

Pérez, M. 116. *Transculturalization and Resistance in Lusophone African Narrative*
Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1997.

Chapter 2

Countermapping Luanda

The Other Luanda

Luandino Vieira is the adopted name of José Vieira Mateus da Graça, born in 1935 in Portugal and brought to Luanda as a small child by his parents, settlers in Angola. An activist with the MPLA, he was imprisoned by the Portuguese New State for eleven years (1961–72) and spent most of that time in the Tarrafal camp for political prisoners in Cape Verde. Luandino was released in 1972, but the conditions of his parole were that he live only in Lisbon. His writing done in prison (in Luanda and Tarrafal) was, for the most part, not published until the Portuguese New State fell in 1974. Following Angolan independence, Luandino held several posts, the most recent and extended being that of Secretary of the União dos Escritores Angolanos (Angolan Writers Union or UEA).

Perhaps the best known internationally of Angolan fiction writers, Luandino began his extended literary career in the mid-1950s when he was associated with the Luanda-based journal *Cultura*.¹ Like the other nationalist writers and intellectuals of the period, in his early writings he engages the question of Angolan identity and begins a search that dominates his literary practice during the next twenty years.

That search, as mentioned in chapter 1, is indicated in his 1957 poem "Canção para Luanda" (Song for Luanda), which poses the question, "Where is Luanda?" Beyond evoking a specific Luanda, one that is being transformed by the post-World War II influx of Portuguese settlers to Africa, this questioning encompasses a search for a collective identity. The poem's vision of unity is strengthened by the use of a shared, [creolized language] and the evocation of a past cultural tradition that is assumed to be hybrid.

The imagining of that other Luanda as the heart of collective cultural identity forms the central problem of Luandino's prose fiction. Although the textualizations of a counter-Luanda rooted in collectivity presume a city that is currently Europeanized and divided, they are never undertaken from a colonial Manichaean position that celebrates the categorization of the colonized other. In Luandino's narratives, there is no easy separation between colonizer and colonized; rather, his counter mappings of Luanda chart the fluid borders of hybridity in the colonized past, the revolutionary present, and the future nation.

These visions of hybridity and the rejection of a facile conjuring of Angolan identity introduce a new complexity to Angolan fiction. As discussed in the previous chapter, texts by earlier Angolan writers, such as Antonio Assis Júnior's *O Segredo da Morta*, (The dead woman's secret), originally published in 1935, revindicate African cultural traditions but by assuming an ambiguous we/they position. A more recent example is Geraldo Bessa Victor's 1967 short story collection, *Sanzala sem Batuque* (Village without drums), which views Luanda's sociocultural transformations from an assimilated perspective of cultural superiority. As Russell Hamilton notes in *Voices from an Empire*, Bessa Victor may mourn the disappearance of African traditions, but he ultimately sees their passing as a benefit to the Portuguese patriarchy with which he himself identifies.²

For Luandino Vieira, Luanda is imagined as the matrix of cultural collectivity precisely at the moment of radical displacement. The other Luanda of the past is one in which creolized cultural practices had emerged, in part, as a result of the limited Portuguese settler presence. The New State's intensified efforts to transform Angola into a white settler colony not only upset Luanda's demographic patterns but also the patterns of creolization. Socioeconomic and racial distinctions manifested in the division of a creolized Luanda into African and European sectors. In *Angola under the Portuguese*, Gerald Bender describes the impact of the intense settler influx into Luanda in terms of a growing white city that expanded into the borders of African neighborhoods and in some cases overran established sections of the city.³

This displacement figures prominently in 1950s narratives that concentrated on the sociocultural contradictions of colonial urban society. These urban-based works, whether those by Arnaldo Santos that assumed a *crônica* (chronicle) form or others by Mário António that were more intimist, read as *quadros sociais* (social portraits) of contemporary *luandense* society. Luandino Vieira's early narratives share in this critical representation of colonial society, particularly in terms of the fragmentation of imagined collectivity.

Critics of Luandino's prose fiction generally ascertain the development of his literary production in terms of the ruptures produced by certain of the works. Salvato Trigo, for instance, in his book-length study, *Luandino Vieira o Logoteta*, identifies two distinct phases in Luandino's literary production with *Luanda* (1964) as the text that marks the rupture. For Trigo, this rupture is understood in terms of discontinuity, so that in the first phase Luandino writes to narrate, while in the second, he narrates to write.⁴ The early texts, therefore, are characterized by the immediacy of representation, while those written after *Luanda* emphasize the process of textual production itself.

In an interesting counter to Trigo's demarcation, José Ornelas admits a certain decentralization of representation but with the provision that Luandino's texts always return to the representative.⁵ I would add that this return is what creates a single literary project whose focus is that of remapping the contours of Luanda's hybrid identity. Moreover, as Stuart Hall reminds us, the narrated invention of identity is that which is "never complete, always in process, and always constituted within . . . representation."⁶ For Luandino Vieira, this process of inventing identity is a continuing project that, of course, changes over time and becomes increasingly concerned with how to represent hybridity within narrative discourse.

It is not surprising that critics such as Trigo understand this project to be ones of ruptures, since what is really at stake is a battle for both subjectivity and discursive terrain. What are perceived as ruptures are actually violent negotiations of hybridity to define the liminal space that can be claimed as Angolan narrative. That space of liminality, I would argue, is that of the transculturated *estória* in which the narratives themselves are as difficult to categorize as the imaginings of Luanda (see chapter 4). It is a charting of narrative space, moreover, that begins with Luandino Vieira's earliest works, in which, as the author himself claims, "Everything is already there."⁷

Transculturation and the Hybrid *Estória*

A Cidade e a Infância (The city and childhood), originally published in 1960 by the Casa dos Estudantes do Império, represents the first book-length collection of prose fiction by a writer associated with the 1950s literary-cultural groups. In 1957, Luandino Vieira attempted to publish a different group of stories under the same title. The edition, which was to be published by Cadernos Nzambi in Luanda, was confiscated from the typesetter. The 1957 *caderno* (booklet) contained four stories, only one of which, "Encontro de Acaso" (Chance meeting), is included in the 1960 edition.

Critics of *A Cidade e a Infância* often recognize it as a prefiguration of Luandino Vieira's subsequent narrative fiction. Salvato Trigo, for example,

describes this collection as the antetext of practically all of Luandino's writings.⁸ Russell Hamilton contends not only that the stories are hymns to the creole-African city, but that they also contain the beginnings of techniques and discourses that later will characterize Luandino Vieira as the storyteller-griot of Luanda.⁹ The ten stories in *A Cidade e a Infância* are arranged according to the dates of production (1954–57), but this arrangement also indicates a shift in the narrative focus that moves from the fragmentation of luandense identity to the emergence of a new identity initially voiced through protests against conditions in the colonial city.

This fragmentation of imagined collectivity dominates the first five stories of *A Cidade e a Infância* and is represented through the alienated positions of the narrators and/or characters from the always problematic but often idealized hybrid past. The opening story, "Encontro de Acaso," for example, recounts the chance meeting between two childhood friends from the Luanda neighborhood of Kinaxixi. This story is characteristic of the concern in the early narratives with the breakdown of imagined collectivity. The "we" of the interracial Kinaxixi group has been divided, like the increasingly Europeanized Luanda itself, into the "I" of the white narrator and the "he" of the black friend who has become marginalized within the transforming city. Kinaxixi has been destroyed by the instruments of European urbanization as the narrator says, "Envious tractors going after bands of unknown enemies invaded our forest and tore down the trees."¹⁰

The collectivity of the creolized city and childhood is reimaged in "Encontro de Acaso" through the harmonica music coming from a bar. For the narrator, the music becomes the song "of all of us, young black and white boys who ate sweets and fried fish, who made escapes and slingshots, and who on rainy mornings laid down our dirty body in the dirty water and with a well cleansed soul went to conquer the fortress from the Kinaxixi bandits."¹¹ Here the reimaged collectivity serves a dual purpose: it bridges the alienated position between the narrator and his childhood friend, again united in the "we" of the past, and it negotiates the space between past and present within a narrative that permits the recuperation, however tenuous and invented, of hybrid collectivity. Luandino's 1972 *estória*, "Kinaxixi Kiamil," also depicts the destructiveness of the Europeanization of Luanda. In this story, Lourentinho is imprisoned for running down an engineer with a tractor rather than obey his command to tear down a sacred *mulemba* tree. Lourentinho's protest, of course, is the refusal to participate in the destruction of Kinaxixi. Moreover, the Kinaxixi that he reimagines—the title in Kimbundo means "My Kinaxixi!"—is forever the center of new dreams.¹²

"Encontro de Acaso," like several other stories, imagines a specific child-

hood that has been dissipated in the divided city. Colonial-style urbanization not only bulldozed the *musseques* but also that shared childhood of tense collectivity. This destruction informs "A Fronteira de Asfalto" (The asphalt frontier), in which the pavement marks the separation between past and present as well as the racial boundary in a divided, colonial Luanda. In this story, a black young man named Ricardo and a white teenage girl question the imposed breakdown of their friendship, but, as Ricardo insists, that relationship was always conditioned by the racist ideology of colonialism: "When I was your friend Ricardo, a clean and polite little black boy, like your mother used to say."¹³ As Manuel Ferreira emphasizes in his preface to the collection's second edition, certain conditions of Portuguese colonialism permitted a limited racial coexistence in the Luanda of the past that has been destroyed by the hegemonical practices of the New State, thus creating an asphalt frontier.¹⁴ The pavement, however, simply places a clear marker on what was always there, so that when Ricardo reiterates that the illusion remains in the past, he refers to the illusion of collectivity always contained within the boundaries of colonialism.

