Within hip hop aesthetics, a 'sonic community'[37] results from diverse musical and other sonic elements, the dead heroes' discourses for instance, being put together as equal elements.[38]

I label my interpretation method simply as listening. This contextualised listening is informed by my engagement with Mozambican hip hop communities and the wider society as well as working with various types of research materials. Therefore, this study is not only about hip hop, but an exercise in public political memory and remembering. It travels back and forth in time, at different speeds, from the internal conflicts during the anti-colonial struggle to contemporary legacies of these events and back again. As in the following section, listening as a method can be linked to several types of readings of, for instance, rumours and written historical documents.

Frelimo's Conflict of Power in the Late 1960s

Frelimo's internal conflict and its aftermath cast a long shadow on Mozambican liberation memory, which is reflected in numerous rap tracks. This conflict arose after the assassination of Filipe Samuel Magaia in 1966, intensified before and after the second congress in 1968, and ended violently in May 1970 when Machel was selected as Frelimo's president. It was officially designated as 'the struggle between two lines', according to the Manichaean framings of the official history. The conflict is described as inevitably leading to the just victory of the 'revolutionaries', who have good and progressive qualities, over 'counterrevolutionaries' designated as traditionalists, reactionaries, black racists, tribalists and people who wanted to economically exploit other Mozambicans. This version has been reproduced and defended over the decades with slight variations.[39] Changes have been necessary because Frelimo's ideological twists and turns entailed the organised forgetting of socialism,[40] especially during the 1990s market reforms, and the valorisation of some previously less well-known heroes. This greatly intensified during Armando Guebuza's presidency of 2004–2015.[41] A canon of principal heroes and villains has, however, remained largely intact.

How significant a role ideology played in the succession conflict is unclear. Despite accusations to the opposite, Simango may not have had significant ideological differences to Frelimo's first president, Eduardo Mondlane.[42] Simango was a Presbyterian minister inspired by Latin American liberation theology, who was involved in Mozambican nationalist politics in southern Rhodesia before becoming a

36 J. G. Rollefson, '"Yo Nací Caminando": Community-Engaged Scholarship, Hip Hop as Postcolonial Studies, and Rico Pabón's Knowledge of Self', *Journal of World Popular Music*, 5, 2 (2018), pp 169–92; M. Clark, 'The Struggle for Hip Hop Authenticity and Against Commercialization in Tanzania', *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 6, 3 (2013), pp. 5–21.

37 L. Watkins, 'Rapp'in' the Cape: Style and Memory, Power in Community', in S. Whiteley, A. Bennett, and S. Hawkins (eds), *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004), pp. 124–46.

38 Rantala, '"Hidrunisa Samora"'.

39 A. Bragança and J. Depelchin, 'Da Idealização da Frelimo à Compreensão da História de Moçambique', *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 5/6 (1986), pp. 29–52; Negrão et al., *A História da Minha Pátria*; A. Chipande, *Como Eu Vivo a Minha História* (Maputo, self-published, 2018).

40 Borges Coelho, 'Abrir a Fábula'; Pitcher, 'Forgetting from Above'.

41 A. N. de Souto, 'Memory and Identity in the History of Frelimo: Some Research Themes', *Kronos*, 39, 1 (2013), pp. 280–96.

42 A. van Dokkum, *Nationalism and Territoriality in Barue and Mozambique: Independence, Belonging, Contradiction* (Leiden, Brill, 2020), pp. 92–8; S. Ngoenha. *Mondlane: Regresso ao Futuro* (Maputo, Real Design, 2019), pp. 123–35.

founding member of Frelimo.[43] Like most struggle leaders, he was sympathetic to Marxism and frequently visited socialist countries that supported Frelimo,[44] but he may have preferred a third economic model for a future independent Mozambique instead of pure socialism and capitalism.[45] During the growing militarisation of the liberation struggles, Simango remained loyal to the 'one man, one vote' principle, while his rivals were among those who found a justification for more authoritarian politics in Marxism-Leninism.

In addition to the dominant version of the story, the conflict within Frelimo has had various rival interpretations. The first, which can be described as a regional interpretation, was voiced in 'Gloomy Situation in Frelimo', an open letter written by Simango which arguably was a key factor in his expulsion from Frelimo.[46] In this version, a southern faction allegedly conspired to replace the Frelimo leadership originating in central and northern Mozambique. This southern faction included black Tsonga-speaking cadres with roots in Gaza province and non-native Mozambicans from the capital. This interpretation was common among Frelimo's regular members at the time and may have corresponded with combatants from central and northern Mozambique being unhappy in Frelimo in the late-1960s. More recently, the regional interpretation has been supported in 'counter-memoirs' that wish to rehabilitate Simango's memory[47] and to a certain extent in critical research as well.[48]

Another interpretation of the conflict was that the members of the three-person presidential council (troika) had sympathies for opposite sides in an emergent Sino–Soviet conflict. The Portuguese secret police, the PIDE,[49] seemed to believe that the Secretary for Foreign Relations, Marcelino Dos Santos, and the Head of the Military, Machel, were focusing on securing Soviet support, while Simango wanted stronger alignment with China.[50] The troika was founded to avoid Simango's automatic rise to supreme leadership after the assassination of President Mondlane, as recently confirmed by General Chipande.[51] The formation of the troika eventually led to Simango's marginalisation and consequent expulsion from the Frelimo leadership.

It is unknown what of these interpretations reached the ears of Frelimo's top leadership. However, according to a well-known rumour, Machel himself organised Magaia's death in 1966 to claim both Magaia's then girlfriend, Josina Muthemba, and the rank of Chief of Military Command.[52] While it is hard to prove or refute these rumours, they can nevertheless reveal abstract aspects of societal history other than mere facts of events and dates. The above story, for instance, might highlight fears among rank-and-file soldiers of leaders' ambition and cruelty that some (southern) leaders want to 'eat well' or even 'eat alone': expressions which metaphorically refer to excessive living standards, exploitation, predatory sexual

