

LUSOTOPIE

Lusotopie

Recherches politiques internationales sur les espaces
issus de l'histoire et de la colonisation portugaises

XXII(2) | 2023

L'Angola au XXI^e siècle. Imagination collective et
production des savoirs

Uncanny Women and Angolan Unhomeliness

Femmes inquiétantes et « étrangeté » angolaise

Mulheres esquisitas e estranhamento angolano

Phillip Rothwell



Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/lusotopie/7668>

DOI: 10.4000/12j40

ISSN: 1768-3084

Publisher

Ideas - UMR 7307

Provided by Bodleian Libraries of the University of Oxford



Electronic reference

Phillip Rothwell, "Uncanny Women and Angolan Unhomeliness", *Lusotopie* [Online], XXII(2) | 2023, Online since 31 December 2023, connection on 22 October 2024. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/lusotopie/7668> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/12j40>

This text was automatically generated on October 19, 2024.



The text only may be used under licence CC BY-NC 4.0. All other elements (illustrations, imported files) are "All rights reserved", unless otherwise stated.

Uncanny Women and Angolan Unhomeliness

Femmes inquiétantes et « étrangeté » angolaise
Mulheres esquisitas e estranhamento angolano

Phillip Rothwell

- 1 In their seminal treatise on postcolonial literature, *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin point to Heidegger's *Unheimlichkeit* or "not-at-homeness" as motivating the "social and imaginative world in post-colonial writing" (Ashcroft *et al.* 2002: 81). They trace this "not-at-homeness" to the original colonizing moment that left the "conquerors" and "present controllers of the means of communication" mired in a sense of displacement that spilled over beyond the colonizers, so that "such *Unheimlichkeit* is experienced not only by the residents of the settler colonies but by all people situated at the ambivalent site of interpretation itself" (*ibid.*: 81-82).
- 2 In the Angolan context, the most ambivalent part of that unhomely site of interpretation, one that spilled over well into the twenty-first century, is highly gendered. From it, women writers have risen up, shedding the burden of their metaphorized bodies that had been reduced to disempowered representations of nationhood. Women writers have enunciated through uncanny alternative visions that write against, reject, or set aside, the twentieth-century nationalist narratives of the MPLA,¹ in order to claim a subjectivity un beholden to and disinherited from the New Man. The examples to which I will refer in this article include Ana Paula Tavares, Rosária da Silva, Margarida Paredes, and Chó do Guri. In particular, da Silva, Paredes and Chó do Guri have unchained motherhood from its passivity as a colonial-legacy marker of self-sacrificial, self-erasing femininity, foregrounding alternative toponymies, alternative primal scenes, and alternative national narratives in uncanny ways.
- 3 As a range of feminist critics have long noted, the mid-twentieth-century process of creating "national difference" in Africa used as its cornerstone the sexual binary, with

“the figure of the woman as a primary vehicle” (Boehmer 2005: 5). Nowhere was this clearer than in Angola, where embodying the nation “as woman by male leaders, artists and writers” (*ibid.*: 4) that Elleke Boehmer detects across the independence-era continent, was put on steroids by male leaders who *were* the artists and writers. The most obvious case is the revered poet-president Agostinho Neto. His generic mother figure in *Sagrada Esperança* owes as much to the social realist textual mother penned by Gorki he read avidly while studying medicine in Portugal (Almeida 1987: 7) as to a culture of telluric maternalism imagined in Africa, or projected onto the continent in the aftermath of the colonial encounter.

- 4 The use of metaphorized motherhood as a political trope by the early cultural producers of the MPLA extended a very gendered and gendering construction of the mother that reinscribed a certain degree of passivity conflated with womanhood from an essentially colonial paradigm. The “patriotic mother” strategically activated during the struggle for independence by the MPLA discussed by Selina Makana, “ensures that all women – even single and childless women – understand that they have to contribute to their country’s liberation by taking on the labor of caring” (Makana 2017: 355). It assumed “an essentialist and monolithic representation of women”, reflecting the ways “the female body is culturally read and represented in Angola” (*ibid.*: 357). As Makana points out, scholarship from African diasporic feminists and women of colour (for example: James & Busia 1993, Nnaemeka 1997, Soiri 1996, Collins 1991) refutes the “exclusively patriarchal analysis” of motherhood, “as it has been theorized in the West” (*ibid.*: 356). Motherhood exceeds the traditionally dichotomous boundaries of Western womanhood, as gender-friendly strands of feminist theory have increasingly acknowledged, a consequence of the understanding that the category of woman is itself “an open one, subject to perpetual interpretation and debate” (Butler 2024: 17).
- 5 Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí goes further, provocatively asking against the backdrop of her analysis of Yoruba culture, *What Gender Is Motherhood?* (Oyèwùmí 2015). She points out that in cultures like Yoruba, prior to the arrival of European colonizers, gender was not a parameter of classification. As a result, the idea of motherhood did not emanate from a gendered category. With the epistemic violence of colonialism, all that changed. Motherhood became “a paradigmatic gendered institution” (*ibid.*: 58). In Oyèwùmí’s earlier work, she accuses Marxism of a “somatocentricity” (Oyèwùmí 1997: 3) underpinned by gendered bodies. The accusation certainly appears relevant in the Angolan case, where the activation of “patriotic motherhood”, like Neto’s poetic renditions of mothers, is a peculiar fusion of a colonial and Marxist mindset that disdains non-European ways of knowing as backward and anti-revolutionary, and reduces women to maternal objects.
- 6 When David Mestre and Amável Fernandes interpret Neto’s poems as “*de amor à África mulher e mãe*” (Mestre & Fernandes 2014: 701) or Manuel Simões points to the visceral relation in Neto’s poetry between “*a terra-África*” and “*o seio materno*” (Simões 2012: 91), they highlight and feed into a critical aesthetic tradition that through metaphor and conflation ideologically limited the terrain of possibility for women in post-independence Angola, reflecting and reinscribing the epistemological shifts of coloniality. Even when Viriato da Cruz embodies in his “*Mamã Negra*” the “*drama vivo duma Raça*” (Cruz 1982: 75), women are interpellated through motherhood – and sacrifice for an Other’s future – that only gives them agency at one degree removed, through the revolutionary sons they engender and train. This is not motherhood as

leadership that Oyěwùmí sees in the political deployment of Mother among contemporary African women politicians (Oyěwùmí 2015: 216-218). Rather, it is a replication of the colonial and Marxist restrictions that an MPLA “gender-saturated” form of motherhood implied (*ibid.*: 59). It is motherhood as an institution rather than an experience – a distinction drawn by Adrienne Rich to distinguish between the monolithic, patriarchal, limiting appropriation of maternity and the heterogenous lived experience of maternal ties (Rich 1986). That appropriation and institutionalization allowed for the “yolking of motherhood and victimhood” to continue to be a “feature of [Western] feminist discourse”, the validity of which Obioma Nnaemeka, among others, questions (Nnaemeka, 1997: 5). In some ways, that yolking in an Angolan context was the symptom of a battle against a phantasm created by an accumulation of liberation-era texts drafted within a colonial mindset.