The narrations of past collectivity become increasingly complex in the first half of *A Cidade e a Infância*, culminating in the fragmented discourse of the title story, a stream-of-consciousness narration of Zito, the son of white settlers. The final narrative fragment of this story indicates a total displacement from the past, so that Zito's memories, once vivid, are reduced to distorted images in a picture-postcard city. This dislocation of the past is also a disarticulation that emphasizes the fragmentation of the narrative segments. The unity imposed by the associative evocations is ruptured at the closing, although a final fragment of the past remains, it appears as a diluted and meaningless image.

The second group of stories in *A Cidade e a Infância* moves to a questioning of the unjust socioeconomic relations of the colonial formation. This questioning is voiced by the characters and narrators in a prefiguration of the revolt that marks Luandino Vieira's later collection of prose, *Vidas Novas* (New Lives), written in 1962. The protest, and in some cases incipient revolt, are directed against the exploitation of the colonized, but they do not move beyond the questioning negation of colonial identity to assume a collective Angolan one, as is the case of *Vidas Novas* and *A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier* (The real life of Domingos Xavier), both written after the 1961 outbreak of armed nationalist conflict.

Some of the stories do propose a relationship between storytelling and the emerging sociopolitical protest. In "Bebiana," Don'Ana, the teller of "old folks' stories," relates her life story as a *quitandeira* and her relationship with a Por-

tuguese merchant in order to convince the narrator to marry her mulatto daughter, Bebiana. Her story ultimately provokes the white narrator to question his own motives as well as those of Bebiana: does he perceive Bebiana as an exotic mixture of races, and does he represent for her one more step up in colonial society?

In "Companheiros," the only story set outside of Luanda (in what was then Nova Lisboa), one of the characters from the *musseques* of Luanda appears as a storyteller capable of transforming reality: "The life of the mulatto Armindo was sad! But when he told stories it seemed even beautiful. Just like those stories in the movies."¹⁵ Armindo's stories also contribute to the transformation of his two companions, who assume an attitude of revolt when their friend is picked up by the colonial police. Here the actual process of storytelling has the possibility to create new identities of resistance, if only at the level of imagination. Storytelling itself becomes an act of resistance.

In this vein, "Faustino" employs a narrative voice that clearly prefigures the narrator-griot of Luandino Vieira's later *estórias*. The story begins and ends with variations of a formula-like technique of orature: "Now I will tell the story of Faustino. Don'Ana didn't tell it to me, no sir. I saw this story myself, another part he himself told me."¹⁶ An intertextual relationship is established between "Bebiana" and "Faustino" with particular relevance to the role of the storyteller. The narrator of "Faustino" assumes Don'Ana's role in order to recount the story of protest. Don'Ana clearly presents the stories of the past, and though her stories are meaningful in the present, she remains distanced from that present. The narrator takes over this role as the storyteller of the present—and thus situates himself within an awareness of colonial contradictions—to relate the story of Faustino, whose revolt is provoked by the desire to study. A sense of narrative immediacy prevails through the use of the formulaic opening and closing, in which the act of storytelling seemingly is directed toward an imagined audience. "Faustino" represents the first instance in Luandino Vieira's literary practice in which oral storytelling techniques are incorporated into the written narrative. Although this narrative still appears in the form of an *história* (story), "Faustino" prefigures the more fully elaborated *estórias* of radical negotiations in *Luanda*.

This formula-like construction appears again in several stories included in *Vidas Novas*.¹⁷ This collection, as its title indicates, textualizes the transformations of imagined Angolans through the revolutionary struggle. Though somewhat didactic, the narratives propose a relation between storytelling and subjectivity as a means to elaborate types of collective identity. This is evident in "Cardoso Kamukolo, Sapateiro" (Cardoso Kamukolo, shoemaker), an exemplary tale of sacrifice and solidarity that assumes the form of a narrative

within a narrative.¹⁸ This multilayered story begins with the voice of a contemporary narrator who imagines a second storyteller in a future independent Angola. For the first time, the term "estória" describes the storytelling process in a proximation of oral and literary narratives as transculturated practice. The grandfather, the storyteller of the future, begins his story of Cardoso Kamukolo with a formulaic opening: "So, now I will put the story of Job Maukuaia of the Cuanhama people, and of his friend Mário João."¹⁹

The use of the verb *pôr* (to put), which later appears extensively in Luandino Vieira's *estórias*, instead of the traditional Portuguese *contar* (to tell), corresponds directly to the opening of the Kimbundu tale, or *missosso*.²⁰ Furthermore, in "Cardoso Kamukolo, Sapateiro," the term "estória" appears in relation to both the story of Cardoso Kamukolo, who dies while defending a child from a white vigilante mob, and the traditional tales, described by the grandfather as "estórias of our people." Clearly, the exemplary story of Cardoso Kamukolo also pertains to a collective culture of the imagined future, as a hybrid form of Angolan narrative.

Luuanda, like *Vidas Novas*, was written in the Cadeia Central da Pide in Luanda and received the top Angolan literary prize in 1964. The following year, a jury composed of Portuguese writers and critics awarded *Luuanda* the highest award for fiction from the Portuguese Writers Society. In the controversy surrounding the decision to bestow that literary honor on a work whose author was imprisoned for political activities against the New State, the Portuguese government disbanded the society, and several members of the jury were interrogated and held by the PIDE, the Portuguese secret police. *Luuanda* was revised by the author in 1972 and published by Edições 70. Marcelo Caetano's government confiscated the edition and fined the publisher. One more edition should be noted, a 1965 illegal edition indicating that it was published in Brazil. It was actually published by PIDE agents in Braga, Portugal, in an attempt to obtain money.

*Luuanda*²¹ represents Luandino Vieira's first elaborated use of the *estória* form with two of the three narratives—"Estória da Galinha e do Ovo" (The tale of the hen and the egg) and "Estória do Ladrão e do Papagaio" (The tale of the thief and the parrot)—containing "estória" in their titles. In *Luuanda*, "estória" designates the transculturated narrative form that incorporates oral storytelling techniques of the Kimbundu *missosso*. During an interview with Luandino Vieira, he told of first encountering the term in a footnote by ethnologist Lopes Cardoso that differentiated between "estória" and "história." Luandino further elaborated on the written *estória* as the textualization of the *estória oral*: "That is, it can be told by another person and maintain a thread that identifies it, so that each person can do variations."²² This open form of

the *estória* finds its roots in the traditional *missosso*, in which the formulaic Kimbundu opening—"eme ngateletele"—employs the iterative form of the verb *ku-ta*. This verb translates into the Portuguese as "*pôr*," (to put), but in this context actually means "to put various times."²³ Luandino Vieira underscored the repetitive basis of the *estória* as "something that was told and that now I am telling and that will be told again."²⁴

In *Luuanda*, the open form of the *estória* is most explicit in "Estória do Ladrão e do Papagaio." Here the narrator-griot addresses the specific problem of how to "*pôr a estória*" (put the story). The metatextual commentary begins in the voice of one of the characters, Xico Futa, who attempts to discern the real cause of Garrido Fernandes' arrest: "The parrot Jacó, old and sick, was stolen by a lame mulatto, Garrido Fernandes, shy of women because of his foot, and nicknamed Kam'tuta. But where does the tale begin?"²⁵ This central question triggers an extended analogy with the cashew tree that maintains its *fio de vida* (thread of life) despite repeated attempts to destroy it.

Clearly, this narrative segment on the extensive and indestructible roots of the tree presents a reflection on how to discern the root of the *estória*: "A beginning must be chosen: it usually begins, because it's easier, with the root of the tree, with the root of things, with the root of events, of arguments."²⁶ Following the recounting of the parable, the narrative voice then resumes the search for the roots of the *estória*: "Now then, we can talk about the root of the affair of the arrest of Kam'tuta as being Jacó, the bad-mannered parrot, although further back we're going to meet Inácia, the nice plump girl he loved even though she was short on affection; and ahead Dosreis and João Miguel, people who didn't pay him much attention and laughed at those ideas of a lame boy."²⁷

The metatextual commentary on how to form the *estória* indicates the multiple roots or stories that inform each particular narration. In this version, the narrator chooses the parrot Jacó as the root. The *estória*, however, is a convergence of stories—in this case at least those of Garrido, Inácia, João Miguel, and Dosreis. A different narration or selection of another root or beginning would result in another version of the same *estória*. Luandino Vieira's literary incorporation of the *missosso* emphasizes the open and repetitive characteristics of orature that are defined not through duplication but through narrative variation. The roots of the *estória* are interwoven, but they eventually surface, with more or less narrative emphasis, in the possible narrations.