43 Interview with Lutero Simango, Uria Simango's son, Maputo, 25 May 2020.
44 U. Simango, 'Moçambique, My Country', *African Communist*, 25 (1966), p. 51; B. Ncomo, *Uria Simango: Um Homem, Uma Causa* (Maputo, Edições Novafrica, 2003).
45 Interview with L. Simango.
46 U. Simango, 'Gloomy Situation in Frelimo', Moçambique para Todos, 3 November 1969, available at https://macua.blogs.com/files/uria-simango-gloomy-situation-in-frelimo.doc, retrieved 17 February 2020.
47 A. Timóteo, *Os Últimos Dias de Uria Simango* (Maputo, Alcance Editores, 2018); Ncomo, *Uria Simango*.
48 B. Machava, 'The Morality of Revolution: Urban Cleanup Campaigns, Reeducation Camps, and Citizenship in Socialist Mozambique (1974–1988)' (PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2018); L. de Brito, *A Frelimo, o Marxismo e a Construção do Estado Nacional 1962–1983* (Maputo, IESE, 2019).
49 Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado.
50 S. Chichava, 'Mozambique and China: From Politics to Business?', Discussion Paper 05/2008 (Maputo, IESE, 2008), p. 6.
51 Chipande, *Como Eu Vivo*, pp. 395–7.
52 This story is reproduced in various counter-memoirs, such as Z. Caliate, *A Odisseia de um Guerrilheiro* (Scotts Valley, CreateSpace, 2014), pp. 36–7.

behaviour or witchcraft.[53] The rumour suggests that the central and northern Mozambican respect for the late Simango was preceded by a similar admiration for Magaia, who was also from central Mozambique. It also illustrates regional power dynamics within Frelimo which played a part in Simango's fate, with most Frelimo soldiers from central and northern Mozambique and the leadership to a growing extent from the south. Fears and complaints similar to those in 'Gloomy Situation in Frelimo' can be found in other documents of the southern African liberation struggles, for example the so-called Chris Hani Memorandum.[54] These documents, as much as the rumours, reflect fears that one group (e.g. 'southerners') insert their own 'tribesmen' (e.g. Machel and Dos Santos) into leadership positions after supplanting or killing others (e.g. Magaia and Simango). These silenced but important fears, linked to continuities of social dynamics and prejudices, are still prevalent within contemporary Mozambican society, as demonstrated by persistent military tensions in central Mozambique.

Echoes of these feelings can be heard in rap tracks that do not explicitly invoke deceased heroes. The track 'Se Não Fosse a TV' (If There Was No Television, 2017) by Chimoio rapper Extraterrestre, for example, addresses the perceived unfair media access of Maputo rappers due to the centralisation of national media. His more recent single 'Tribalismo' (Tribalism, 2020), while not naming historical figures, narrates Mozambique's history with a strong echo of Simango's accusations in 'Gloomy Situation'. This cross-reading of documents, rumours and songs, even if valid and enlightening, can easily be labelled as disrespectful among high-ranking former combatants and academia.

I would question to what extent any ideological motivations were more than fabricated justifications for a violent solution to a simple power struggle among the higher ranks of Frelimo. To consider the events in good faith, similar to David Scott's recent approach to another 'past revolution of our better selves' in Grenada,[55] Frelimo's violent conflict can also be seen as the unpredictable and unavoidable consequence of the well-intended revolutionary actions of selflessly committed revolutionaries, which, however, could result only in tragic collision in an atmosphere lacking mutual trust. Similar to Scott's idea of 'better selves', Mozambican rappers may represent the participants of the internal conflict, even as superheroes as in Track 3, as being simultaneously aware that these were the persons whose actions tragically led to the destruction of each other and, eventually, revolution itself through civil war and destabilisation.

Simango from Below and Above

The history of official attacks against Simango's legacy is extensive. Public speculation regarding his involvement in President Mondlane's assassination began in a French left-wing journal only days after Simango's expulsion from Frelimo's leadership. The article accused him of being jealous and ambitious, while referring derisively to his Presbyterian faith (*l'homme providentiel* – a providential man).[56] Occasional attacks from high-ranking Frelimo members still continue, with Simango and other Frelimo dissidents referred to as

53 For more about the polysemy of 'eating', see H. G. West, *Kupilikula: Governance and the Invisible Realm in Mozambique* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005).

54 H. Macmillan, 'The "Hani Memorandum" – Introduced and Annotated', *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 69, 1 (2009), pp. 106–29.

55 D. Scott, *Omens of Adversity: Tragedy, Time, Memory, Justice* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2014), p. 29.

56 A. Bragança, 'L' ítinéraire d' Uria Símango', *AfricAsia*, 3 (1969), pp. 12–3.

Track 3. 'Superherói' (Superhero) by Inspector Desusado, featuring Ray Breyka: refrain by Ray Breyka		
1	Eu quero ser um superherói	I want to be a superhero
2	Tentar dar a minha vida algum sentido, meu caminho	To make sense of my life, my path
3	Eu quero virar immortal	I want to become immortal
4	Morrer pela causa real	To die for a real cause

Figure 2. Ray Breyka's refrain from Inspector Desusado's 'Superherói', featuring Ray Breyka, in the original Portuguese, with English translation.

traitors.[57] Most notoriously, Simango was attacked by the late Marcelino dos Santos, a principal villain of Track 5, discussed later.[58]

Recently, popular remembering of Simango, particularly in Beira, has led to efforts for his unofficial rehabilitation. A significant example of this is a best-selling counter-memoir, *Uria Simango: Um Homem, Uma Causa* (*Uria Simango: One Man, One Cause*), about Simango's rise and fall in Mozambican liberation politics, which reveals the popularity of rebel forms of remembering among urban youth, even in Maputo.[59] By calling these accounts counter-memoirs as they promote marginalised views,[60] I do not wish to undervalue their merits but to simply contrast them to Frelimo biographies, memoirs and narratives that represent and defend official history. The book's principal argument, one emphasised in its subtitle and echoed in Track 3 (line 4) (see Figure 2) and Track 5, is that Simango never betrayed his revolutionary cause. The book's reception by Frelimo authors reveals that they also recognise its challenge to the dominant narrative.[61]

Simango's rehabilitation has still not reached official levels, not even in Beira where Simango's son Daviz was a popular figure until his death in February 2021: four times elected as Beira's mayor, and the founding president of the opposition Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM).[62] Beira's memory landscape and national remembrance days and ceremonies are still largely controlled by the Frelimo government through the country's exceptionally centralised political system, which does not even devolve street-naming to the local level. In Beira, as in all provincial capitals, there is a statue of Machel in the Independence Square. Machel's and Mondlane's painted images decorate the entrance hall of the public university. Simango's equally iconic image can, in contrast, only be found on people's private bookshelves through the aforementioned counter-memoir. In Beira, as everywhere in Mozambique, ceremonies of liberation remembrance are organised by the central government and city mayors attend these at the government's invitation. The most remarkable exception in the country's memory landscape is a monument and square in Munhava dedicated to the late André Matsangaissa in 2007 by the then Renamo-controlled municipal assembly, just before

57 For example, J. Chissano, a former president of Mozambique, cited by Chipande, *Como Eu Vivo*.

58 'M. dos Santos: "Nós Não Estamos Arrependidos"', *Canal de Moçambique*, 17 May 2006 [transcript from TVM's television programme No Singular, 19 September 2005], available at https://macua.blogs.com/moambique_para_todos/2006/05/retrospectiva_s.html, accessed 10 June 2024.