- 7 As was the case in much of lusophone Africa, from its earliest days, the imagination of Angolan nationhood as conceived by men was often haunted by some form of “mother-ness”, with all the chauvinistic baggage that implies, particularly when juxtaposed with narratives of pioneership or revolution that assigned to the New Man primacy in the creation of the nation. At the same time, the texts written by women most celebrated by the MPLA in the era of the independence struggle and its aftermath, like Deolinda Rodrigues’s “*Mamã África*” (Rodrigues 1980: 51-52) or Alda Lara’s “*Prelúdio*” (Lara 1973: 65-66) may be naively read (or wilfully misread) to repeat the trope – motherhood as the defining function of women, and their wombs in the service of the nation. Such a reading aligns with the institution of “patriotic motherhood”, conveniently overlooking the lived, and very contingent, experience of mothers that particularly Alda Lara’s poetry enunciated.
- 8 Once he was president of Angola, Agostinho Neto made clear he wanted to create a country in which “a man may feel that his future is secure [... and] a woman shall not be afraid of having children, of educating her children” (Neto 1980: 47-48). As the “Father of the Nation”, he “guides the country and safeguards its ideology” (Makana 2017: 355). The gendered demarcation of roles could not be clearer. Neto’s speeches as president were the political culmination of a worldview first delineated in his poetry. His poems like “*A voz igual*” conferred on “*os homens*” the defining role in the progress of History. The “*povo negro*” is, for Neto, constituted by “*homens anónimos no espírito da triste vaidade branca / agora construindo a nossa pátria / a nossa África*” (Neto 1987: 152). The double colonization of women (Petersen & Rutherford 1986) – under colonialism and then under an ardently enduring patriarchal postindependence worldview – surfaces as a redoubled anonymity in Neto. First, the colonizer does not see women as subjects with agency. Then, Neto, when he references them, infantilizes them – as “*raparigas*” in “*A voz igual*” (Neto 1987: 153) – or generically interpellates them – as “*mãe*” in “*Adeus à hora da largada*”, the perennially self-sacrificing but never self-realizing or historical subject (*ibid.*: 47-48). In the latter poem, a contrasting male poetic voice messianically asserts: “*sou aquele por quem se espera*” (*ibid.*: 47).
- 9 Luiza Inglês, who served as the secretary general of the Angolan Women’s Movement, the OMA, reached the conclusion shortly after independence that “*a nossa luta não era a mesma dos homens*” (ContraCorrente 2017: 149). As Nnaemeka asserts, this was a common experience across the continent, where “nationalist politics depoliticizes women’s politics, forcing the repoliticization of women’s politics back on the national agenda only in the aftermath of nationalist struggles” (Nnaemeka 1997: 2) By then, the

depiction of women by male writers was often steeped in what Dorothée Boulanger identifies as a toxic masculinity. Even if in subtler forms than during the struggle for independence, women were often portrayed by men through a vulnerability that failed “to capture the complexity and ambivalence of women’s relation to the struggle, before and after independence, highlight[ing] how the limitations of Marxists’ state-led feminism suffused Angola’s literary creation” (Boulanger 2022: 136).

- 10 Against the backdrop of nationalist and state-sanctioned writing that was overwhelmingly male-centered and reductive in its portrayal and placement of women, Boulanger points to the “continuing struggle of Angolan women to exist and be heard in the postcolony” (Boulanger 2021: 198). Women writers have, of course, existed but overwhelmingly they write from a margin that both obliges and enables them to contest in uncanny ways the flaws and discrepancies of the dominant nationalist narratives that exclude them. Where many leading male writers (from Pepetela and Luandino Vieira to Manuel Rui and Boaventura Cardoso) went from a position of contestation to complicity and then disillusionment as colonialism was replaced by a socialist revolution that opened the way for corruption and crony capitalism, women writers did not generally enjoy the privileges of being in power. They remained very much on the terrain of the *Unheimlichkeit* and from it, they wrote back not to or from the Empire, but against the limitations placed on their desires by their male counterparts, who had grabbed the reins of power in the name of revolution.
- 11 The “uncanny”, at times, appears to be a Freudian catch-all. Much has been written about the “unheimlich” – or “unhomely” as the original German is often glossed. It covers everything from the return of the repressed to an uneasy re-encounter with something that has been defamiliarized, or is just plain weird. In the present article, I am interested in the uncanny’s link with the “foreignness” of language, its rooting in a sense of unhomeliness, and its warping of familiar narratives. There is always something of the performative in the uncanny. In different ways and by different women writers, foreignness, unhomeliness and new takes on particularly nationalist narratives are linked with cultural attempts to wrest Mother from the ideological grasp of the MPLA, with its historically monopolizing, gender-saturated, institutional fantasy of Angolanness. The writers I choose to exemplify this purposefully expand the boundary of what is covered by Angolan letters, to include Margarida Paredes. She was born a Portuguese woman and opted to fight alongside the MPLA in the 1970s. She points out that, while she has profound connections of citizenry with Portugal and Brazil, the only country for which she has ever been prepared to die is Angola. That weighs heavily on who she is (ContraCorrente 2017: 154).
- 12 The MPLA’s own definition of who counted as Angolan and who did not was historically more determined by ideological commitment rather than any concept of *jus soli* or *jus sanguinis* (Rothwell 2019: 50). Some of the most celebrated Angolan male writers, including Luandino Vieira and Rui Duarte de Carvalho, were, like Paredes, born in Portugal. Paredes mingled within the highest cadres of the liberation movement, teaching José Eduardo Dos Santos’s first wife, Tatiana Kukanova, Portuguese. She was also engaged to be married to Paulo da Silva Mungungu, more commonly known as Comandante Dangereux, who was assassinated during the violence of May 1977 (Lucas 2016). Her work is relevant because she brings into focus colonial motherhood as an experience that shaped independent Angola too, as well as reconfiguring the Freudian paradigm in uncanny, lusotropical ways.