This open characteristic of the *estória* is less evident in "Estória da Galinha e do Ovo," but here too the narrator, as Russell Hamilton explains, assumes the role of a griot who elaborates his tale within molds and formulas transformed from orality.²⁸ The particular oral context in this *estória* is that of the

Kimbundu *maka*, described by ethnographer Héli Chatelain as revolving around the question of who is right or wrong. In all the *maka*, the chief protagonists are either exonerated or found guilty by what they do or say. Some of the *maka* contain lawsuits with pleadings by both sides to determine the correct judgment.²⁹

The particular *maka* of "Estória da Galinha e do Ovo" centers on the dispute between two musseque neighbors who claim an egg laid by the hen of one in the other's yard. Five additional characters are summoned to judge the case: Bebeca, the *mais-velha* (the elder wise woman) of the musseque; Só Zé, a white shopkeeper; Azulinho, a seminary student; Só Vitalinho, the musseque landlord; and Só Lemos, a former notary assistant. Clearly, the judges represent various elements of the colonial social formation—the commercial class, the clergy, the property owner, and the judicial system—all of which conspire against the people's interests in the text. Furthermore, and in relation to the multiple roots of the *estória*, each character's story is included in the narration. In this sense, although the *maka* itself remains the central narrative focus, the *estória* maintains its plural form.

This plural and open form here extends to include the collectivity of reception. "Estória da Galinha e do Ovo" ends with the narrator's exhortation to the readers: "My tale. If it's pretty, if it's ugly, only you know. But I swear I didn't tell a lie and that these affairs happened in this our land of Luanda."³⁰ As Russell Hamilton emphasizes, this closing indicates a movement from the particular to the collective while designating yet another judicial role to the audience.³¹ In this instance the readers are invited to judge not only *estes casos* (these arguments) but also the *estória* itself.

Luandino's elaboration of the transculturated *estória* in *Luuanda* represents a decisive pass in the retaking of discursive terrain reserved for purely acculturated discourse. By indicating the hybrid *estória* as that vehicle for textualizing collective identity, his narrations open the margins of the written text to practices of orature within traditional Kimbundu culture. The transculturated narratives, as hybrid forms of imagining Luanda, turn to that other city, in this case the Kimbundu *Luuanda* of the title. Here is an Africanized terrain that is the countermapping to the divided colonial city of *A Cidade e a Infância*. The constructs of identity, like those of the *estórias* themselves, are replete with the possibilities of many roots, many arguments, and many future narrations. And although the author signs off on the written tale, these textualizations of hybrid identity are posited as collective narrations of "our land of Luanda."

The *estória* as hybrid narrative is further developed in *Velhas Estórias* (Old stories), whose narrations were first conceived during the same period as

Luuanda but were revised between 1965 and 1966 following Luandino Vieira's transfer from Luanda to the Tarrafal prison camp in the Cape Verdean archipelago. Luandino Vieira specifically refers to this period between the writing of *Luuanda* and the 1967 novel, *Nós, os do Makulusu* as one of literary meditation concerning the paths his narratives had taken in the *estórias* of *Luuanda*.³² *Velhas Estórias*, finished during this period of reflection, bridges the metatextual questionings of *Luuanda* and the radical resistance narration of the 1967 novel. These four *estórias* also demonstrate a further experimentation with the open and plural form of the hybrid text, as well as with the interpolative role of the narrator-griot.

As was the case with *Luuanda*'s *estórias*, the telling of "A Estória da Menina Santa" (The story of the young girl, Santa) revolves around sorting out the multiple narrative threads. The *estória* of Santa's pregnancy incorporates the stories of the Portuguese merchant António Júlio dos Santos, how he became Julinho Kanini, and his arrest on charges of diamond smuggling, all within the story of the expansion of the Makutu musseque. The narrative movement recalls "Estória do Ladrão e do Papagaio" as the storyteller begins the tale with a beginning that is not the actual root of the *estória*. Observations on how to produce the *estória* once again begin with the questioning voice of a character who compares life to a river of complex waters. The narrator expounds on this statement at length to initially conclude that "a river truly seems like the life of a person."³³ Here, however, the routes of the river open up to the possible roots of the *estória*: "Makutu, a river; the life of Kanini, also a river, rivers flowing together in the separate. . . . The rivers meet in the sea of many more waters."³⁴ The narrative search leads to a "beautiful confusion of waters"—the complications of other roots and stories. This specific narration is only one possibility within the plural *estória* form and does not preclude other potential narrations.

The production of the *estória* also forms a central focus of "O Último Quinzar do Makulusu" (The last *quinzar* of Makulusu), which, as Salvato Trigo points out, is reminiscent of "Cardoso Kanukolo, Sapateiro" and prefigures "Cangundos, Verdianos, San Tomistas, Nossa Gente" (Cangundos, Verdeans, San Tomistas, our people) as an "*estória* of an *estória*."³⁵ The narrator recounts how Sá Domingas knew many *estórias* that she had learned as a child from her parents, but that she never repeats her stories; instead she continually reinvents a tale that differs with each telling. Sá Domingas's *estória* of the *quinzar*—a half-human, half-animal monster of popular luandense folklore—ends with the same formula used by the narrator-griot of *Luuanda*'s *estórias*: "If my *estória* is pretty, if it is ugly, you're the ones who know."³⁶

"O Último Quinzar do Makulusu," like two other tales in *Velhas Estórias*,

takes place in the Luanda of the past. Luandino's literary return to the place in time, following the contemporary settings of *A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier*, *Vidas Novas*, and *Luanda*, also marks a return to the narrative tension between the creolized childhood past and the colonized present that prevailed in *A Cidade e a Infância*. In "O Último Quinizar do Makulusu," the narrator opens the *estória* with a setting of the spatial-temporal context: "The arguments that I will put, took place on that forgotten night of March 11, 1938 in Makulusu, in those times our musseque."³⁷ The displacement is later revoiced at the close of the *estória*: "That was the last time that cases of the quinizar took place in Makulusu, in those times our musseque and today a white neighborhood."³⁸ This distancing between "our musseque" and the contemporary white neighborhood that stands in its place is countered by the storytelling process. The imagining of the hybrid but collective *musseque* as the site of resistance finds complex expression in the doubled narration of an *estória* within an *estória*.

The imagining of hybrid identity through the plural roots of the *estória* forms the basis of Luandino's long *estória*, *João Vêncio: Os Seus Amores* (written in 1968) in which the imprisoned João Vêncio tells his life stories to another prisoner.³⁹ Although the voice of the other prisoner does not appear in the written text, the "dialogue" is not one-sided; João Vêncio continually addresses, questions, and answers his interlocutor, so that the narration also is informed by its active reception. Luandino later employs a similar storytelling technique in "Kinaxixi Kiamil," in which the imprisoned Lourentinho relates his own story to a fellow inmate. Both "Kinaxixi Kiamil" and *João Vêncio* recall the narrative strategies of Brazilian fiction writer João Guimarães Rosa, in particular in his monumental *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. Here Riobaldo's tells his story to an outsider from Brazil's urbanized coast who is taking notes and subsequently writing the story. In Luandino's works, the interlocutors take no less active a role in the storytelling process, and in *João Vêncio*, too, the interlocutor is writing down the story.

This narration, like many of Luandino's other *estórias* opens during a conversation between João Vêncio and the other prisoner: "This man asks the craziest questions! . . . You want to know why I'm in the lockup?"⁴⁰ The *estória*, of course, never achieves its form through singularity so that the interlocutor's question opens the narrative to the multiple levels that inform João Vêncio's seemingly simple story. Vêncio's imprisonment stems not only from the particular act of attempted homicide but rather from his cumulative life stories. The proposal to relate those stories to the other prisoner—"eu queria pôr para o senhor minhas alíneas"—specifies a mixture of the narrative tech-

niques of orature, with the formulaic use of "pôr," and of literature with, "alíneas."

This combination of orature and literature also is evident in the pact that João Vêncio, the storyteller, proposes to his interlocutor, symbolized by their joint stringing of the beads of a *missanga* necklace: "I'll hold the thread while you, comrade, put on the beads, and little by little we'll make our necklace of commingled colors."⁴¹ If João Vêncio is to relate his stories, the interlocutor's task is that of putting the *missanga* beads, or pieces, into an order. At several points, Vêncio interrupts his storytelling to emphasize their joint narrative venture and indicates that his comrade in prison is writing notes. Here the hybrid nature of the pact gains new importance as the oral string of stories is ordered by the written order of the *missanga* beads. João Vêncio may "pôr a *estória*," but it is the *muadié* (boss) who provides the *alíneas*. There is no evidence that the interlocutor has omitted or changed any of João Vêncio's associative and meandering oral narration, but his persistent (though unheard) questions and comments are incorporated and in that way determine the narrative order of the *estória*. The stringing of the *missanga* necklace not only represents the narrative's joint construction but also points to the plurality of the *estória*'s discourse.