59 Ncomo, *Uria Simango*.

60 See Souto, 'Memory and Identity', p. 290.

61 Implicit efforts to refute Ncomo's counter-narrative without even mentioning it can be found, for example, in Chipande, *Como Eu Vivo*.

62 In the first elections, in 2003, he was selected from Renamo's list. He subsequently left Renamo and retained the mayoralty as an independent candidate in 2008.



Figure 3. Aurélio Manave and Simango with Josina and Samora Machel in a celebration after their wedding ceremony in 1969. (Source: Courtesy of the Centro de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica, Maputo.)

legislation was passed that recentralised this political power back to the central state.[63] More recent exceptions are temporary memorial spaces for the late Daviz Simango in the Praça do Munícipio in the city centre and in Munhava, decorated with flowers and photos long after his death.

Dominant visual representations of the 1969 wedding of Josina Muthemba to Samora Machel illustrate official forgetting processes. Simango led the ceremonies as he was a Presbyterian minister. In most published photos, however, only Simango's hands are visible, to the left of the bridal couple. I am reluctant to call this censorship, as a Simango memorialist has suggested,[64] since I have not been able to locate negatives, but this is the dominant image of the event. By contrast, in the image reprinted here (Figure 3), a smiling Simango appears with the couple during the festivities. He is not, however, identified in the picture's caption, in a book published to commemorate the 15th anniversary of Machel's death.[65] He was not named in the photo description when I visited the Centro de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica in 2021. Archiving and publishing his photo while deliberately omitting his name can be both a discreet academic invocation as well as self-censorship. Simango's legacy is more deliberately concealed by hiding access to his war correspondence and his recorded voice in historical archives, as experienced by anyone who has done related work in Mozambican archives.

Only a few months after the wedding Simango was removed from the leadership troika, and one year later, in May 1970, he was formally expelled from Frelimo, accused by the

63 Igreja, 'Politics of Memory'.
64 An image can be found in the photo supplement of Ncomo, *Uria Simango*.
65 A. Sopa (ed.), *Samora: Man of the People* (Maputo, Maguezo Editores, 2001), p. 175.

Frelimo central committee of 'counterrevolutionary action, opportunism, ambition, corruption and irresponsibility'.[66] His marginalisation within Frelimo had already led to his exile in Egypt from Frelimo's wartime headquarters in Tanzania. Simango was then painted as a conspirator behind President Mondlane's assassination, a leader of reactionaries, an anti-white racist and a collaborator of the PIDE. President Machel himself claimed that after the 1974 *coup d'état* in Portugal, Simango and others had not hesitated to ally themselves with the fascist general António Spinola to 'prolong the war', 'massacre the people' and 'to earn money and live comfortably'.[67] Machel promised that future generations would learn from these 'traitors'' life stories how people are corrupted and transformed into agents of imperialism. This promise was never fulfilled. Simango's life history was never seriously studied in Mozambican schools, and he was actively silenced in all official remembering. In a similar manner to the treatment of the memory of Leon Trotsky in the early Soviet Union, Simango was transformed into a non-person who was not publicly remembered and hardly mentioned at all, bar occasional attacks. Simango and other 'reactionaries' were recalled in a well-known 'revolutionary' song though, in which he and other dissidents are declared reactionaries. This song accompanied the lynchings of supposed traitors during the liberation war.[68] After independence, it was sung to humiliate political prisoners as they were displayed in public and regularly broadcast on public radio as a warning against dissidence.[69]

Many in central Mozambique never considered Simango a traitor, particularly in the Sofala and Manica provinces, where he was well known both as a minister before the war and later as a struggle leader. He also left memory traces in Beira after Portugal's coup in 1974, when he was chosen as the president of a new short-lived political party, the *Partido da Coligação Nacional* (National Coalition Party). He attempted to promote multiparty democracy according to the 'one man, one vote' principle in soon-to-be independent Mozambique. A remarkable indication of his legacy in Beira is that his son was mayor for 18 years from 2003 onwards. Mnemonic places that Beira residents associate with Simango include the ex-American Board church in Maquinino where Simango lived and preached before his exile.

Keeping these events and processes in mind, I adapt a recurrent and multi-layered listening practice to Mozambican rap tracks invoking Simango along with other political ancestors. These are all detailed in Table 1.[70]

'The Time That Has Passed'

Re-education camps are a central theme in rapper Y-Not's track 'O Tempo que Passou' (The Time That Has Passed – Track 2) (see Figure 4). Drawing upon heated post-civil war debates in Mozambique within political arenas and the independent media, Y-Not evokes human rights violations and re-education camps in several of his tracks.[71] He thus undermines

66 Machava, 'The Morality of Revolution', p. 70.
67 'Interview: Samora Moises Machel. President of the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) Speaks to Africa', *Africa,* 46, p. 80, available at https://www.mozambiquehistory.net/smm_discursos_1975.php, retrieved 22 May 2024.
68 Israel, 'The Formulaic Revolution', p. 198.
69 A. Timóteo, *Nós os de Macurungo* (Maputo, Alcance Editores, 2013); Timóteo, *Os Últimos Dias de Uria Simango*.
70 Tracks can be listened to at https://www.ucc.ie/en/cipher/resources/outputs/uriasimango, where I have archived all the media to accompany this article.
71 V. Igreja, 'Memories as Weapons: The Politics of Peace and Silence in Post–Civil War Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34, 3 (2008), pp. 539–56.