- 13 I am aware of the charge of eurocentrism that can be levelled at someone who draws on Freudian terms and concepts to consider African texts. I am also aware of Deleuze and Guattari's damning critique of Oedipus as a tool of ideological repression in the process of globalization (Deleuze & Guattari 2004) or as Robert Young puts it, as the "policing agent for capitalism" (Young 1995: 168). The reason I think deploying aspects from Freud's framework is useful in the context of Angolan women writers contesting the cultural position assigned to them, and in particular, in their recasting of motherhood, is because Freud is so obsessed with little boys and their fantasies about their mummies, and how toxic those fantasies can be. As much as the Angolan New Man claimed to inflect social realism and scientific socialism, culturally he was staging a psychodrama, with clear roots in the experience of being colonized that rendered "mother-ness" a trope that blocked equality of opportunity in the newly born nation. In other words, Angolan independence is not just about the failures of Marx. It is about the failures of Freud, too. It is often argued that the Angolan Revolution did not deliver because too many in the MPLA leadership, particularly post-Neto, were never really committed to it, or because the Marxist-Leninist model inevitably flounders in what was at the time of independence an overwhelmingly agrarian society. These arguments, however, overlook the Western gender normativity that MPLA cadres naturalized, with its inherent binary infected by an imposed inequality masquerading as the natural order of things. That explains why the Angolan poet João Tala can, without irony, assert "*a mulher é a pátria do homem*" (Vasconcellos 2005: 416).
- 14 The central issue is always one of social construction of the nation through cultural metaphors of sexual difference, something that has a long history and a wide breadth. As Ana Paula Ferreira's analysis of *Women Writing Portuguese Colonialism in Africa* demonstrates, even under the Portuguese Republican agenda of the 1890s, in which a "nationalist project of imperial rebirth [...] spoke a transnational language of order and progress and, along with it, of republican feminism" (Ferreira 2020: 34), national shortcomings were rhetorically alloyed with an embodiment of women as simultaneously responsible for "the various lacks or failures that made the Portuguese 'others' vis-à-vis an ideal heroic image of themselves" and "the main pillar of the imperialist nation" as the "educator of man" (*ibid.*). Women were recast as the backbone of the Empire, and its brains-by-proxy through the colonial sons they taught, a rhetoric that Salazar would later pick up and actively legislate. As Ferreira points out, "the prescriptions offered to convert the feminine other into a version of the idealized national male were insistently related to the need for education and professional or practical instruction for women" (*ibid.*). At the same time, "it became clear [...] that woman-ness, like nation-ness, [was] no longer conceived as pre-given stable essences, determined solely by biological and geographical spaces and histories. They were, rather, deliberate and conscientious acts aiming to transform nature" (*ibid.*).
- 15 Those who led the struggles for independence in Lusophone Africa – including Amílcar Cabral who understood the potential of equal opportunities for all sexes better than most of his counterparts – acquired their political formation against the vestiges of that backdrop, in which woman-ness and nation-ness were malleable forms to be molded and molding in the service of revolutionary change. During and after the struggles against colonialism, and particularly in those liberation cultures where *négritude* had been an important dynamizing actor, "mother figures were used [...] to imagine the nation into being" (Boehmer 2005: 14), conveniently delimitating the roles and

expectations of women. This was intricately linked to the ideological positions of the independence movements, as the title of Hilary Owen's seminal study of Mozambican women writers, *Mother Africa, Father Marx*, succinctly signals (Owen 2007a).

- 16 The Angolan case is starker because the MPLA deployed a more vigorous cultural operation that put literature, at least immediately after independence, at the heart of politics. This allowed predominantly male, politically engaged writers to believe they could literally pen the nation into existence. Yet, even as that first generation of post-independence writers became more critical of how the nation was being configured, they remained New Men to the core. They never truly abandoned what Ana Sofia Ganho once highlighted as "the concept of personified territory" that "would remain at the mercy of various interpretations that emphasized its 'womanhood' as [...] 'homeness'" (Ganho 2004: 156-157). Against that reduction to "homeness," the unheimly, or "unheimlich", becomes a creative instrument of subversion for certain Angolan women writers.
- 17 A fundamental example of this subversive creativity is Ana Paula Tavares, whose embodied, sensual poetry raised eyebrows and male opprobrium in the 1980s. When, in 1984, she versed on the "*frágil vagina semeada*" in which "*se alargam as sedes*" (Tavares, P. 2015: 25), she scandalized the New Man, whose poetry she has repeatedly asserted she never had any intention of continuing to write. She turned fruit into open metaphors for desiring women's bodies, rather than women's bodies into restricted metaphors that marshalled nationhood, gender-coding agency; see for examples her poems, "*O Mamão*" (*ibid.*: 25); "*A Manga*" (*ibid.*: 27); "*A Nêspira*" (*ibid.*:23). The familiarity of the objects she described in her early poetry took on uncanny forms as they came to represent aspects of female sexuality the New Man could not imagine, or rather, was extremely uncomfortable imagining. In an interview with Michel Laban, Ana Paula Tavares insists that in order to represent women as corporeal and sensual poetic subjects, "*eu sinto-me melhor quando grito*" (Laban 1992: 861). Her shouting sensuality changed the coordinates of what Angolan poetry could do. She took it out of its comfort zone. She redefined the political freight of women's bodies, previously used to literalize the nation penned into being through hackneyed tropes of mother Africa. Her literal bodies breathe, sense and desire in recalcitrant ways. Her verse gainsays the homely domestication of a woman's place, re-presenting it as vibrant, bodily and beyond the hearth. She so unsettled elements in the Angolan male literary establishment that they accused her of producing pornography (Ribeiro 2007: 150).
- 18 In many ways, Ana Paula Tavares opened the way for future Angolan women writers and filmmakers to tack towards strategies of defamiliarization that, in a feminizing Freudian twist, turn domestic spaces and metafiction into uncanny statements that question both "womanhood" as "homeness" and the territoriality of motherhood. Ana Paula Tavares is very clear that she is a woman who "speaks imperial languages" and yet who hears the other languages of Angola. In her words, she "work[s] them, cannibalize[s] them, devour[s] them" (Ribeiro 2007: 151). Her project is centred on the "incorporation of various heritages" (*ibid.*: 152). That conscious, linguistic process is part of what marks her out as an uncanny writer, undermining an MPLA vision of the world.
- 19 So, what is the uncanny and why is it relevant to how these writers challenge the expectations of the revolution? Nicholas Royle's very broad definition of the uncanny links it to "a strangeness of framing and borders, an experience of liminality. It may be

that the uncanny is a feeling that happens only to oneself, within oneself, but it is never one's own" (Royle 2003: 2). As I will argue later in relation to Chó do Guri, that can imply a certain level of interpellation – a subject brought into being by a voice that is not her own, or at least, a staging of that process, to challenge male voices that have overwritten women's bodies.