This plural character extends beyond the multiple stories and temporalities that comprise the narrative to encompass each textual fragment or case. The narration ends somewhat abruptly with Vêncio's sharp rebuttal to the interlocutor's final question: "This man asks the craziest questions! . . . Separate beads on the string—you think that's what a man's life is. Red beads, blue beads, this color, that color, all in a row? No, sir! . . . Everything a man does is all of him, whole—each and every color is the rainbow."⁴² The narrative returns to the opening question ("This man asks the craziest questions") of the interlocutor, who, it appears, has failed after all to grasp Vêncio's claim that the simple case of his imprisonment must be told through his life's many stories. The *missanga* beads on the string are not his life, but rather the order provided by the *muadié*. As João Vêncio retorts, each story, each event that he has related is all of him and every single *missanga* bead has the colors of the rainbow. The educated interlocutor—and here "muadié" can be taken as a sign of class separation between the two prisoners, as it is sometimes understood as "boss"—strings the stories together but does not recognize in this singular necklace the potential others that might be made from the same beads.

While this failure to understand the dynamics of orality brings the joint narrative venture to a close, the *estória* itself does not end in failure if we

think in terms of storytelling as resistance. João Vêncio is perhaps Luandino's ultimate imagined hybrid identity and, as will be discussed in the last section of this chapter, appropriates all the discourses of colonialism and transnational capitalism in the distinctive patois of a pimp, cicerone, and, of course, modern-day colonized and hybrid storyteller. Here in the colonial prison, João Vêncio passes the time of his imprisonment by stringing missanga beads and telling stories to the literate muadié. The latter may write what he believes to have heard, but ultimately, João Vêncio's oral *estória* is marked by what Doris Sommer has termed "the rhetoric of refusal." Sommer identifies as "resistant" those texts that ultimately withhold the secrets of communities from readers who, quite simply put, cannot know. In *João Vêncio: Os Seus Amores*, the muadié, as outsider, is incapable of knowing the multiplicity of the resistant self that João Vêncio presents in his oral narration. João Vêncio stops the *estória* short. His Kimbundu *kana ngana* ("no sir") resonates with the refusal of resistance as he keeps for himself the many meanings of his *estória*. The muadié may walk away from the prison with notebook in hand, or more likely pieces of torn paper, but that which belongs to the resistant textualization of Vêncio's life has been refused him. Here, of course, the storyteller's name takes on added significance. Vêncio may be imprisoned, but he is not defeated, for within the domain of his storytelling he proves victorious against those who might appropriate his tale and ultimately his life's meaning as hybridity.

It is this very sense of the resistance of the hybrid, transculturated narrative that marks the *estórias* collected in *Macandumba*, published in 1978. *Macandumba* returns to Luanda in the time of *Luanda*, so that its opening epigraph—"Jikul'o mesu! Uala mu Luanda" (Open your eyes! You're in Luanda)—serves as a warning not only to the characters to beware the violent and potentially deadly context but also to the readers—those who might understand—to be aware of the text.

This double-edged warning indeed pertains to "Cangundos, Verdianos, Santomistas, Nossa Gente," another of Luandino's *estórias* within an *estória*. This particular text opens with the creolized Kimbundu-Portuguese lyrics of a song attributed to the musical group Ritmo Iaxikelela.⁴³ As Russell Hamilton indicates, "Whoever understands the meaning of the song . . . is already in the plot of the *estória*."⁴⁴ The song itself represents the key to the mystery of a counterfeit lottery ticket, but the solution is open only to those who understand the creolized luandense lyrics. Among the police, only Justiniano—*filho-de-pais*—with his *experiência luandista* (born in Angola with Luandan experience) finally decodes the solution provided by the song.

The narrator-griot jumps right into the confusion of the arguments to interpret the order of the *estória*: "Arguments that are in the song, are those that are most confused—the musseque poet is always the only boss of his very different truths."⁴⁵ Right from the start we are informed that the song is subject to the rules of musseque poetics as the narrator establishes the order of the *estória* through an interpretation of the lyrics: "Look, in the song they put: 'The colonist went to jail' or in official Portuguese: 'The policeman gave entry into the underground prison.' Musseque exaggerations, you'll see very soon, the *estórias'* lessons will show you."⁴⁶ The narrator's translation of the hybrid lyrics into "state Portuguese" counters this dominating discourse of colonization while revealing only part of the song's secrets.

The narrative movement also is marked by the repeated references to a game played by musseque children: "It's like this, in cases with whites involved, everything seems like the game of musseque children: hill of red sand, there inside a string carelessly rolled; if you pull it, slowly, slowly, the matches sticking in there will fall."⁴⁷ As the narration progresses, the *estória* opens to the complex interweaving of the characters' stories—including the Cape Verdean, Robertom, the santomense (or "santomista"), Alceu, and Evi, originally from Porto—who, as in the musseque game, fall into the trap when the thread of the *estória* is slowly pulled.

The different stories of the Sambizanga dwellers not only combine to form the *estória* but also voice the hybridity of the luandense musseque. Robertom's *terra-longismo*—the longing for his Cape Verdean birthplace—Alceu and Maria's pretentious mestizo aspirations and Evi's socialization into musseque culture all converge within the *estória* of the counterfeit lottery ticket. This is, after all, Luanda.

Luanda is also the setting of "Pedro Caliota, Sapateiro Andante," in which all the storytelling paths are inverted.⁴⁸ The *estória* begins with Caliota's attempt to buy back the fish that he had sold earlier in the day. The narration, however, is in reverse sequence until it reaches its true beginning or root—the discovery of a five-hundred *escudo* bill in the belly of Caliota's last fish. The plural form of the *estória* emerges not only through Pedro Caliota's various encounters as he meanders through Luanda—for the people he meets each have their own *estórias*, to be sure—but also through the three questions raised by the narrator-griot. The first appears at the beginning of the *estória*: "In order to be able to put the *estória*, first one must ask: the same—Pedro Caliota, in white ignorance assimilated as Iscariotes—who wanted to make a viola from a tail, to put forth some cases that took place in a missoosso *estória*, in the long ago?"⁴⁹ This question opens one level of the *estória*—

Pedro Caliota's careless and carefree wanderings through Luanda and his ingenuous belief in the innate benevolence of people and the good fortune of life's events. The remaining questions end the *estória* and indicate not only two other levels but also other possible *estórias*: "Returning to the arguments: Caliota, poor Peter or Moses dead in the waters, whoever could have thought that they were immortal in '61? . . . But to begin another *estória* I want to know: can a person die, be badly murdered and dead on a day of all suns?"³⁰ This second question sets the immediate context of the *estória* as the 1961 outbreak of armed conflict in Luanda. Caliota, whatever he is called, has not heeded the context and dies at the hands of Portuguese vigilantes. The final question lifts the *estória* from its very violent context and questions the injustice of death—anyone's death—in the face of nature's beauty on that day of all suns.

These three questions, moreover, point to the very hybridity of the transculturated *estória* as central to Luandino Vieira's project of narrative resistance. The first question indicates the meanderings of orature, an associative practice that resists the rigid boundaries of the written text, but within the context of Luandino's writings allows a certain fluidity, though never carelessness, to the fixed limits of the monolingual histories of the colonizers. The very possibilities of those meanderings introduce other potential polyglot *estórias* in a transculturated practice that itself is both hybrid and revolutionary. The second question is contextual and situates the resistant texts in a revolutionary Luanda as a privileged imagined space of violence and counterviolence that is precisely that moment of affirmation of complex hybrid identities. The narrator's final question is that which lifts the *estória* to an imagined future in which those other *estórias* might be realized in less violent postrevolutionary contexts.

Luandino's *estórias* imagine the boundaries of Luanda, that other city, in a countermapping to the Europeanized colonial terrain. If the official map of Luanda has rigid frontiers of race, temporality, and class, all expressed in European narrative forms, the countermap of Luandino's hybrid terrain textualizes a city with indeterminate borderlands but not fixed boundaries. These borderlands are the very liminal narrative sites that engage the possibilities of revolutionary change in a form of narration that is itself fluid, plural, and open.

Resistance Novels: Textualizations of the Collective "We"

Luandino Vieira's two novels—*A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier* (written in 1961) and *Nós, os do Makulusu* (written in 1967)—also demonstrate the fluidity and plurality of the non-fixed *estórias*. These are not tales of imag-

ined collectivity to be recounted in possible future contexts but rather resistance narratives in the sense that Edward Said puts forth in *Culture and Imperialism*. For Said, resistance is understood in part not only as a contestation to imperialism but more importantly "as an alternative way of conceiving human history."³¹ In this sense both novels, though quite different from each other, elaborate invented collective histories that are integral in their plurality and perhaps even somewhat utopic in their search for different historical endings.

The difference between the two narratives resides more specifically in their positions within the revolutionary struggle in Angola. *A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier*, written in the first year of the nationalist conflict, is an immediate textualization of resistance and collective identity. *Nós, os do Makulusu*, written from prison six years into the nationalist war, opens up the imagined collectivity of the hybrid Luanda to a radical reconfiguration of the symbols and images that sustained the creolized city. Both texts, as Barbara Harlow proposes in her work on resistance novels, analyze the dominant relations of power albeit within the specific revolutionary moments of rupture that expose those very power structures.³² Moreover, as resistance novels Luandino's works are set in the revolutionary present but imagine an integral past that opens up the possible futures.