Track 2. 'O Tempo que Passou' (The Time That Has Passed) by Y-Not		
1	Houve tempos que existia no país, campos de re-educação	There were times that there were re-education camps in this country
2	Para endireitar ou aniquilar desalinhados da nação	To mend or to kill the nation's crooked ones
3	Sacudzo em Sofala, M´telela em Niassa	Sacudzo in Sofala, Mtelela in Niassa
4	Muitas outras camadas foram e nunca mais voltaram	Many other [social] classes went and they never came back again
5	Yakub Sibinde, Sebastião Sibinde[1]	Yakub Sibinde, Sebastião Sibinde
6	Pergunta Daviz Simango se o pai ainda vive	Ask Daviz Simango if his father is still alive
7	Pergunta o esposo da Joana Simeão qual é seu estado civil	Ask Joana Simeão's husband about his marital status
8	Se é viuvo ou se esposa ainda há de vir	If he is a widower or if his spouse will ever come back
9	Temos pena de capital de sentença extra-judicial	We've got extrajudicial capital punishment
10	Corpos perdidos sem registo nem sinal	Lost corpses without any record nor signs of them
11	Sepulturas graves sem cerimónias habituais	Grim graveyards without ritual ceremonies
12	Se espera que essas almas ainda se vão revoltar	It is expected that those souls will trigger a revolt

Figure 4. Selected lines from Y-Not's 'O Tempo que Passou' in the original Portuguese, with English translation.

official narratives about Mozambican history, similarly to some later works in literature,[72] cinema[73] and diaspora Mozambican scholarship.[74] He concludes by mentioning the internet site of a weekly newspaper, *Canal de Moçambique*, which publishes historical documents and long interviews offering alternative, marginalised perspectives on Mozambique's past.

In this track, which inter-textually refers to a well-known revolutionary song 'Não Vamos Esquecer' (We Shall Not Forget) about colonial atrocities, he specifically mentions Sacudzo in Sofala province and M'telela in Niassa province (line 3), two of the 22 post-independence re-education camps nationwide. These camps accommodated an estimated 100,000 prisoners during their existence from 1974 to 1992.[75] One of the most feared, M'telela, was specially designed for political prisoners, among whom Simango and Joana Simeão are referred to in the track (lines 5–8). Simango is, however, mentioned only indirectly through his then living son (line 6).

72 Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa, *Entre as Memórias Silenciadas* (Maputo, Alcance Editores, 2013); Timóteo, *Nós os de Macurungo*.

73 L. Azevedo (director), *Virgem Margarita* (Maputo, Ebano Multimedia, 2012).

74 C. D. Quembo, *Poder do Poder: Operação Produção e a Invenção dos 'Improdutivos' Urbanos no Moçambique Socialista, 1983–1988* (Maputo, Alcance Editores, 2017); Machava, 'The Morality of Revolution'.

75 B. Machava, 'Reeducation Camps, Austerity, and The Carceral Regime in Socialist Mozambique (1974–1979)', *Journal of African History*, 60, 3 (2019), p. 434.

During 1974 and 1975, along with several other high-profile political dissidents, Simeão and Simango were pursued across southern Africa, before being arrested and tried at the Nachingwea meetings in southern Tanzania in May 1975 (Figure 8). Machel himself led these highly performative meetings at Frelimo's politico-military training camp. The prisoners, labelled 'the people's enemies', were transferred to M'telela camp in northern Mozambique and executed years later, possibly by being burned alive in the wilderness outside the camp. The location of their bodies is still unknown: one reason, the track suggests, for the restlessness of their spirits (lines 9–12).[76]

To understand these lyrics, it is useful to know something about the performer and his public. Y-Not, a mysterious Mozambican rap artist, grew up in Quelimane and Beira but now resides in the south. His identity and face are generally unknown. He does not promote his music conventionally – he does not perform live, give interviews to the media or hold album launch events. Despite this air of mystery, he is particularly respected by the dedicated Mozambican hip hop public, having been awarded Album of the Year in 2010 by popular vote on the prestigious radio programme *Clássico Hip Hop Time* at Rádio Cidade, Maputo. Two of his tracks analysed here are part of this celebrated album. He has released three albums, one double album and several separate singles and collaborative tracks, most distributed via the internet and social networks for free. He is known for his controversial but well-researched lyrics with which he addresses the past using his rebel concepts of heroism and betrayal, and for his equally provocative takes on religious themes and morality.

Y-Not's track pays tribute to Simango and other political dissidents whom Frelimo wished to eliminate politically during and after its internal struggle between 1968 and 1970. The track's lyrics are not positive towards the established heroes of Frelimo, nor towards the Renamo leaders. Many other rappers simultaneously invoke both established heroes like Samora and Josina Machel as well as archetypical 'people's enemies' such as Matsangaissa and Dhlakama.

Matsaingaissa and Dhlakama were former Frelimo guerrillas and founding members and commandants of the post-independence guerrilla movement Renamo, which became a political party after the general peace treaty in 1992. Renamo was supported by anti-communist neighbours Rhodesia and South Africa, at that time ruled by white segregationists. This enabled a generation of scholars to deny the concept of 'civil war' and downplay the internal dynamics of the conflict. Instead, it was framed as a 'war of destabilisation' in which Renamo was a proxy for foreign powers with little popular support.[77] However, it became clear later that Renamo had its own genuine social base in the marginalised and exploited peasant populations, exhausted and frustrated by Frelimo's agricultural policy and socialist modernism.[78] In their lifetimes Matsangaissa and Dhlakama had no personal, ideological or historical links to Simango, who was detained two years before Renamo's guerrilla war (1976–1992) started. They were all still similarly labelled as people's enemies in official history, and they are often invoked together in contemporary counter-remembering. This is also true for the tracks which will be discussed in the following section.

76 Ncomo, *Uria Simango*.

77 See, for example, Bragança and Depelchin, 'Da Idealização da Frelimo'; A. Dinerman, 'In Search of Mozambique: The Imaginings of Christian Geffray in La Cause des Armes au Mozambique. Anthropologie d'une Guerre Civile', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20, 4 (1994), pp. 569–86.

78 C. Geffray, *A Causa das Armas: Antropologia da Guerra Contemporânea em Moçambique* (Porto, Afrontamento, 1991); Adam, 'Trick or Treat'; H. Englund, *From War to Peace on the Mozambique–Malawi Borderland* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2002).

Track 3. 'Superherói' by Inspector Desusado		
1	[quero ser] Urias [*sic*] Simango por um minuto,	[I want to be] Urias Simango just for a minute
2	Lutar pela igualdade de direitos e por uma nação para todos	To fight for equality of rights and for one nation for all
3	Lutar por uma educação de qualidade para todos, sem distinção de raças e etnias	To fight for quality education for all, without discrimination of race and ethnicity
4	Eu quero ser eu mesmo, Inspector Revolucionário	I want to be myself, a Revolutionary Inspector

Figure 5. Further selected lines from Inspector Desusado's 'Superherói' in the original Portuguese, with English translation.