- 20 Royle asserts that the uncanny may “be construed as a foreign body within oneself, even the experience of oneself as a foreign body [...] Above all, the uncanny is intimately entwined in language, with how we conceive and represent what is happening within ourselves, to ourselves, to the world” (Royle 2003: 2). He sees the uncanny at play in a wide philosophical tradition from Freud and Marx to Derrida and Heidegger, for whom “the fundamental character of our being in the world is uncanny, unhomely not-at-home” (*ibid.*: 4). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin redeploy that framework to understand postcolonial subjectivities. This is hardly a feminist lineage, even if Derrida's work through the lens of Spivak has phallogocentrism as one of its concerns. To a certain extent, these men are coding the uncanny as a sense of alienation at the core of colonial and postcolonial men's experience of the world. In contrast, writers like Rosária da Silva, Margarida Paredes, and Chó do Guri exemplify the activation of uncanny strategies, rewriting narratives of homeliness “to elude mastery” (*ibid.*: 15-16). In the process, they distil the amalgamation of motherhood and Africa into far more sophisticated renditions of desiring, sinning, and awkward women. In sum, complex human beings with voices of their own, who understand Virginia Woolf's *sine qua non* – of a room of one's own for successful women's writing (Woolf 1929) – to include challenging the familiarity of the home in which that room is located, simultaneously rupturing the traditions and concerns of strands of white, Western feminism.
- 21 Rosária da Silva at some level takes her cue from Ana Paula Tavares, in the way that she adapts linguistic heritages as placeholders in her depiction of a mother's experience of domestic abuse in 1980s Angola. She is considered to be independent Angola's first published woman novelist. Her 1998 *Totonya* portrays the violence of a deterritorialized Angolan home space, making a powerful “protest against the physical and psychological abuse of women” (Hamilton 2002: 146). In the story, Totonya moves from Luanda to Lobito-Benguela, with her three children, to join her husband Quim. She subsequently loses a child who is born prematurely, and this loss leads to a marked change in Quim's behaviour. He begins a relationship with another woman, Joana, insisting on his “traditional” right to be polygamous. Totonya's various efforts to enlist help from her family, as well as the MPLA, fail to stem Quim's increasingly unpredictable, violent behaviour. In Maria Tavares's words, Quim “eliminates the things that make [Totonya] a woman” (Tavares, M. 2018: 175). He denies her a sex life, stopping her from having further children. He disempowers her as his official wife, going off with Joana for a year. And he is repeatedly violent towards Totonya, eventually throwing her out of her home, abandoning her and their children.
- 22 Maria Tavares sees the novel as deconstructing “representations of culture and gender in the discourse of the dominant [MPLA] ideology” (Tavares, M. 2018: 159). I would add that da Silva challenges that ideology most forcefully in her rendition of motherhood as something beyond the cultural grasp of the independence-era party. Totonya survives despite the party's inaction, and the blind eye it turns to the realities she faces as a woman and a mother. She is not a metonym of *Mãe África*, but a being with desires, and

aspirations who, to paraphrase the title of Maria Tavares's book, finds herself with no country as a nonconforming woman. Or, as a woman with no home or room of her own, left to occupy an uncanny space, in which motherhood is no longer an act of sacrifice or national service. She is a mother far from the MPLA ideal.

- 23 In *No Country for Nonconforming Women: Feminine Conceptions of Lusophone Africa*, Maria Tavares repeatedly draws on Edward Said's discussion of exile, viewing the postindependence nation as "an internally exiled community" (Tavares, M. 2018: 24). Conscious of Said's omission of "gender as an element that not only refutes the homogeneity of experience of exile, but also unfolds into a myriad of exiles when analysed alongside other factors such as race and class" (*ibid.*: 110), Maria Tavares nevertheless sees the usefulness of Said's analysis of exile to explore an "internal condition, a mental state of detachment towards the imposed communal imaginary that occurs within the geographical limits of the nation" (*ibid.*: 153). At some level, the uncanny mirrors internal exile's account of alienation, in its sense of not quite belonging or fitting into a space we come to inhabit. Said's claim that exiles need as quickly as possible to recuperate the similarity of a world now lost to them (Said 2012: 181) is less applicable in the case of Angolan women writers, whose resistance is to a continuation of colonial gender norms in the postindependence era.
- 24 Da Silva captures this nuance in the uncanny way she challenges writing's orthodoxy. She employs a style of language that is purposefully alienating and "foreign", "unhomely", paradoxically foregrounding what have come to be known as national languages in how she writes Angolan place names. For example, Benguela is written "Bengela" or "Mbengela"; Luanda becomes "Luwanda"; Lobito is "Lubitu"; Lubango is "Lumbangu". She doubles down on Freud's insight in his essay on the uncanny that "we ourselves speak a language that is foreign" (Freud 1985: 341) or Kristeva's subsequent assertion that "foreignness, an uncanny one, [...] irrigates our very speaking-being [...] we are foreigners to ourselves" (Kristeva 1991: 170). That uncanny "foreignness" da Silva forges is grounded on changing the orthography of how we read the places where her characters move. The towns and city names may sound the same but look different and unfamiliar, at least to the Portuguese-reading literate elite able to absorb the words on her pages. They are defamiliarized by being nationalized. Like Ana Paula Tavares before her, Rosária da Silva incorporates "various heritages", not by how her words sound but how they look, reminding her reader of the intrinsic foreignness of an imperial language that became Angola's official tongue.
- 25 Da Silva provides a detailed linguistic introduction in her novel, a way of asserting the author's credentials in formal linguistics, and also forestalling the inherently sexist critiques that bedevilled her Mozambican counterpart Paulina Chiziane's early work when Portuguese male critics felt empowered to complain about her "*falta do domínio do português*" (Owen 2007b: 487). Da Silva is highlighting her conscious decision to make the description of her protagonists' experience from the language of its representation to what that language depicts, unhomely – at least for a Portuguese-dominant reader, like most members of the MPLA elite were. *Totonya* is not a comfortable read. Its nationalized, uncanny toponymy is part of that process of alienation. The character of Totonya-as-mother may just about survive in the novel, but there is no place for her in the MPLA writing system.
- 26 Being out-of-place is a recurrent theme in Margarida Paredes's debut novel, *O Tibete de África*. First published in 2006, it has at its heart an uncanny postcolonial, post-

lusotropical inflection of Freud's primal scene. Once again, a mother is at stake. She fares even worse than Totonya because it is her daughter who will come to hate her. In the novel, the protagonist Ana recollects a childhood experience of witnessing her mother's sexuality in full force. Unlike in the Freudian version of the primal scene, the child, Ana, is a girl, and her father is missing. Paredes is not metaphorizing a story about a white man imposing pleasure on an apparently subalternized female figure. Instead, Ana's primal scene involves her mother and their black cook, Aguiar. What the child Ana accidentally witnesses but cannot comprehend is not copulation but her mother lay masturbating on the bed, watched by Aguiar, who then misunderstands the cues from Ana's mother and sees her writhing as an invitation to participate. The scene culminates with Ana's mother screaming and pushing the black cook off the bed (Paredes 2009: 20). In this particular primal scene, there is, like in Freud's original, a chain of misunderstandings. The witnessing white child has little clue about what is going on. She will subsequently identify more forcefully with the black cook, who misunderstands at another level what his mistress desires. In fact, in this warped, onanistic version of a lusotropical love narrative in which no connection between competing subjectivities is possible, the black cook will pay for his misunderstanding with his life.