Figurations of collective identity, resistance, and revolt dominate the various narrative levels in *A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier*, written during Luandino's stay in Portugal in late 1961. He completed the manuscript only days prior to his arrest and subsequent deportation to Luanda. Although an official edition was not published until 1974, copies of the original manuscript were circulated prior to that date.³³

The novel's title provokes expectations of the literary biography or even exposé—the real life—of one character. In actuality, *A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier* is composed of several narratives and discursive temporalities that are all unified by a single narrative event, the imprisonment of Domingos Xavier. This interweaving of stories provides an integrating perspective of the unifying narrative event and also textualizes the different levels of resistance against the colonial regime. This composite vision of the collective struggle forms the true focus of *A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier* and as such is the novel's real protagonist.

Luandino has stated that the novel's popularity is due to its relative narrative accessibility and linear movement.³⁴ Actually the chapters are not ordered chronologically, and, as Pires Laranjeira points out, the novel is marked by a "rupture of the linear" within the individual chapters themselves.³⁵ The first three chapters establish the three major story lines: the activities of the

organized nationalist movement in Luanda, Maria's search for her husband, and Domingos Xavier's imprisonment, torture, and death. The narrative perspective also switches constantly so that although the ninth chapter concerns Maria's search, her actions are seen through the eyes of Zito and Petela. The meaning of the narrative resides in the conjuncture of these stories; the novel's vision of collectivity depends upon this plurality.

The collective basis of resistance and struggle is established within each of the stories. This appears most evident in the narration of the militant clandestine movement in Luanda. In his preface to the French translation published in 1971, three years before the novel's publication in Portuguese, Mário Pinto de Andrade describes the text as a sociological painting of resistance and adds that "the narrative of Domingos Xavier's life does not only permit one to understand the degree of mobilization and of the integration of social classes in the nationalist combat, but also clarifies, through diverse dialogues, its nature and its content."⁵⁶ The actions of the nationalist movement center on deciphering a mystery—the identity of the prisoner brought to Luanda. These actions follow an established trajectory from the child, Zito, to Petela to Xico to Miguel to Mussunda, all of whom are united in the last chapter. The inclusion of Mussunda and other historical figures such as Carlos Vieira Dias ("Liceu") further situates the narrative within the immediacy of the liberation struggle.⁵⁷ The novel—written shortly after the February 1961 MPLA attack in Luanda that initiated the outbreak of nationalist conflict—identifies with the immediacy of that struggle, which underlies the urgency of the text.

Domingos Xavier's own story is prototypic and, as Maria Lúcia Lepecki explains, might represent the portrait of "any fighter or of any patriot who lives in analogous circumstances."⁵⁸ His story assumes representative stature in its treatment of the heroic resistance of a common man and his subsequent transformation into a symbol of Angolan resistance. The real emphasis, however, is on collective rather than individual struggle. Furthermore, this textualization of collectivity focuses on daily oppression and, of course, on day-to-day resistance. Domingos Xavier's torture and death, Maria's persistent search in the police headquarters of the colonial regime, the resistance of the musseque dwellers, and the actions of the militants in the nationalist movement are all representative of the various levels and forms of imagined collectivity in the novel.

The narrative voice itself is not impartial but rather forms part of this collective resistance as it dialogues with the prisoner to offer encouragement: "Your friends know that you are imprisoned and trust in you, they send you notes with words of courage, you must get through this, Domingos Xavier. It's true, brothers, I must get through this."⁵⁹ In the final chapter, as members of

the Ngola Ritmos band are about to perform, the narrator speaks directly to the imprisoned Liceu: "True, brother Liceu, true. You still haven't reached the end, we are all with you in your prison. Ngola plays your music, the people don't forget, brother Liceu."⁶⁰ In both of these instances, the narrator speaks with the unity of imagined Angolan peoples (*irmãos, povo*) and opens the discourse to a voice that represents the collective.

More important, it is precisely in this vision of collectivity that the biographical expectations of European narratives are countered in a life story that is anything but singular. In this sense, the novel appears more as a counternarrative to acculturated discourse as it establishes the real life of Domingos Xavier in the heart of an imagined Angolan people. Here the text echoes the answer to the question first posed in Luandino's 1957 poem. Luanda, after all, was always in the collective heart of its people. And in the 1961 novel, the search to determine the truth of Domingos Xavier's arrest takes the various characters through Luanda with its many networks of resistance that remain invisible to those outside of the community. Maria's questions as to her husband's whereabouts may go unanswered at the different colonial headquarters, but the real answers reside in the support of the people she encounters in the musseques. Finally, *A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier* imagines a collective symbolic reclaiming of the body of the tortured prisoner that parallels the reclaiming of the colonized city under the very eyes of the Portuguese authorities. His true life becomes part of the communal memory of Angolans bound together not only in colonialism but also in the imagined visions of resistance.

Written from the prison in Tarrafal, *Nós, os do Makulusu* questions the very survival of both communal memory and collectivity within the violent ruptures of the Angolan liberation struggle. More than ten years after the writing of *A Cidade e a Infância*, Luandino's second novel returns to the fragmentation of past collectivity and, more important, to the reinvention of that past. The question that ends the novel—"We, those of Makulusu?"—or more aptly put, leaves the novel open-ended, concerns the survival not only of the "we" but also of the values of that specific past. As Luandino himself has pointed out, "Makulusu has disappeared irrevocably." The question posed by the novel's narrator is whether the we, the collective we that has been marked by the positive values of Makulusu that emerged from within the boundaries of race, class, and origin, will be able to construct a future based on the communal memory of those very values.⁶¹

This narrative questioning of both the textualized past and imagined future is prefigured in the novel's Kimbundu epigraph that translates into English as: "Because from where we come there isn't anything left to see. What

we look for is where we are going." This epigraph, cited as from a "traditional tale," is actually from the Kimbundu *maká* "Kututunda Ni Kutuia" ("The Past and the Future") included in Héli Chatelain's *Folk Tales of Angola*. In this tale, two men—Kututunda ("Whence-we-come") and Kutuia ("Where-we-go")—request wine from a palm-wine tapper. The tapper refuses Kutuia on the grounds that his name (the future) represents evil. The judge who hears the *maká* between Kutuia and the tapper decides in favor of the future, and *Nós, os do Makulusu's* opening epigraph represents the reasoning behind that judgment. Only the future provides an answer to the open ending, whether history will permit the survival of the we of Makulusu.

The novel's interrogative discourse follows the stream of consciousness narration of Mais-Velho, the oldest child of Portuguese peasants who have settled in Angola.⁶² The death of his younger brother, Maninho, an officer in the Portuguese army in Angola, serves as the immediate catalyst for the narrative: "Simple, simple, just like that a shot: he was an officer, took a bullet, went to war and poured his life on the ground, it drank the blood."⁶³ The syntax of the sentence is Kimbundu, most noticeably in the last part, which in standard English would really read "the blood drank." The reference, though, is to the ground soaking in the blood. The subsequent narrative, however, negates the "simple, simple" both of Maninho's death and its recounting. Salvato Trigo notes that the stream-of-consciousness narration is associative rather than chronological and impedes an easy reading of the text.⁶⁴ The narrative movement follows relations triggered by the stream of consciousness, and the resulting complexity has led at least one critic to misread the novel at its most literal level.⁶⁵

Nós, os do Makulusu's reinvention of the past is further complicated by the position of the narrator, Mais-Velho. His narration takes place several years after the death of his brother and involves an overlapping of temporalities. For instance, the recounting of Maninho's funeral combines events of the past, present, and future. These events are perceived by Mais-Velho, who at the same time relives the experiences and their emotional impact through their recreation as narrative.

The reinventions of the past move among familial scenes, conversations between the narrator and his friends, and depictions of the idealized and hybrid childhood in the musseque of Makulusu. Events are recalled repeatedly but always with the incorporation of new elements to provide an integral vision of the past. Certain motifs appear throughout the text—"we, those of Makulusu" and "bilinguals that we almost are," for instance—and represent, as Luandino Vieira states, "theorizations" or a type of spontaneous and questioning commentary on the narration itself.⁶⁶ These narrative theorizations

and reflections lead to the last question—"We, those of Makulusu?"—and to the narrator's final understanding of the destruction of the collectivity.

The narrative reinvention of the we provokes, in this way, a parallel realization of its breakdown. This breakdown is first perceived in the immediate violence of the nationalist struggle but also encompasses the extended history of political and sociocultural conflicts in Angola. The we, therefore, indeed represents the four friends and brothers from Makulusu (Mais-Velho, Maninho, their mulatto half-brother, Paizinho, and their friend, Kibiaka), but it also incorporates a more totalizing vision of Portuguese colonialism. As part of the integral historicizing of the narration, Mais-Velho's introspections, retrospections, and interrogations bring to light the many boundaries installed by five centuries of Portuguese domination.

The stream-of-consciousness narration also accompanies Mais-Velho's wanderings through Luanda. As in Luandino's *estórias* and *A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier*, the reclaiming of Angolan discursive space always involves a parallel reclaiming of the geographical space of Luanda. Here, as the narrator passes through certain streets and sections of the city, the landmarks, shops, restaurants, and so forth trigger related memories of the collective we but always within the totalizing vision of history. Thus one of Mais-Velho's recollections of Maninho's funeral provokes a simultaneous imagining of violent colonial history: "Chains of slaves, chains of the dead, of prisoners, of contract laborers, of the free—a whole history to unearth."⁶⁷ *Nós, os do Makulusu* is of course the partial unearthing of that history and the breaking, so to speak, of the chains that can only be cast off once that history is restored to those who were enslaved, prisoners, contract laborers, and even free people in an imagined Angolan nation.