'A Motherland of Uria Simango'

> 'Stepson in this motherland of Sa …/… mora Machel, Mondlane, Uria and Matsangaissa'.[79] ('Homem Bomba'by Azagaia)

Simango is an important figure among alternative heroes and is increasingly invoked in public debates. He is remembered in Maputo rap too, as in the Azagaia track cited above, where Simango is mentioned in neutral terms alongside Machel, Mondlane and Matsangaissa and thus a previously actively forgotten figure is written back into popular history. André Cardoso's 'A Narrativa' (The Narrative) pays tribute to all these figures as well as to Dhlakama, who died only weeks before the track's release. 'A Narrativa' also invokes other figures officially labelled as 'reactionaries' (e.g. Simeão and Lázaro Nkavandame) who, like Simango, were executed by Frelimo as traitors at an unknown time and location.

In addition to these two tracks, 'Superherói' (Track 3; Figure 5) by Chimoio rapper Inspector Desusado also invokes Mondlane, Machel and Matsangaissa alongside Simango, and challenges the conventional presentation of these historical figures as purely heroes or villains. These tracks invoke together, in a neutral or positive way, Machel and guerrilla commanders who were each other's worst enemies. These 1976–1992 civil war figures became topical in 2013 when Renamo resumed armed conflict with the Frelimo government. Military presence has been strong around the Gorongosa district even after the ceasefire agreement – the third since independence – in August 2019.

Local and regional aspects of invocations of these alternative heroes are important to note. These figures were often first invoked in central Mozambique, often in parallel with conventionally incompatible established heroes, such as Machel. Some of the rappers are children of former combatants of the liberation struggle, such as all five members of Beira group Batalhão da Inteligência (Battalion of Intelligence). Chimoio rapper Tuz MC has paid tribute to his parents, former Makonde combatants, in his track 'Meus Heróis' (My Heroes). Family memory often makes these invocations personal, bringing to the fore the question of who claims the nation's heroes – family or state.

In Batalhão da Inteligência's 'Dia dos Heróis Moçambicanos' (Mozambican Heroes' Day), Simango is celebrated in a ceremoniously recited rather than a rapped conclusion to the track together with established national heroes Raimundo Pachinuapa, Alberto Chipande, Samora and Josina Machel, Mondlane, as well as the late grandfather of a member of the

79 In the original: 'Enteado dessa pátria de Sa …/… mora Machel, Mondlane, Uria e Matsangaissa'.



Figure 6. A poster for Batalhão da Inteligência's album launch on 29 June 2018. Group members are dressed in military uniforms. (Source: Courtesy of Nhosa D.)

Track 4. 'Apocalipse 13' by Tuz MC		
1	Mas este povo já está acordado	But this people is already awake
2	Rescrevemos a nossa história sem fazer perguntas ao passado	We rewrite our history without asking questions to the past
3	Usamos o espelho de Felicio e Canana	We mirror the experiences of Felicio and Canana
4	Com ideais do Simango e Afonso Dhlakama	With the ideals of Simango and Afonso Dhlakama

Figure 7. Selected lines from 'Apocalipse 13' by Tuz MC in the original Portuguese, with English translation.

group, who he claims personally killed Matsangaissa. Batalhão da Inteligência performs dressed in military uniforms (Figure 6), the uniforms of 'Frelimo of Mondlane, Samora and Josina Machel, and Uria Simango', as Sargento emphasised in an interview in Beira's famous III Bloco studios.[80] With their Wu-Tang Clan-inspired joint tracks and instrumentals, often accompanied by flute, guitar and conga samples and mixed with echoing background vocals, their sound appears both loyal to the African American roots of the genre as well as to their local realities. Members of the group have told me they have had the opportunity to perform to a receptive public consisting of local liberation veterans and were able to interact with them about the figures in the tracks.[81]

Tuz MC's track 'Apocalipse 13' (Track 4; Figure 7), which according to him has never been broadcast on the radio, is accompanied by a folksy guitar sample and a female choir. It represents an exceptionally aggressively rapped criticism of local politics in Chimoio and of Frelimo's power in general. The track honours the ideals of two seemingly incompatible figures, Simango and Dhlakama (line 4), straight after paying tribute to two exceptionally well-reputed Frelimo leaders who worked in Chimoio (line 3).

Having grown up during the Cold War, I was struck to hear a tribute to these two people in the same line: Simango as a Frelimo leader with Marxist sympathies and close ties to the Chinese Communist Party, and Dhlakama, who continued his Cold War-style anti-communist rhetoric until his death in 2018. From a contemporary point of view both figures still represent opposition to the Frelimo of the time. Simango's legacy is a more central theme in the two tracks released outside Maputo we will focus on next.

'A Living Coward, a Dead Hero'

> 'But it must be made clear that we do not regret an action carried out [dissidents' executions] for we acted using revolutionary violence against traitors, against traitors of the Mozambican people'. (Marcelino dos Santos)[82]

'Um Cobarde Vivo, um Herói Morto' (Track 5) is a track which most directly refers to the central figures in Frelimo's conflict in the late 1960s. It is Y-Not's inter-regional collaboration with 4 Ases (4 Aces), Stupa Serious and Azagaia (Figure 9). Stupa Serious from Quelimane and 4 Ases from Beira are among the most eminent rappers and hip hop activists from central Mozambique. Azagaia, from southern Mozambique, is the most

80 Interview with Coronel Sheriff, Dzano and Sargento, Beira, 28 July 2018.
81 *Ibid*.
82 'Mas que se diga bem claramente que nós não estamos arrependidos da acção realizada porque agimos utilizando a violência revolucionária contra os traidores e contra traidores do povo moçambicano'. Dos Santos, 'Nós Não Estamos Arrependidos'.