- 27 The primal scene in the novel is fundamental to Ana's psycho-sexual development. In it, no man is needed or accepted to satisfy Ana's mother. The focus is switched from white male prowess and aggression to an ambiguous rejection of the possibilities of an inverted lusotropical form of inter-racial pleasure by a white woman. That rejection will eventually, in the story, be overcome by Ana. She becomes a child *retornada* leaving Angola for Portugal and losing her father in the process. As such, she is subsequently always in a state of *Unheimlichkeit* – belonging nowhere and ever-alienated, feeling the unfamiliar familiarity experienced by the *retornado* generation forced to return a Portugal they both knew and did not know. By the end of the novel, she becomes pregnant by an Angolan. He challenges her bourgeois, Western hang-ups but not before Ana has grown to hate her mother, blaming her for the cook's death, and placing cockroaches in her shoes.
- 28 Paredes's uncanny version of the primal scene renders the domestic space, like da Silva's, one that is uninhabitable. It places limitations on her sexuality and that of her mother, and inflects a colonial heritage with a continued bearing in postindependence Angola. Paredes foregrounds an unspoken side of motherhood as an influence in Angola's history: colonial mothers, who were deemed to act as moral enforcers – “the main pillar of the imperialist nation” (Ferreira 2020: 34). In Paredes's warping of the Oedipal narrative, light is shed on women's desire, unanchored from the shared patriarchal regulating matrix of both the nationalist and colonial mindset.
- 29 In the late 1970s, Paredes moved at the very heart of the MPLA leadership, although she was Portuguese-born with no particular territorial tie to Angola. Forty years later, she realized that “*sob o chapéu da ideologia marxista, o MPLA era um movimento machista, a dominação masculina estava naturalizada e as mulheres eram evidentemente secundarizadas e colocadas num lugar de subordinação aos homens*” (ContraCorrente 2017: 149). She remembers how feminism was repeatedly dismissed within the MPLA as a minor concern emanating from the privileges of the petit bourgeoisie and wonders now “*como não via essas contradições, por que não me questionava?*” (*ibid.*). Her literary and academic trajectory has been dedicated to recuperating women's voices from the discourses of

that “*movimento machista*”. Her scholarship includes the 2015 study, *Combater duas vezes: Mulheres na luta armada em Angola*, that makes a point of acknowledging the roles of women in independence movements beyond the MPLA as well as those who were marginalized within it. *Combater duas vezes* also challenges how Deolinda Rodrigues “*é veiculada de uma forma mítica, onde o que é sublinhado é o ter morrido pela pátria como guerrilheira do MPLA. Esta representação simbólica contribui para silenciar a sua singular história de vida e o pensamento que produziu*” (Paredes 2015: 110).

- 30 The struggle against silencing was also the lifework of one of Angola’s most prolific postindependence women writers, and one of the most overlooked. Chó do Guri – the pen name of Maria de Fátima de Moraes – forged an idiosyncratic style that challenged the New Man, the legacies he inherited from colonialism and the confining legitimacy of his cultural space. Born in Kwanza-Sul in 1959, she died in 2017 having published four novels, children’s stories, a collection of short stories based on her experience growing up in Luanda’s Bairro Operário, and several collections of poetry and chronicles. Although she eventually became a member of the Angolan Writers Union, the literary establishment did not initially welcome her with open arms. The topics she fearlessly explored, from a middle-class experience of street children to the AIDS crisis in Angola, tackled in palpable ways the shortcomings of an MPLA nationalist rhetoric that outlasted any semblance of reality. Probably the greatest reason she was kept on the margins of the literary establishment was because, like Ana Paula Tavares before her, she unabashedly portrayed women as sexual agents whose desires operated well beyond the confines of the New Man’s imagination. For him, she was very much the *Perversa* of the only novel she published in Portugal (Chó do Guri 2012) – supposedly producing pornography like Ana Paula Tavares before her.
- 31 From her earliest work, Chó do Guri faced the patronizing barriers of the male literary establishment and the nationalist misogyny which it projected and protected. The preface of Chó do Guri’s first collection of poems, *Vivências*, exemplifies this. It is, in essence, an exercise in mansplaining of the work that follows, characteristic of the New Man, written by the Portuguese-born often-considered-to-be Angolan poet, literary critic and iconic bookseller, Ricardo Manuel. He explains in his preface how the still young Maria de Fátima brought him a collection of poetry that he did not rate at all (Manuel 1996: 7). He describes the poems that follow as “*todas estas queixas femininas*” and asserts that his initial rejection of Chó do Guri’s work was an act of benevolence. Thanks to him, she became a better poet, or so he would paternalistically have us believe as he ambiguously and ambivalently declares her to be “*mais uma voz de mulher que se levanta nas Letras Angolanas nestes últimos tempos!*” (*ibid.*: 8). He adorns his declaration with an exclamation mark reminiscent of Eça de Queirós at his most ironic, leaving you wondering if he thinks women in the arts is a good thing or a sign of national degeneration. Ricardo Manuel even questions Chó do Guri’s choice of pen name, berating her for such an exotic pseudonym as if Pepetela or Ondjaki were common-all-garden Angolan names. In fact, her nom de plume reflects her experience of being the unacknowledged child of a white father she never knew (Agência Lusa 2007), roughly translating as “the one with no name”, or “without lineage”.
- 32 Manuel does grudgingly praise the work that follows, or at least declares it to be a precursor of what might be better work in the future. Chó do Guri clearly bore him no grudges, dedicating several poems to him in her subsequent volume, *Na boca árida da Kyanda*. Nevertheless, Manuel’s tone is one of male authority, judging, approving and

disapproving of a female-authored text. Chó do Guri's answer to this comes in the poetry she writes, in which she describes being a woman as “vomitar prosperidade / fecundar sem esperma” (Chó do Guri 2007: 42), taking out of the productive process of fertility the need for a male component, in a parallel of Paredes's primal scene, in which no man is required. Her poetry touches on many issues, from seeing herself in the faces of street children – “vejo-me / revejo-me / nestes retratos na rua” (ibid.: 38) – to a poem entitled “Sou cruzada”, in which the poetic voice seeks a stable identity “no cruzamento de culturas desconhecidas” (ibid.: 90).