In this sense, the countering of chronological narrative time must be read as much more than a mere experimentation with acculturated structures. Barbara Harlow's study indicates that resistance narratives experiment with linear temporality as an essential part of the struggle to claim a totalizing history. Part of this challenge is what Harlow terms "a radical rewriting" of the European historiographies that privilege the western calendar of events.⁶⁸ In *Nós, os do Makulusu*, that radical rewriting implies a reclaiming of Angolan history through a reimagining of the conditions of hybridity.

As was the case with Luandino's earlier textualizations of past collectivity in *A Cidade e a Infância*, the narrative imagining of a hybrid we always reveals a tense, if not violent, coexistence. In the earlier stories, the reinventions of the past were conditioned by the fragmentation precipitated by the white settler influx and the destruction of those conditions that had permitted a racial-cultural proximation. Clearly *Nós, os do Makulusu* moves beyond

fragmentation and displacement. The immediate setting of the novel captures the total rupture of the we, while the introspections expose the contradictions that marked the violent collectivity. In this sense, the positive visions of the creolized childhood world of *A Cidade e a Infância* appear in the 1967 novel as no less a determining force, but they are always countered by the realizations of colonial relations of appropriation and inequality.

As in the earlier narratives of *A Cidade e a Infância*, the breakdown of collectivity follows the movement from childhood to adolescence to adulthood. The fragmentation—textualized in such previous works as “Encontro de Acaso,” “A Fronteira de Asfalto,” and “A Cidade e a Infância”—intensifies with the boundaries that mark the adult world in the stratified colonial society. In *Nós, os do Makulusu*, the diverse paths of the four childhood friends and brothers demonstrate the rupture of collectivity. Maninho, as Russell Hamilton points out, represents a new colonialist mentality that continues within the sphere of white racial-cultural superiority, even though paradoxically he has “undergone his measure of creolization.”⁶⁹ Maninho, however, is conscious of the contradictions of colonial domination but points to those very racial-cultural relations of inequality as his justification for fighting against Angolan liberation: “This, Mais-Velho, is what is difficult and what I must do. The grass of Makulusu dried beneath the tar pavement and we grew up. And while we can’t understand each other because only one side of us grew, we must kill one another; that is the reason for our lives, the only manner that I can give fraternally to allow him to assume his dignity—kill or be killed, on our feet.”⁷⁰ Maninho’s reasoning indeed recognizes the breakdown of collectivity that he describes as a necessarily unequal coexistence dictated by the nonreciprocal acculturation process. However, he seeks a paradoxical measure of equality through armed confrontation. Mais-Velho and Paizinho follow the course of clandestine organization and political education. Kibiaka, embodying a reasoning that counters that of Maninho, joins the armed nationalists.

The novel’s final question voices the realization of fragmentation—the disappearance of Makulusu and all that it represented—and rupture, the destruction of the we. Ultimately, the narrator, like the judge deciding the maka between the future and the wine-tapper, views the destruction of the past as necessary violence, so that a future based on relations of equality might be constructed: “Your relative will become my absolute—solidarity, is it like this?—and it will also calm me, having the certainty that later I will destroy and destroying I will reconstruct and go on like this, with you who is not you, but us, those of Makulusu, constructing not a certainty, but certainties that will help us to be neither cowards nor heroes: only people.”⁷¹

The future remains an uncertainty, an open vision projected from the fragmentation of past collectivity and the rupture of present conflict. The narrator may decide in favor of the uncertain future but does not negate the past, however contradictory and fragmented. As resistance narrative, *Nós, os do Makulusu* proposes a reconstruction of the conflictive past and present through subjective and collective narrative memory. In this sense, Mais-Velho’s assertion that “life is not time, but only its memory—we’ve already forgotten that and want to get to the twenty-first century” tempers the open and present conflict that destroys the past and also threatens to negate its memory.⁷² The destruction of Makulusu and the we are irreparable and even necessary; the narrative questions whether that which might survive can be both remembered and reconciled in the imagined future nation.

Neologizing Nation

We don’t use Portuguese because someone gave us authorization, or because of a statute, or due to a mandate, or from charity. It is a trophy of war.⁷³

José Luandino Vieira

For Luandino Vieira, the process of imagining a nation can only be realized through the invention of a language that is itself hybrid and nonhierarchical. In spite of his claim that Angolan writers have gained the Portuguese language as a spoil of war, the fight for discursive terrain has not meant a simple wholesale appropriation of acculturated literary discourse any more than his elaboration of the *estória* has implied a facile borrowing of Portuguese narrative forms. If the *estória* celebrates the reclaiming of narrative terrain, indeed the right to collective narration, then Luandino’s language is no less resistant and popular.

Even the earliest of Luandino’s narratives attempt to incorporate a hybrid language that is based on popular practices of creolization so that the discourses of the marginal become the voices of imagining nationness and Angolan identities. The use of such a language is part of transculturation as a claiming of imposed structures that are then made Angolan. The language in which these narrative voices speak are themselves acts of resistance that work against assimilation practices of the New State, which would not acknowledge local patterns of creolization, but instead inextricably tied the use of a standard language to social mobility and rights of citizenship. This is a language, then, that counters acculturation and also becomes a means of resistance, both for the characters and for the readers. If Luandino employs a

neologized language based on popular practices, then his works are aimed at a future literate Angola and not the metropolitan marketplace.

In this vein, Luandino took a strong stand against including glossaries in his works, even after independence. It was not until the eighth Portuguese edition of *Luanda* (1981) that he authorized a glossary of Kimbundu terms, creolized expressions, and neologisms. Until that time, the writer stood steadfast in his position that if metropolitan readers were going to understand his works, they would do so on the terms of the texts themselves and would be forced to surrender to the hybrid language. In the 1980 English-language version of *Luanda*, which did include a glossary, translator Tamara Bender cites Luandino as explaining that "he wrote his *estórias* for the very people whose language he used, adding that ignorance of musseque speech was the problem of the Portuguese colonizer, not his."⁷⁴

Thus the language of the works themselves is resistant as it holds back the secrets of the imagined linguistic community and builds collectivity from within this hybrid discourse. As we will see, this resistance of language assumes many forms in the narratives as the collective basis of shared identity and linguistic memory. As an invented language based on popular luandense patterns, it above all envisions nationness as the space in which the peripheral registers are valorized as literary discourses.

Paradoxically, the literary model for Luandino Vieira's inventions of language was not Angolan or even African for that matter, but rather Brazilian. During the author's previously mentioned period of rethinking his notions of narrative, his reading of *Sagarana* by Brazilian writer João Guimarães Rosa suggested a new literary direction: "[A]nd that was what João Guimarães Rosa taught me, that writers have the freedom to create a language that is not that of their characters: a homologue of those characters, of that language. That is to say, what I had to learn from the people was those processes by which they constructed their language . . . using the same unconscious or conscious processes which served the people to use the Portuguese language."⁷⁵ For Luandino, then, the lesson of rethinking *Sagarana* in terms of his own literary practice was the freedom to invent a language that was based on the popular patterns of accommodation and resistance in Angola.

The practice of neology, employed somewhat tentatively in *Luanda*, virtually explodes in *Velhas Estórias*, revised during this time of literary rethinking in Tarrafal. The neologisms in this collection can be divided into four main categories: those derived from Kimbundu; those that have their roots in luandense Portuguese; those that are created from standard Portuguese; and those that represent a creolization of Portuguese and Kimbundu. Examples from the first category include such words as *axuetado* from the Kimbundu

ku xueta (to dry), *banzanco* and *banzativo* from *ku banza* (to think), *xaxateiro* and *xaxata* from *ku xata* (to squeeze), and *mussequial* from *musseque*. Words such as *tristecido* from the Portuguese *entristecido* (saddened) and *venear* from *envenenar* (to poison) represent the luandense tendency to eliminate the first vocalic syllable.

Neologisms derived from standard Portuguese include fusions of two separate words to form a new one with combined semantic value: *Belzebúnico* (*Belzebu* and *único*) (singular); *cautelento* (*cauteloso* and *lento*) (cautious and slow); *pretazul* (*preto* and *azul*) (black and blue); and *vagamundagem* (*vagabundagem* and *mundo*) (vagabondage and world). Finally, words with both Portuguese and Kimbundu roots include *mexebundo* (*mexer* and *bunda*) and *zulado* (a shortened form of *azulado* that also gains semantic value from the Kimbundu *ku zala*—to be without clothes).⁷⁶

In *Velhas Estórias*, more than one hundred neologisms represent more than a relexification of Portuguese literary language. Luandino's use of Kimbundu-derived words and expressions indicates a valorization of the literary capacity of that language as well as a means of incorporating the voices of its then-marginalized speakers. In the same manner, the creolized neologisms revindicate disparaged speech patterns and simultaneously underscore the positive semantic capacities of the creolization process for the textualization of nation. The creation of words and expressions from various language and dialect systems indicates not only the new directions of an emerging Angolan literature but also the polyglot hybrid possibilities of the imagined nation.