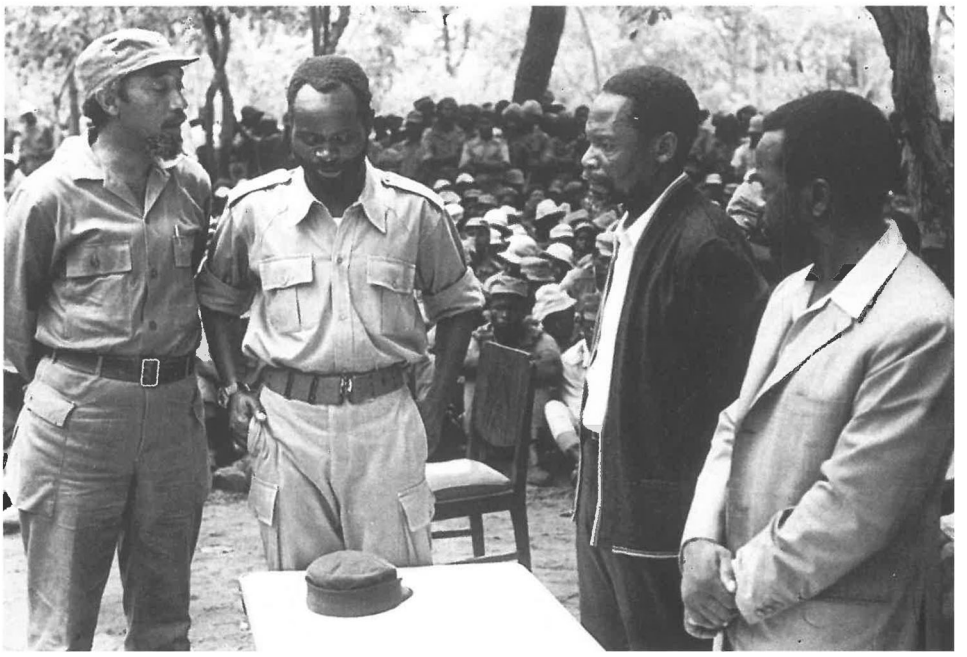


Figure 8. Dos Santos and Machel, and Paulo Gumane and Simango as their prisoners, at the Nachingwea meeting, May 1975. (Source: Image extracted from A. Sopa (ed.), *Samora: Man of the People* (Maputo, Maguezo Editores, 2001), p. 199. Negatives of the photo could not be located in any of photo archives in Maputo.)

well-known Mozambican rapper throughout the Portuguese-speaking hip hop world, famous for his tough criticism of Frelimo as well as of Renamo.

Their track takes Simango as its principal dead hero, while Dos Santos, at the time still alive, is the track's principal villain. It draws an alternative perspective on Frelimo's conflict: Dos Santos, Simango's rival during the peak of the conflict for power in 1969, and the unpopular Governor of Sofala province in the early 1980s, appears as the principal example of a living coward. Accusing Dos Santos (and 'marcelinos' in general) of cowardice was a very controversial idea at the time, because in official remembering he, as one of the founders of Frelimo, was considered an iconic hero of the liberation struggle and was given a prominent place in Frelimo platforms, even if he was not expected to speak publicly in his old age.[83]

Despite its exceptionally harsh polemic, the track reflects a common feature among young peoples' attitudes to Mozambican history: a rejection of old Manichaean binaries (Figure 10). Therefore, it is not surprising to hear Simango (line 11), journalist Carlos Cardoso (9) as well as Mondlane and Machel (5), celebrated as dead heroes in the same track, while the then president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, was considered a living coward (11) alongside Dos Santos. The track thus plays with the classic idea that (only) the good die young. Moreover, all these heroes died in a different, utopian, time compared to the neo-liberal present.

A reference to the re-education camps linked to Simango is found in Stupa Serious's bars (Figure 11), playing with images of cities where cowardice dominates, contrasted with the countryside or rather the (re-education) camps (line 13) that are associated with heroes and heroism. The meaning is ambiguous because 'os campos' (camps) is also the plural of 'o

83 I personally saw this at President Armando Guebuza's orchestrated popular commission during Frelimo's X congress in Pemba on 27 September 2012, where Dos Santos sat on the stage with his medals, not expected to speak a word.

Track 5. 'Um Cobarde Vivo, um Herói Morto' (A Living Coward, a Dead Hero): refrain		
Rapper		
4 Ases	Cobarde vivo	Living coward
Azagaia	Já estas morto há muito tempo, só falta enterrar	You are already dead for a long time, you only need to be buried
Y-Not	Os bons morrem cedo	The good ones die young
Stupa Serious	Marcelinos cobardes, apelidados santos	Cowardly 'marcelinos', surnamed Santos/saints

Figure 9. Refrain from 'Um Cobarde Vivo, um Herói Morto', featuring 4 Ases, Azagaia, Y-Not and Stupa Serious, in the original Portuguese, with English translation.

Track 5. 'Um Cobarde Vivo, um Herói Morto': 4 Ases' bars		
1	Um cobarde vivo, um herói morto	A coward alive, a dead hero
2	Veja só como é que o mundo está torto	Just look how this world is crooked
3	Morre quem não deve morrer, vive quem não merece viver	There dies the one that was not supposed to die then lives another one that does not deserve to live
4	O que está a acontecer, mundo todo está doente	What is happening, a whole world is sick
5	Mondlane morreu, Samora morreu	Mondlane died, Samora died
6	Agora quem que está a caminho do céu	Now who is on his way to heaven
7	Eu, um outro héroi vivo,	Me, another living hero
8	Pergunto no ar e a resposta não encontro	I throw an open question into the air and don't find an answer
9	Aí veem companhia vivos, Cardoso morto	There come partners alive, but Cardoso dead
10	Por esse grupo dos cobardes	By that group of cowards
11	Zanu(PF) e Mugabe vivos, Urias [*sic*] morto	Zanu(PF) and Mugabe still alive, but Urias dead
12	Mas bem vivo nos nossos 'hearts'	But still well alive in our *hearts*

Figure 10. 'Um Cobarde Vivo, um Herói Morto': bars by 4 Ases in the original Portuguese, with English translation.

campo', the countryside, in Portuguese. Marcelino, here in plural, is used as a common name for cowards and is accused of trying to silence 'Uria' (lines 15–16). Based on earlier research on Machel's legacy in Maputo,[84] it is not surprising that Machel (line 5), who suffered a violent death, does not receive a similar harsh treatment as Dos Santos even though he was a part of the troika and plotted against Simango. While there are hundreds of tracks with references to Machel, this track is the only one I have heard focusing on Dos Santos.[85]

84 See, for example, Rantala, '"Hidrunisa Samora"'; C. Serra, *Combates pela Mentalidade Sociologica* (Maputo, Livrária Universitária da UEM, 2003); S. E. Ngoenha, *Machel: Ícone da 1a República?* (Maputo, Ndjira, 2009); H. B. Maúngue, 'Para uma Sociologia do Carisma na Atualidade: Ensaio para Leitura do Carisma de Samora Machel', *Em Tese*, 11, 1 (2014), pp. 91–108; D. Chirindza, 'A Exaltação da Memória de Samora Moisés Machel entre Músicos Jovens da Cidade de Maputo' (*Licenciatura* dissertation, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, 2010).

85 Except for the almost as negative 'Declarações de um Líder, Vol. 2' by Idóneo Pariela (2009), produced by El Capo. The lack of tribute tracks was reconfirmed when *Clássico Hip Hop Time* paid tribute to Dos Santos soon after his death in 2020 using voice notes, but not broadcasting any tracks invoking him.