- 33 In her depiction of motherhood, Chó do Guri is her most uncanny. In some ways she inflects her own story. She was the abandoned daughter of probably a German man she never knew and an Ovimbundu woman, who left her at the doorstep of a nun-run orphanage when she could no longer cope. Perhaps unsurprisingly, mothers across Chó do Guri's work are rather more complicated figures than their literary predecessors in nationalist narratives. But like the “mãe África” of those narratives, Chó do Guri's mothers are interpellated beings, brought into existence through a voice that is not their own. This is a significant contrast to the enunciating position of motherhood we find in the work of Alda Lara, for example, whose 1959 “maternidade” is voiced “dentro de mim” (Lara 1973: 43). Alda Lara is often cited by Angolan women writers, including Ana Paula Tavares and Djina, as an inspiration, as they seek to establish a literary genealogy that does not run exclusively through the pens of men.
- 34 For Chó do Guri, Lara's motherhood is meaningless. So too, is Neto's and Viriato's. The interpellations of Neto and his kin become a source of further alienation in the case of Chó do Guri, as she enacts what Spivak terms a “double-displacement” in any psychodrama that entails a female subjectivity (Spivak 1983: 172-173). Because haunting Chó do Guri's summoning of a maternal object is the poetic voice of a missing father. We see this in “Rainha dos Prazeres”, a poem dedicated “à minha mãe”.

negra!
 rainha dos prazeres
 sorria encabulada
 já comi tua moamba
 traz maruvo ou quissângua
 p'ra engolir as malambas
 despi o cansaço
 no teu loanda
 pra [sic] dar vida à mulata
 que trazias nas entranhas
 ... que nome deste à garota?
 (Chó do Guri 2007: 45)

- 35 The absent father/poetic voice interpellates both a mother “negra!” and the fruit she bears in her “entranhas”, a “mulata” whose name he does not know. There is no loving, self-sacrificial telluric motherhood at stake here, a far cry from the generic “minha mãe (todas as mães negras)” of Agostinho Neto's *Sagrada Esperança*, through whom he metaphorized a continent. “Minha mãe” is still brought into being by a voice that is not her own. However, through the pen of Chó do Guri, the implied voice describes from a position of wilful ignorance – not even knowing or really caring for the name of the girl he engenders, with the poem alluding to complex colonial legacies that render the trope of motherhood far from innocent.

- 36 Chó do Guri returns to a similar theme in “*História*”, a sociologically encoded explanation of her existence:

minha mãe;
 uma vaca
 dengosa e vadia
 meu pai;
 um touro aturdido
 cheio de vigor
 eu sou mais uma história
 de um país invadido
 (Chó do Guri 2007: 89)

- 37 A lot is at play in this short poem, not least a very biological motherhood that is far from innocent; sensuality; the staging of desire; and the complex sociological results of imperialism. Mother is animalesque rather than telluric – a caricature rather than a metaphor, summoned into existence by a daughter whose being becomes the metonym for the messy results of the colonial encounter. She is a micro-history, one among many (“*mais uma história*”) – rather than a unifying component in a teleological process – cf. Neto’s “*minha mãe (todas as mães negras)*”. Like in Paredes’s work, there is emphasis on a daughter’s projection of her mother in a less-than-favourable light. When Adrienne Rich reflected on “*matrophobia*” in the thinking of a strand of second-wave white, Western feminists, she defined it as “the fear not of one’s mother or motherhood but of *becoming one’s mother*” (Rich 1986: 237). Feminist daughters did not want to occupy what they saw as the gender-coded restrictions that emanated from the sacrificial passivity of being a womb-for-the-future. In the work of both Paredes and Chó do Guri, where we witness a certain degree of animus towards maternal figures, it is from a desire not to repeat their mothers’ perceived lack of agency. Patriotic motherhood was, for them, a phantasmatic act of self-annihilation. They both depict motherhood through the complex reality of what it means to be a postindependence daughter, still haunted by colonial legacies entwined with the weight of the nationalist narrative.
- 38 Motherhood, across Chó do Guri’s work, is frequently a process of interpellation, in which the mother figure is brought into being through the voice of another. She is never idealized, and always reveals more about those who bring her into being than any innate essence. She is a malleable being to be molded and molding, like the strategies of “*woman-ness*” and “*nation-ness*” Ana Paula Ferreira highlighted in 1890s Portugal, repeated by nationalist narratives, but this time in a quest for independent female subjectivity rather than as part of the erasure of her individuality. In terms of tactics, Chó do Guri replicates the New Man poets and their uber-paradigm, Neto. The difference is the distance between where we imagine the poetic voice and the poets to be situated. In the way critics read Neto, the voice bringing mother into being for the continent is fused into the poets as New Men. For Chó do Guri, there is a distancing in which she enacts the voice of an Other, used to interpellate. Her poetic voices straddle genders, from absent fathers to frustrated daughters, freighting the mothers they summon with inadequacy. Central to Chó do Guri’s project is claiming the right to enunciate from a position untainted by the expectations or restraints of the New Man, unencumbered by *his* mother. As she succinctly puts it, “*quero ser só poeta*” (Chó do Guri 2007: 93), in her own right, defining her own parameters. Like Ana Paula Tavares before

her, she is not interested in writing the New Man's poetry. Instead, she uncannily rewrites the space his mother occupied, filling it with doubt and contradiction.

- 39 To conclude, we might remind ourselves of just how prudish and limiting the vision of the New Man could be. One of the paradigmatic texts of the revolution, Pepetela's *Mayombe* (1980), had its publication stalled for nearly a decade. Its release was eventually sanctioned by Agostinho Neto, but not without his objecting to Pepetela's portrayal of Ondina, the main female character in the novel. Angola's poet-president was concerned about the poor example that her perceived licentiousness would set for Angola's women. Her sin was to sleep with more than one man. For Neto, female characters in literature were chaste mothers, socialist versions of the Virgin Mary or Africanized renditions of Gorki's Pelageya Nilovna Vlasova. Confronted with this legacy, Ana Paula Tavares, Rosária da Silva, Margarida Paredes and Chó do Guri have all in uncanny ways deconstructed that worldview. By depicting the uninhabitability of the nationalist domestic space and the uninhabitable inheritance of its colonial precursors, women writers have opened up unhomey new places from which to speak. Be it the defamiliarization of a language that actively engages with the multiple linguistic heritages of Angola or the defamiliarization of the discourses of sexual awakening, one of their greatest legacies is to claim positions of enunciation free from the overbearing weight of the New Man.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agência Lusa 2007, "História de uma escritora que nasceu sem apelido por ser filha de branco", *RTP Notícias*, February 9, https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/cultura/historia-de-uma-escritora-que-nasceu-sem-apelido-por-ser-filha-de-branco_n159893 (accessed on July 30, 2023).
- Almeida, R. de 1987, *A vida e a obra de Agostinho Neto*, Luanda, Comité Central do MPLA-PT.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. 2002, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, London, Taylor & Francis.
- Boehmer, E. 2005, *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.
- Boulanger, D. 2021, "Centring Women or Rehabilitating Masculinity? Gender, Literature and Late Nineteenth Century Angola", in Bethencourt, F. ed., *Gendering the Portuguese-speaking World*, Leiden, Brill: 179-198.
- Boulanger, D. 2022, *Fiction as History: Resistance and Complicities in Angolan Postcolonial Literature*, Oxford, Legenda.
- Butler, J. 2024, *Who's Afraid of Gender*, London, Allen Lane.
- Chó do Guri 1996, *Vivências*, Luanda, Trirumo.
- Chó do Guri 2007, *Na boca árida da kyanda: poesia*, Luanda, Kilombelombe.
- Chó do Guri 2012, *A perversa*, Lisbon, Chiado.