In terms of Luandino's narratives, this practice implies a movement away from the earlier, more direct duplication of luandense speech patterns. Various characters in *A Cidade e a Infância*, for instance, employ creolized speech but mostly at the lexical level. In *A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier*, however, Kimbundu-Portuguese is introduced into the narrative voice at both the lexical and syntactic levels. Creolized words such as *muxaxar*, *candengue*, *cambuta*, *matumba*, *quifunes*, *inhambas*, and *xuaxulhar* are used by both characters and narrator.

In addition, several grammatical patterns prevalent in luandense creolized speech are incorporated into the text. For instance, the preposition *em* is used when the object refers to a person: "Foi encontrar a *compãheira* pondo *quifunes em miúdo Bastião*;" "Vou casar na *Behiana*;" "Os dois amigos despediram no *vavô*." The indirect object *lhe* (to you, to her, to him) is used in grammatical constructions that in standard Portuguese demand a direct object: "Nunca *lhe* vi no musseque;" "Ninguém *lhe* conhecia." The subjunctive mode is at times suppressed: "*Talvez Domingos tinha sido levado lá*;" "*Se Maria não tinha sua amiga no Sambizanga, como ia fazer então*." The subject pro-

noun *você* ("you" informal) appears with the verb ending that corresponds to the *tu* ("you" intimate) form. The following sentence illustrates all of these syntactic constructions of Luandense creolized Portuguese: "*Melhor você dizer naquele homem se mano Xico chega, a gente lhe esperar na muralha.*" The use of these speech patterns by both characters and narrator clearly indicates a shared hybrid literary discourse and further emphasizes the novel's collective vision by means of a common language of resistance.

If *Luuanda*, indeed, marks a turn in Luandino's prose in terms of transculturated and hybridized literary form, that turn also signals the transformation of acculturated literary language. *Luuanda* continues the literary valorization of marginalized and popular speech patterns and introduces a tendency toward the creation of new forms. These neologisms all have their roots in words or expressions used in Luanda that are derived from either popular practice or Kimbundu. Neologisms of Kimbundu origin include *cafucambolar* from *kafukambolo* (*cambalhota*), *cocair* from *ku kaia* (*espreitar*) (to observe) and *uatobar* from *ku toba* (*fazer pouco*) (to make fun of). *Capiangista* (thief) comes from the Luandense Portuguese use of *capiango* (theft), whereas *cavalmarinho* is based on the popular pronunciation of *cavalo marinho*.

Although no glossary was provided until 1981, interlingual translations at times are provided in the narration itself, as in the following examples in which the underlined sections represent the equivalent expressions in Portuguese:

Ri os dentes brancos dela, parece são conchas, xuculula-lhe, mas não é raiva nem desprezo, tem uma escondida satisfação nesse revirar dos olhos.

Nga Tita chegou mais perto para contar a menina nascera cassanda, isso mesmo xavó, nasceu branca, branca, parecia era ainda filha de ngueta.

*Logo-logo veio um guisado de feijão, um cheiroso quitande amarelo.*⁷⁷

For the most part, however, translations are not provided so that although *Luuanda*'s *estórias* refrain from the almost didactic political message of *A Vida Verdadeira de Domingos Xavier* and *Vidas Novas*, political solidarity is expressed through a collective language. Moreover, this is evident within the *estórias* themselves as the language of resistance establishes the strength of the musseque community. In "Estória da Galinha e do Ovo," for instance, the maka between the two women is not resolved by the outside Portuguese or assimilated judges who attempt to obtain the egg for themselves through discourses of power. Rather the resolution relies on shared codes of resistance in which even the cackle of the hen partakes. José Ornelas notes that truth in

this case resides in the art of the colonized who refuse to assimilate the colonial discourse and whose actions subvert monolingualism.⁷⁸ A comparison also might be made to Luandino's earlier story, "O Fato Completo de Lucas Matesso" from *Vidas Novas*, in which the imprisoned title character drives his Portuguese jailers and torturers crazy when he asks his wife to bring him a *fato completo*, which in standard continental Portuguese is a man's suit. The authorities search through Matesso's clothing to find a hidden weapon or note, but their search is in vain because they don't realize that in Luandense Portuguese a *fato completo* is the name of a popular fish dish. The prisoner, though beaten from the continued interrogations, laughs at the victory of resistance on the part of a community that has subverted and transformed colonial discourse.

Velhas Estórias, revised during Luandino's literary rethinking in Tarrafal, demonstrates the new linguistic direction through a creative practice based on the recreation of popular patterns of linguistic resistance. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the first *estória*, "Muadié Gil, o Sobral e o Barril" (Boss Gil, Sobral and the barrel), concerning the dispute over a barrel of wine normally given workers after completion of a construction project, follows the parallel linguistic confrontation between Sobral—the self-appointed voice of the workers—and the Portuguese boss, Gil. The animosity that already exists between the two men because of Gil's attentions to Sobral's wife surfaces in their linguistic dual: "Boss Mr. Gil Afonso! Oh, boss, you old rooster, if you want to fight, take off your spurs."⁷⁹ When Gil attempts to respond in his Kimbundu *estragado de branco* (his corrupted white-man's Kimbundu), Sobral retorts: "Hey, boss. Prohibited in the decree! Kimbundu is not official! A white man can't speak Kimbundu."⁸⁰ Sobral is the one who controls because of his Kimbundu domain.

The confrontation between the two intensifies when Gil sees one of the workers preparing coffee on the job, and Sobral diverts his attention by means of a linguistic frontal attack:

— Savá, mestre?

— Sou um prolixo, falo línguas mauidiê . . . Isto aqui é frenxe!

— Prolixo! Pròlixo, é que te manda outra vez.⁸¹

Sobral's use of French ("savá" for "ça va") and English ("frenxe" for "French") and his assertion that he is *prolixo* is countered by Gil's play on the word *prolixo* as *pròlixo* ("para o lixo"—in the trash).

The linguistic dual takes on overt political dimensions as Gil demands that his workers greet the colonial governor with signs that read "Os operários

da Gilafo/com firmeza na defesa/da Angola portuguesa" (The workers of Gilafo/with strength in the defense/of a Portuguese Angola). The workers look on as the verbal war continues between Sobral and Gil—"maca de sungarigengo e cangundo fica de fora o monabundo" (blacks stay out of the maka between mulattos and whites). When Gil explains his rising costs in technical terms, Sobral concedes the advantage: "Sobral could well see that the boss was winning; those words that they didn't know were scoring points."⁸²

Although the workers eventually receive the wine, the linguistic dual remains unresolved. Sobral's final song—in Kimbundu, of course—places the confrontation in the larger political-linguistic context. The song also underscores the link between political and cultural independence as it recognizes the Portuguese language as a stratifying and repressive element of colonialism and even neocolonialism: "Portuguese Government! Portuguese Government! Portuguese Government with good lines/If you don't eat us in the war/You'll want to eat us in conversations."⁸³

A similar linguistic confrontation forms one of the central themes of Macundumba's "Cangundos, Verdianos, Santomistas, Nossa Gente." In this *estória*, the repeated interpolations of the narrator concern the languages of the musseque as well as the actual narration itself.⁸⁴

The *estória* textualizes the linguistic hybridity of the musseque as an intersection of Joaquim Ferreira's "pretuguês," Robertom's Cape Verdean creole, Alceu and Marília's pretentious upper-class speech, as well as Kimbundu, legal Portuguese, and creolized musseque discourse. Pretuguês was a pejorative colonial term used to describe the Portuguese spoken by Africans and comes from a combination of *preto* (black) and *português*. Luandino uses the term here somewhat ironically, of course, to describe the assimilation of the Portuguese Joaquim Ferreira into the musseque.

The narrative voice also participates in the confusion of the languages in the *estória* that adds to the mystery surrounding the counterfeit lottery ticket. If on the one hand the author of the creolized song that opens the text is criticized humorously as an illiterate poet for writing *santomista* instead of the standard *santomense* (someone from São Tomé), the narrator also freely uses *santomista* throughout the *estória*. At one point, the narrator uses the verb *fitucar* and interrupts the *estória* to comment on both meaning and usage: "It was there that sister Marília *fitucou*—as the loyal Ximinha would say, vendor with confidence in the state of the soul at the garden door. *Fitucou*, that's what it is, there is no foreign word for the feeling of the musseque: hot and wordy anger, with the soul on the outside, all the truths spoken with nothing left out—more friendship than anger, less hate than heat, how is it in the vernacular? Dona Marília, therefore, *fitucou*."⁸⁵ The verb must remain,

for there is no outside linguistic means of expressing the musseque. The multiple sociolinguistic registers of Luanda—"cidade de muitas e mussecadas gentes" (city of many and musseque-ed peoples) enter into the narrative because, as the title of the *estória* indicates, they all belong to "nossa gente" (our people).