Track 5. 'Um Cobarde Vivo, um Herói Morto': Stupa Serious's selected bars		
13	Cobardia nas cidades, heroísmo nos campos	Cowardice in the cities, heroism in the camps
14	Marcelinos cobardes, apelidados santos	Coward marcelinos, called saints/ Santos
15	Calaram Uria como a maioria	Silenced Uria as well as a majority
16	Mas é possível calar a utopia dos Simangos?	But is it possible to silence a utopia of Simangos?

Figure 11. 'Um Cobarde Vivo, um Herói Morto': selected bars by Stupa Serious in the original Portuguese, with English translation.

The above-cited lyrics seemingly focus on the past, but through their invocations of political ancestors who died violent deaths calling for justice and vengeance, the real focus is on the future. Closer listening of two lines (lines 12 and 16) demonstrates this. They are in the generically important location of the *punchline*, finishing a double bar unit or an entire strophe. Punchlines are meaningful, humoristic or technically smart lines. As in improvised freestyle,[86] written punchlines are often created first and preceding lines lead to the argument the punchline presents. Here, the punchlines turn the track's focus from the past to the present and future while declaring that although 'Uria is a dead [hero]' (line 11) he is 'well alive in our hearts' (12). Moreover, questioning whether it is 'possible to silence a utopia of Simangos' (line 16), the latter punchline glorifies Simango's legacy. This may include a challenge to Mozambique's bipolarised power dynamics that the MDM party of his sons (Lutero and Daviz) represented in 2010, as well as the pan-Africanism of the late Kamba Simango, an early intellectual and militant radio broadcaster in Ghana who is considered Uria's uncle.

Dos Santos, in this track, also denotes post-Machel Frelimo politics, particularly the reign of former President Guebuza, who often took Dos Santos to his rallies, arguably for some historical credibility. Dos Santos may have attracted the tracks' criticism because he repeatedly violated a widely shared taboo against speaking ill of the dead, namely the group that he and other victors of the conflict in the late 1960s labelled 'reactionaries'.[87] Rappers concerned with their generation's future feel offended that Dos Santos disparaged 'Uria' and other executed dissidents, who intended to guide society towards brighter times (see also Track 2).

'Sacred Munhava'

I conclude my analysis with an interpretation of 'Sagrada Munhava' (Track 6; Figure 12). It praises Uria Simango and his son Daviz and pays tribute to hip hop's generic inner-city 'hood' that is Munhava, the historic segregated African 'ghetto' in Beira. In a more ambiguous manner, the lyrics also pay tribute to Machel, Matsaingaissa and Dhlakama. Dhlakama was still alive at the time of the track's composition, in exile in Gorongosa National Park, but that did not prevent the track from anticipating his next state of existence: '[b]ecause of his ideals he had to face Samora/as great combatants he will only rest when the time has come'.[88] The track, while playing with different registers as in praise poetry, calls Dhlakama by his full name, Afonso Machacho Marceta Dhlakama. It then presents him

86 V. Sykäri, 'Sitä kylvät, mitä niität: suomenkielinen improvisoitu rap ja komposition strategiat', *Elore*, 21, 2, pp. 1–39.
87 Dos Santos, 'Nós Não Estamos Arrependidos'.
88 In the original: 'Pelos seus ideais teve de enfrentar Samora/como grandes combatentes só descansa quando chega hora'.

Track 6. 'Sagrada Munhava' by Duplo V		
1	Em plena praça fica a sua memória,	In the middle of the square there remains his memory
2	Estampado no rosto de quem conhece a sua história	Engraved on the face of the one who knows his legacy
3	André Matsangaissa e Uria Simango	André Matsangaissa and Uria Simango
4	Vosso filho Munhava, ainda segue o vosso espaço	Your son Munhava, still follows your footsteps
5	Arregaçamos a manga, pusemos mão na massa	We roll up our sleeves, we are holding power now
6	De Matacuane, Baixa, Esturro, até Munhava	From Matacuane to Baixa [downtown], from Esturro to Munhava
7	Libertamos o povo [laughter]	We liberated the people [laughter]
8	Batuque e maçaroca jamais, não somos loucos	Drum and corn cob [Frelimo's electoral emblematic symbols] never again, we are not crazy

Figure 12. Selected lines from 'Sagrada Munhava' by Duplo V in the original Portuguese, with English translation.

as 'a sinister rebel in Mozambique with a house in Sommerschield',[89] a privileged neighbourhood in Maputo. Dhlakama left Sommerschield in 2009, initially for Nampula, with the intention of decentralising the country's political life. Later he escaped government assassination attempts, shifted to the rural Serra de Gorongosa, and began leading a new insurgency in 2013. Despite revoking the horrors of the 16-year-long civil war, many Mozambicans value Dhlakama's last years as a sacrifice he gave for the people.

The lyrics mention Dhlakama's former commander, Matsangaissa, in lines 1–4. These lines refer to André Matsangaissa Square in Munhava, which is one of the rare counter-hegemonic memory landscapes in Mozambique. According to the track's producer, Simango, Dhlakama and Matsangaissa all passed through Munhava at different times, and it has been an important place for political mobilisation since the liberation struggle.[90] Since the implementation of the multiparty system in 1994, the populous neighbourhood with its predominantly Sena- and Ndau-speaking urbanites has been a strategically important electoral battlefield for political parties and candidates. The wider public may remember Munhava from frequent news about protests and clashes with riot police, linked to electoral campaigns and fraud.

Through these lyrics, Simango, Matsangaissa and Dhlakama are invoked as alternative heroes to figures within official historical narratives. Both official and counter meta-narratives utilise a similar perspective, that history is largely about the deeds of 'great men'. Listening more closely, the focus of the melancholic, on a deeper level hopeful track, is on the anonymous residents of Munhava, who have made societal changes possible throughout the decades with their spirit of resistance. Political independence was brought about by the liberation struggle that Simango led with other Frelimo leaders, with the rank and file composed mainly of combatants who remain anonymous. They came from peripheral areas such as Munhava, often associated with poverty and other social problems. More recent electoral results in Beira are also in focus – where the ink passed through the rebellious fingers of the voting inhabitants of urban working-class areas such as Matacuane, Baixa and Esturro, but most particularly Munhava (lines 5–8). The track celebrates them with its swinging, almost militaristic saxophone and drum kit beat, which the producer intended to transmit the urbanites' courage.[91] The main intent is clarified in the spoken statement as the track ends: 'I don't know

89 In the original: 'Sinistro rebelde em Moçambique com uma casa em Sommerschield'.
90 Conversation and listening session with producer and rapper Mr Get in his home, Beira, 1 July 2018.
91 Interview with Mr Get, Beira, 27 July 2018.

what my city would be without that neighbourhood, such a humble neighbourhood but where the heroes live. *Big up* for all Beira's inhabitants, especially the inhabitants of Munhava'.[92]

According to several witnesses and a YouTube recording, when the track was performed for the first time, in Beira in December 2015, it received a loud and enthusiastic reception.[93] The famous rapper Azagaia cried when he heard the track at the event. In striking contrast some months later in Maputo, the public, including myself, followed the performance in the quiet, attentive manner described at the beginning of this article. It was possible, however, to feel how public memory was shaped through strongly performed history and Maputo's hip hop public's great capacity for focused listening. The performance became a major topic of discussion in Maputo's hip hop community.