- Collins, P.H. 1991, "The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother-Daughter Relationships", in Bell-Scott, P. et al. eds, *Double Stitch: Black Women Write About Mothers and Daughters*, Boston, Beacon Press: 42-60.
- ContraCorrente 2017, "História de vida em trânsito: Entrevista com Margarida Paredes", *ContraCorrente: Revista de Estudos Literários*, 5: 145-154.
- Cruz, V. da 1982, "Mamã Negra", in Tenreiro, F. & Andrade, M. Pinto de eds, *Poesia negra de expressão portuguesa*, Linda-a-Velha, África Editora.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. 2004, *Anti-Oedipus*, Hurley R., Seem, M. & Lane, H.R. trans, London, Continuum.
- Ferreira, A.P. 2020, *Women Writing Portuguese Colonialism in Africa*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press.
- Freud, S. 1985 [1919], "The Uncanny", Strachey, J. trans., in *Pelican Freud Library*, 14, Harmondsworth, Penguin: 339-376.
- Ganho, A.S. 2004, "Sex in the Shadow of the Nation: Angola in the Voices of Lopito Feijóo and Paula Tavares", in Owen, H. & Rothwell, P. eds., *Sexual/Textual Empires: Gender and Marginality in Lusophone African Literature*, Bristol, HiPlaS: 155-175.
- Hamilton, R.G. 2002, "Not Just for Love, Pleasure or Procreation", in Quinlan, S. Canty & Fernando Arenas, F. eds, *Lusosex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-speaking World*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press: 130-148.
- James, S.M. & Busia, A. eds 1993, *Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women*, London, Routledge.
- Kristeva, J. 1991, *Strangers to Ourselves*, Roudiez, L.S. trans, New York, Columbia University Press.
- Laban, M. 1992, *Angola: Encontro com escritores*, Porto, Fundação Engenheiro António de Almeida.
- Lara, A. 1973, *Poemas*, Lobito, Capricórnio.
- Lucas, I. 2016, "Longform Domingo: 'Eu estava lá'", *Público*, January 10, www.publico.pt/2016/01/10/sociedade/noticia/eu-estive-la-1719431 (accessed on July 30, 2023).
- Makana, S. 2017, "Motherhood as Activism in the Angolan People's War, 1961-1975", *Meridians*, 15(2): 353-381.
- Manuel, R. 1996, "Chó do Guri: Palavras em tom de voz dolorido (à laia de Prefácio)", in Chó do Guri, *Vivências*, Luanda, Trirumo: 7-8.
- Mestre, D. & Fernandes, A. 2014, "Agostinho Neto: Poeta da África mulher e mãe", in Laranjeira, P. & Rocha, A.T. eds, *A noção de ser*, Luanda, Fundação Agostinho Neto: 699-701.
- Neto, A.A. 1980, *Speeches*, Luanda, Department of Politico-Ideological Education, Propaganda and Information.
- Neto, A.A. 1987, *Sagrada Esperança*, 11th ed., Lisboa, Sá da Costa.
- Nnaemeka, O. ed. 1997, *The Politics of (M)Othering: Womanhood, Identity, and Resistance in African Literature*, London, Routledge.
- Owen, H. 2007a, *Mother Africa, Father Marx: Women's Writing of Mozambique 1948-2002*, Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press.
- Owen, H. 2007b, "Third World/Third Sex: Gender, Orality and a Tale of Two Marias in Mia Couto and Paulina Chiziane", *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 84(4): 475-488.

- Oyěwùmí, O. 1997, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Oyěwùmí, O. 2015, *What Gender is Motherhood?*, New York, Palgrave.
- Paredes, M. 2009, *O Tibete de África*, Luanda, Caxinde.
- Paredes, M. 2015, *Combater duas vezes: Mulheres na luta armada em Angola*, Vila do Conde, Verso da História.
- Pepetela 1980, *Mayombe*, Lisbon, Edições 70.
- Petersen, K. Holst & Rutherford, A. eds 1986, *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-colonial Women's Writing*, Oxford, Dangaroo Press.
- Ribeiro, M. Calafate 2007, "A Heritage of One's Own: A Conversation with Ana Paula Tavares", *ellipsis: The Journal of the American Portuguese Studies Association*, 5: 147-52.
- Rich, A. 1986, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, New York, Norton.
- Rodrigues, D. 1980, "Mamã África", in Andrade, M. de ed., *Antologia temática de poesia Africana 2*, Praia, Instituto Caboverdeano do Livro: 51-52.
- Rothwell, P. 2019, *Pepetela and the MPLA: the ethical evolution of a revolutionary war*, Oxford, Legenda.
- Royle, N. 2003, *The Uncanny*, New York, Routledge.
- Said, E. 2012, *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary Cultural Essays*, London, Granta.
- Silva, R. de 1998, *Totonya*, Luanda, Brigada Jovem de Literatura de Angola.
- Simões, M.G. 2012, *Outras margens: Ensaios de literatura brasileira, angolana, moçambicana e caboverdiana*, Lisboa, Colibri.
- Soiri, I. 1996, *The Radical Motherhood: Namibian Women's Independence Struggle*, Uppsala, Nordic Africa Institute.
- Spivak, G.C. 1983, "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman", in Krupnick, M. ed., *Displacement: Derrida and After*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press: 169-195.
- Tavares, M. 2018, *No Country for Nonconforming Women: Feminine Conceptions of Lusophone Africa*, Oxford, Legenda.
- Tavares, P. 2015, *Ritos de Passagem*, Luanda, Grecima.
- Vasconcellos, A. Botelho de ed. 2005, *Todos os sonhos. Antologia da poesia moderna angolana*, Luanda, UEA.
- Woolf, V. 1929, *A Room of One's Own*, London, Hogwarth.
- Young, R.J.C. 1995, *Colonial Desire*, New York, Routledge.