Sobral, from *Velhas Estórias*, has a counterpart in João Vêncio, also a self-proclaimed "prolixo," whose first-person narration is a hybrid interweaving of languages and linguistic registers. Vêncio self-identifies as an *ambaquista*, and indeed his radical discourse is signaled by the *estória*'s subtitle—*uma tentativa de ambaquismo literário a partir do calão, gíria e termos chulos* (an attempt at literary *ambaquismo* using jargon, slang, and the terms of pimps). As an attempt at literary *ambaquismo*, the text draws upon the historical role of the Ambacas, whose propensity for argumentation and use of the Portuguese language accounts for their significant part in the colonial administrative and judicial systems. The Ambacas not only served as scribes and notaries for the often illiterate Portuguese colonizers, but they also functioned as provisional lawyers. Here "ambaquista" not only designates origin but also draws its meaning as a popular pejorative expression from those same rhetorical capabilities. Alfredo Margarido suggests, though, that the *ambaquistas* subverted their own privileged positions to identify with the community, as many became types of public writers.⁸⁶ The *estória*'s literary transculturation, suggested by "literary *ambaquismo*," is informed also by marginalized discourses that are incorporated into the oftentimes rhetorical narration.

João Vêncio continually claims that words lie as they transform reality and truth, although this questioning realization does not stop him from participating in an orchestration of those same lying words: "You're astonished by my vocabulary, my patois? . . . Anyway, my father it was that got me hooked: he gave me the dictionary opened and shut, I learned it by heart. Then, too, my shantytown, with its thousand colors of people, its thousand voices—I'm partial to Verdean lingo, all those neat words! And the rivers of my days, my ways: I was also a tour guide, you know, showing the sailors, the sights, clubs, hussies and sluts. I learned some English. Geel the clean dirty smell of this sweet old she-rat . . . How much? Twenty dollars? Vêncio, tell this old crab I would rather fuck myself. . . . Ay-ay! My bad ways, parlances!"⁸⁷

João Vêncio's *estória* is not only his life's multiple stories but also the various discourses that he has absorbed along the way. An accumulation of the codes of standard and popular Portuguese, creolized musseque speech, Cape Verdean creole, English, French, seminary Latin, and biblical discourse all combine to form João Vêncio's hybrid lexicon, or as he puts it, his "*patua*" (patois). It is Vêncio who controls his patois, however, as he mocks at the astonishment of the literate *muadiê*. Clearly João Vêncio's language is that of

colonized hybrid identity and is meant to evoke the multiplicity of his life stories as well as the multiple levels of resistance.

It is language as well that memorializes the tense collective childhood world of *Nós, os do Makulusu*. One of the motifs that runs through the novel, "bilinguals that we are, almost," reveals the frontiers of coexistence as the imagined collective bilingualism is modified by a colonial style "almost."⁸⁶ The narrator attempts to remember and indeed reconstruct through language that collective world of Makulusu as he wanders through Luanda, and his memory is triggered by various words and phrases. For instance, Mais-Velho's path through Luanda, specifically through the Bairro dos Coqueiros, leads him to the Rua das Flores (Street of Flowers), which sets off the memory of buying flowers for Maninho's funeral from Dona Marijosé.

Moreover, Mais-Velho fully realizes his own part in the betrayal of the collective we through the recurring recollections of the four friends and brothers trapped in the Makokaloji cave. He desperately attempts to recall the full Kimbundu phrase—he almost has it, almost—that united the four and released them, in his memory, from the cave: "*Ukamba, ukamba kikunda!*" (In friendship there is no betrayal.) It is only at the novel's end that he finds the missing word that signifies his own betrayal.

Undoubtedly, this forgetting of the Kimbundu phrase that marked the unity of the *nós* (we) underscores the conflictive colonial relations of collectivity. The lost Kimbundu phrase further resonates against Maninho's own justification for the war and the suppression, or forgetting, of African and creolized values. Mais-Velho remembers the missing word too late, for he has already betrayed Paizinho by arranging a meeting to tell him the news of their brother's death: "I'm going to see Paizinho, I'm going to meet him, against all the rules of security, against the order that he gave me. . . . And I am betraying, and that is betraying him."⁸⁷ Mais-Velho also assumes the guilt for the deaths of the others. He had given Kibiaka a gun when his friend had left Luanda to join the MPLA. He later convinces himself that Kibiaka is the guerrilla who killed Maninho and is killed, in turn, by Portuguese soldiers. The remembrance of that missing word that might reunite the we—even in narrative memory—simultaneously triggers Mais-Velho's realization of his own contradictory position and the irreparable destruction of the collective we: "We have to do what we have to do even if Maninho is laughing—and he isn't laughing now, he's only dead—and curses us since these are society's games, there isn't any other path: . . . to fight so that your reason is not reason and you live and Kibiaka lives and all the dead can live and all the living can die without being heroes. And suddenly, I now remember the third word: *kikunda*, betrayal, that's it and I say: — *Ukamba ukamba kikunda!* — we leave the depths

of death in Makokaloji. And this is now worthless. There is Paizinho under arrest, over there, some one hundred meters from me."⁸⁸

The memory of the childhood game in which the we pronounced the magic words and were released from the Makokaloji cave of death comes too late for Mais-Velho. All alone now, he says the words, but they have lost their magical powers of collective freedom that they had within the violent hierarchies and boundaries of colonial Luanda. Mais-Velho's ultimate narrative question amid the rupture of the we is whether those words might once again recapture the magical and imagined collectivity within the future possibilities of nationness.

This narrative memorialization through language attains its most complex form in *No Antigamente, na Vida* (In the long ago, in life). The three *estórias* in this 1974 collection move beyond imagined communal memory to a type of mythicizing of the past. The specific past once again is that of tense childhood collectivity in a colonized and creolized Luanda. In "*Lá em Tetembuatubia*" (There in Tetembuatubia), language is the key to both the mysterious imagined voyage of the children as well as its textualization. Similar to Mais-Velho's realization that even the remembrances of collectivity might not survive the present rupture of armed conflict, the narrator of "*Lá, em Tetembuatubia*" also realizes that the return to the past is always inadequate. Here the narrator is the childhood chronicler of the imagined voyages of the musseque children, and even though he obeys their leader's command—"O que ves, escreve-o num livro" (What you see, write it in a book)—he understands the futility of remembering: "Today, Tetembuatubia is not even a simple name on the wall of time. . . . But there was life in its entirety, the place where we found impossible miracles, in a far away long ago."⁸⁹

"The wall of time" (*a parede do tempo*) is an image that Luandino borrowed and modified from Brazilian poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade's "*Confidência do Itabirano*." He uses the image in the closing of "*Cangundos, Verdianos, Santomistas, Nossa Gente*," as the Cape Verdean Roberton dreams of returning home: "On the wall of time, Luanda, that will only be a murmured sound of waters against the hard rocks over there on his island, in the returns."⁹⁰

The images of the wall of time and the many returns for those who are exiled both within and away from their homelands serve as encapsulating metaphors for Luandino's textualizations of nation. His counternarratives to acculturated discourse write against Western notions of chronological time that would colonize Angolan narrative itself in a sequential and false ordering of communal memory and orality that would further separate the past from the future. Luandino Vieira's resistance texts propose transculturated

forms and languages to narrate the *estórias* of Angolan nationness, its imagined pasts, and its possible futures.

The narrator of "Cangundos, Verdianos, Santomistas, Nossa Gente" may project a time-bound image of Luanda but counters this very image with another: "City of truth that no longer exists, never more, it will only be found again one day in a faraway land. And there, it will seem like nothing we've seen or lived—it is the other thing, the veiled light living in the heart, a dewy and serene mist within those who are in exile."⁹³

The wall of time, that seemingly eternal colonial boundary that enforces dominant history through European time, remains as a marker of the colonial past in the narratives but is always countered by the collective image of that other Luanda that stays secreted away in the heart to be narrated as *visions of imagined nation*. The liberating reclaiming of an integral Angolan past is the telling and retelling of multiple *estórias* within Luandino Vieira's narratives. By drawing formally from oral traditional structures and by inventing a language that reinvents the polyglot possibilities of Luanda's hybrid community, Luandino imagines an Angolan nation that is at its heart a collective retaking of community and homeland.

Chapter 3

Mimicry in the Contact Zone

Menacing the Colonizers

Uanhenga Xitu was born in 1924 in the Calomboloca village in the Luandan region of Icolo e Bengo. Baptized as Agostinho Mendes de Carvalho, Xitu uses his Kimbundu birth name, which he has always emphasized is not a pen name. Xitu was one of the original organizers of the MPLA and was imprisoned between 1959 and 1970 in Luanda and Tarrafal. Since Angolan independence, Xitu has served as a member of the Central Committee of the MPLA, as minister of health, and as ambassador to the former East Germany. The author began writing in Tarrafal, and his works were published after 1974.

For Luandino Vieira, the narration of nation is a transculturated practice that reclaims discursive terrain through the invention of hybrid Angolan literary forms and languages. For Uanhenga Xitu, his contemporary and one-time fellow prisoner in the political camp in Tarrafal, narrating the Angolan nation is no less an imagining of hybrid identities but is carried out under subversive strategies of mimicry and farce. Homi Bhabha has suggested the role that mimicry plays in the subversion of colonial discourse by the discriminated subject: "The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority."⁹⁴ Mimicry is menacing precisely because the colonized subject seems to be gazing adoringly at the metropolis, while there is a second gaze behind the adoration that is mocking and carries the threat of disruption.

In Uanhenga Xitu's narratives, this second gaze, masked within the colonial visions of the other, is the one that counts. Xitu mocks the discourses of the Portuguese civilizing mission with a counterstance that seemingly defies hybrid Angolan identity. Behind that public stance, however, is the coun-