Essentially, it is not so much for the 'great men' but for its unknown residents that rapper Duplo V considers Munhava sacred, the neighbourhood of heroes. It is a sonic tribute to the disadvantaged neighbourhood that is played and loved greatly in Munhava, as popular rapper Djick Rock, a resident of Munhava himself, told me.[94] It is also a tribute to the anonymous people of any other ordinary neighbourhood who influence the course of history.

Conclusions

Uria Simango and Samora Machel have returned to influence public memory, present-day politics and visions for alternative futures just like many other deceased liberation fighters in southern Africa. Their haunting, vengeance and overall legacies happen through types of invocations and rememberings and through the actions of those who remember them. Haunting happens in everyday reflections and speculations about the past and future, frequently taking the form of song, literature or rumour. Alternative futures can be heard in counter-memoirs and media interviews, with speculation on how the present would be different if those arguably incorruptible liberation fighters had survived. Similar laments are heard about other victims of assassination throughout southern Africa, for example Dulcie September and Chris Hani of the ANC, Anton Lubowski of SWAPO,[95] or Herbert Chitepo and Josiah Tongogara of ZANU(PF).[96] As White asserts about Chitepo and Tongogara, Mozambican political ancestors like Matsangaissa, Dhlakama, Machel and Simango are 'portrayed as more heroic, more charismatic and more judicious figures than they had ever been considered in their lifetimes'.[97] They have become stronger because of controversy, ongoing conflicts keeping their legacy and memory alive while some posthumously less controversial figures, such as Eduardo Mondlane, have largely dwindled from public view. They are heroes and liberators for some, traitors, villains and conquerors for others.

One pattern in the rap tracks discussed in this article is noteworthy. Even if the lyrics might pay tribute to political ancestors with lifetime affiliations to Renamo or Frelimo, there are no partisan tracks among this material. Rare exceptions are some tracks from central Mozambique (Tracks 2, 5 and 6) which seem to pay tribute to Uria Simango's sons and their MDM party, despite the criticism it receives in other Beira rap tracks. In general, there are few rappers in Mozambique who support electoral campaigns, compared with musicians

92 In the original: 'Eu não sei o que seria da minha cidade sem esse bairro, bairro muito humilde, mas onde vivem os heróis. *Big up* para todos os moradores da cidade da Beira, especialmente para os moradores do bairro Munhava'.

93 B Town Real Hip Hop, 'Duplo V Sagrada Munhava', 4 April 2017, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-w4mSEE9ps8, retrieved 10 April 2020; interviews with Mr Get, 1 and 27 July 2018, Beira, and rapper Duplo V, Beira, 29 July 2018.

94 Interview with rapper Djick Rock, Beira, 1 August 2018.

95 E. Groenink, *Incorruptible: The Story of the Murders of Dulcie September, Anton Lubowski and Chris Hani* (Johannesburg, Jacana Media, 2018).

96 White, 'Assassination of Herbert Chitepo'.

97 *Ibid*., pp. 96–7.

from other genres who are regularly exploited politically, especially by the dominant party. There are also no tracks that resonate completely with either official or counter-metanarratives about Simango. The opposing narratives that share clear-cut black-and-white roles for heroes and traitors do not seem to convince rappers and their generation. Surprising combinations of heroes and symbols, as well as fresh, often ambiguous, perspectives are a result of rappers' independent reflections. They are actively historicising rather than repeating and reproducing previous narratives. They thus pay tribute to the spirit of resistance and the ideological convictions of invoked figures. This is despite the figures' opposition to one another in life that rappers recognise, and the tragic collisions that the conflicts caused for the Mozambican revolution. Importantly, as observed in 'Sagrada Munhava' (see also Table 1), not all political ancestors in southern Africa are well-known historical figures such as Machel, Simango or Savimbi – as the concept has been largely understood previously. Rather, they are mostly lesser known or unknown people whose identities remain unknown to the public. They have become topical and important through contemporary events, performances and memorial practices such as in ongoing discussions about reparations in Namibia[98] or disputes about electoral fraud and violence in Mozambique.

Some particularly Mozambican aspects of invocations are important to note. With questions on heroism and betrayal one can see and foresee further pluralisation of public memory and the profound challenges for official memory in the way the latter is still represented or imagined. Thirty years after the official end of the one-party state and Marxist-Leninism, one can already predict the end of the hegemony of the current official narrative, both in Beira and Maputo. These tracks and other sources reveal the strong need people, particularly the young, feel to tell and listen to alternative, rebellious and silenced stories. These reconsidered stories can help imagine alternative futures for the past, reminding us and imagining what our contested political ancestors could arguably have offered if they were still alive or not exiled, rather than other 'cowards' who remained alive.

This article has shown how political ancestors, both in rap and in other fields of public debate, are silenced and mobilised by people of differing political convictions, in a situation where public memory is shaped not only from above but also from below. Political ancestors can facilitate the articulation of extant differences in public debates, imagining alternative futures they represent, making current conflicts visible. The resulting polyphony, even dissonance, is integral to the functioning of democracy in order to revitalise feelings of hope that there indeed will be a future. If the teleology of official liberation histories is unsophisticated in theory, in politics it is poisonous. When society becomes fixed in one dominant narrative and script of the past, politics as a process essentially ceases, with history taken as 'ended' or as the inevitable path to a single predetermined 'future'. Political ancestors are useful for preventing this; even if they themselves may be dead, the values and principles the living link to them are alive and continue living in their hearts and bodies. Quoting one of the lyrics cited earlier, I end by asking: can anyone silence the utopias of these political ancestors?

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98 Brandt, '"Practices of Self"'; P. Wilson, 'Remembering the Herero-Nama Genocide in Namibia', *African Arts*, 56, 1 (2023), pp. 62–81.

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