NOTES

1. Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola.

ABSTRACTS

Women writers have contested the monolithic version of Angolan nationhood propagated by the MPLA during the struggle for independence and its aftermath. Often haunted by an instrumentalized form of “mother-ness”, the version of Angola fashioned by the New Man left little space for women’s agency or the recognition of their creative autonomy. This article’s central premise is that a range of women writers (exemplified by Ana Paula Tavares, Rosária da Silva, Margarida Paredes, and Chó do Guri) have contested the gendered limitations placed on them by deploying techniques grounded in the uncanny, most notably “foreignness”, “unhomeliness” and new takes on old narratives, in the process, wresting control of Mother from the New Man. The article discusses the deployment of Mother in nationalist discourse, and the extent to which this was inflected in colonial-era gender-saturated matrices. Less gender-coded research on motherhood is juxtaposed with Agostinho Neto’s “mãe” to argue that nationalist poets and authors, unwittingly or otherwise, pushed a metaphor of Mother articulated from within a colonial epistemological framework. The article suggests that the failure of the MPLA revolution should be judged as much in terms of the movement’s proclivity towards normalizing gender binaries as its inability to realize political utopia. Against a backdrop of “patriotic motherhood” that reduced women to carers, Ana Paula Tavares’s challenges to the prudish sensitivities of the New Man were expanded linguistically into the terrain of uncanny “foreignness” by Rosária da Silva. For her part, Margarida Paredes’s rewriting of the Freudian primal scene foregrounds the colonial mother as an Angolan inheritance. For Chó do Guri, the interpellation of mother replicates Neto’s strategy of calling a maternal object into being, but in an uncanny way that uses mother to tell the fraught history and present of a daughter rather than allying her to the future of a nation.

Les femmes écrivaines ont remis en cause la version monolithique de la nation angolaise propagée par le MPLA pendant la lutte pour l’indépendance et ses prolongements. Souvent hantée par une forme instrumentalisée de « maternité », la version de l’Angola façonnée par l’Homme nouveau a laissé peu de place à l’action des femmes ou à la reconnaissance de leur autonomie créative. Le postulat central de cet article est qu’un ensemble d’écrivaines (telles Ana Paula Tavares, Rosária da Silva, Margarida Paredes et Chó do Guri) ont contesté les limites sexospécifiques qui leur étaient imposées en déployant des techniques fondées sur l’étrange (*uncanny*), en particulier le sentiment d’étrangeté et de non-appartenance (*unhomeliness*) et de nouvelles interprétations de vieux récits, retirant ainsi le contrôle de la Mère à l’Homme nouveau. L’article examine la convocation de la Mère dans le discours nationaliste et l’influence sur celui-ci des matrices saturées de genre de l’ère coloniale. En juxtaposant des recherches sur la maternité moins codées en termes de genre à la « *mãe* » d’Agostinho Neto, l’article montre que les poètes et auteurs nationalistes ont, involontairement ou non, mis en avant une métaphore de la mère formulée à partir d’un cadre épistémologique colonial. L’article suggère que l’échec de la révolution du MPLA devrait être considéré autant à l’aune de la tendance du mouvement à normaliser une binarité de genre que de son incapacité à concrétiser une utopie politique. Dans un contexte de « maternité patriotique » réduisant les femmes au rôle de soignantes, les défis lancés par Ana Paula Tavares à la sensibilité pudibonde de l’Homme nouveau ont été étendus linguistiquement sur le terrain d’une inquiétante « étrangeté » par Rosária da Silva. La réécriture de la scène primitive freudienne par Margarida Paredes met quant à elle en avant la mère coloniale en tant qu’héritage angolais. Chez Chó do Guri, l’interpellation de la mère reproduit la

stratégie de Neto consistant à appeler à l'existence un objet maternel, mais d'une manière étrange, utilisant la mère pour narrer l'histoire et le présent troublés d'une fille plutôt que pour la relier à l'avenir d'une nation.

As mulheres escritoras têm contestado a versão monolítica da nação angolana difundida pelo MPLA durante a luta anticolonial e após a independência. Frequentemente assombrada por uma forma instrumentalizada de “maternidade”, a versão de Angola moldada pelo Homem Novo deixou pouco espaço para a ação das mulheres ou para o reconhecimento da sua autonomia criativa. O argumento principal deste artigo é que existe hoje um leque de escritoras (exemplificado por Ana Paula Tavares, Rosária da Silva, Margarida Paredes e Chó do Guri) que contestou as limitações de género que lhes foram impostas. Recorrendo a técnicas baseadas no “estranho” freudiano, nomeadamente o “estranhamento”, o “deslocamento” e novas abordagens a velhas narrativas, as obras das referidas escritoras desafiam o Homem Novo, retirando-lhe o controle da imagem de Mãe. O artigo discute a utilização da figura da Mãe no discurso nacionalista e até que ponto esta é reflexo da matriz colonial de género. A investigação sobre a maternidade, menos codificada em termos de género, é contraposta à “Mãe” em Agostinho Neto, argumentando que os poetas e autores nacionalistas, involuntariamente ou não, promoveram uma metáfora materna configurada dentro de um quadro epistemológico colonial. O artigo sugere que o fracasso da revolução do MPLA deve ser julgado tanto em termos da propensão do movimento para normalizar os binários de género quanto da sua incapacidade para realizar a utopia política. A partir de uma “maternidade patriótica” que reduzia as mulheres a cuidadoras, os desafios de Ana Paula Tavares às sensibilidades púdicas do Homem Novo foram alargados linguisticamente para o terreno do “estranhamento” por Rosária da Silva. Por seu lado, Margarida Paredes, ao reescrever a cena primordial freudiana, coloca em primeiro plano a Mãe colonial como uma herança angolana. Para Chó do Guri, a interpelação da mãe reconfigura a estratégia de Neto de convocar à existência um objeto materno. No entanto, fá-lo de uma forma desestabilizadora que utiliza a mãe para narrar o passado e o conseqüente presente de uma filha rebelde, em vez de ligar a figura materna ao futuro de uma nação.

INDEX

Mots-clés: écriture féminine angolaise, Agostinho Neto, étrangeté, Chó do Guri, Rosária da Silva, Margarida Paredes, Ana Paula Tavares

Palavras-chave: escrita feminina angolana, Agostinho Neto, o estranho freudiano, Chó do Guri, Rosária da Silva, Margarida Paredes, Ana Paula Tavares

Keywords: Angolan women's writing, Agostinho Neto, the uncanny, Chó do Guri, Rosária da Silva, Margarida Paredes, Ana Paula Tavares

AUTHOR

PHILLIP ROTHWELL

University of Oxford

phillip.rothwell[at]mod-langs.ox.ac.uk