

question these logocentric discourses. Barbosa discusses Lispector's use of counter-discourse as a destabilizing element illustrating the intertextual relationships the narratives establish with each other and with traditional literary canon formation.

"Defying Gods and Disturbing Classical Harmony" is a re-evaluation of traditional criticism on Clarice Lispector's short stories that has focused primarily on the existential and epiphanic elements in her earlier work as well as the tragic contours. As in previous publications, Barbosa challenges static notions of quest narratives and the structure of tragedies. She shows how Lispector parodies mythological quests' "reintegration into the social structure" (6). The mythic qualities readily apparent in the characters inform Barbosa's interpretation of Lispector's attempted progression from order-to-disorder-to-re-order and begin to establish firm links between Lispector's work and that of other literary masters in the Luso-Brazilian tradition.

Clarice Lispector: Spinning the Webs of Passion offers a much needed English analysis of Clarice Lispector's work. For the most part, whatever English criticism exists focuses on either one short story or one novel. Theoretical English texts

are rare, except for the problematic studies of Hélène Cixous or the excellent development of the place of passion and violence in Lispector's work by Marta Peixoto. Maria José Somerlate Barbosa has definitively returned the feminine and feminist aspects to Lispector's work. Despite minor typographical errors, a footnote included but not indicated in the text and slight errors in capitalization, Barbosa's text offers an in-depth look at the range of Clarice Lispector's talents. Her work offers an important contribution to scholars of Brazilian literature, Brazilian historiography and culture, and women's studies' scholarship.

- Susan Quinlan
(University of Georgia)

Peres, Phyllis.

Transculturation and Resistance in Lusophone African Narrative.

Gainesville: The UP of Florida, 1997. 168 pp.

Transculturation and Resistance in Lusophone African Narrative, by Phyllis Peres, is an impressive study of Angolan contemporary narrative and its impact on

the imagining of the nation. Peres carefully takes the reader from the first stirrings of the liberation movements against Portuguese colonialism in the late fifties to the present aftermath of the twenty year long post-independence civil war, which broke out in 1975.

Despite the pioneering studies of distinctive scholars such as Gerald Moser, Russell Hamilton, Manuel Ferreira, and the innovative expression of Portuguese-speaking literature itself, both critical bibliography and translated works on Lusophone African literature are anything but abundant. To their credit, however, the few critical works available to scholars today demonstrate sensitivity to the importance of literature in the struggle for freedom as an "act of culture" as well as, in the most recent works, its enormous significance to the project of imagining the nation. Examples of this sensitivity can be found in the studies compiled in *Les Littératures africaines de langue portugaise. A la Recherche de l'identité individuelle et nationale*,¹ in *Coscienza Nazionale nelle Letterature Africane di Lingua Portoghese*,² and in some aspects of the work by Patrick Chabal, *The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa*.³ However, *Transculturation and Resistance in Lusophone African Narrative*

marks a new beginning in this area of research for various reasons: first, this study is imbued with an interpretative spirit that sets it apart from the "reviewing nature" of critical work on Portuguese-speaking African literature in the past; second, Peres applies a postcolonial theoretical background (with originality and accuracy) to the historical and literary context of Angolan literature, which results in many innovative and interesting interpretations; and, finally, Peres's book is the first in-depth study on the theme of Angolan narrative as a space for imagining the nation as a specific topic of Angolan literature.

Peres begins her study with an introductory chapter which is followed by an analysis of the works of four of the most important Angolan authors. The first three writers covered in this study began their imaginings of the nation in the nationalistic movement and struggle for independence: Luandino Vieira, the emblematic name of Angolan resistance literature, whose counter-narrative strategy of the colonial discourse of acculturation affirms a national literature from a thematic and aesthetic viewpoint; Pepetela, winner of the Camões Prize, the most distinctive literary prize of the Lusophone world, has been one of the most original and consistent

voices on the imagining of the nation from his first works in the 1970s to his 1992 masterpiece *Geração da Utopia* (The Generation of Utopia); and Uanhenga Xitu, whose stories of the struggle for freedom recover traditional practices of the rural areas where subversive characters deflect European visions of otherness from within the ambiguities of colonial discourse. The fourth writer studied here is Manuel Rui, author of some of the most important post-independence narratives. It is important to underline that Peres's reading strategy is enriched by the fertile comparisons she draws between the works of the different authors.

In the first chapter Peres discusses the historical context of contemporary Angolan narratives and presents a theoretical background for an understanding of resistance literature and postcolonial studies. She stresses the importance of the 1950s as the time of the first significant politically-organized attempt to question Portuguese colonialism in Angola. The "discovering of Angola" by the dictatorial Portuguese regime resulted in a package of cosmetic reforms with which the *Estado Novo* would adapt its conservative colonial ideology to the "winds of change" brought by the end of the World War II and the ensuing decolonization movement, thus suggesting the blur-

ring of boundaries between the Portuguese empire and the imagined Pan-Lusitanian nation. However, for the contemporary Angolan nationalists of the Generation of the 1950s, also dedicated to "discovering Angola," the boundary to question was not between empire and metropolis but rather, as Peres emphasises, between colony and an imagined liberated nation. The "cultural reconversion" (in the words of Amílcar Cabral) led by the Angolan nationalists is the political and cultural counter-mapping of a nation sketched centuries ago during the Portuguese discoveries by imperial cultural and political attitudes. Within this cultural and political process protagonized by the Angolan nationalists two movements (and concepts) are essential—resistance and transculturation—the two fascinating key concepts that guide Peres's readings of Angolan contemporary narrative.

Transculturation is a particularly useful concept for this study since, as Peres argues, it provides the intellectual framework for understanding the process by which Angolan narratives both appropriated and transformed dominant Portuguese discourse towards the expression of a national literature. Thus, it opposes the framework explicit in colonial acculturation that

assumes a static tension between indigenous culture and metropolitan mode. Transculturation assumes dynamism and fluidity, however tense, hybrid, and ambiguous. Homi Bhabha's description of the inherent hybridity of a colonial environment is another key concept for Peres's analysis of the narrations of the nation in contemporary Angola, as hybridity describes the disturbingly ambiguous liminal state of tension between colony and imagined nation-space. That liminal space is the site of what are often violent negotiations of hybridity—the contact zone of Louise Pratt's studies on imperial travel narratives⁴—that have emerged in the textualizations of Angolan nationness. Peres argues that negotiation of cultural hybridity gains further significance if it is viewed as an integral part of the process of transculturation. Transculturation is both a form of resistance typical of the colonial context and a type of hybridization process on an abstract level.

The second chapter is dedicated to Luandino Vieira, a major influence on an entire generation of Angolan writers. Peres believes that the city of Luanda is the heart of a collective and potential national identity in Luandino Vieira's narratives. To sustain this affirmation she follows the counter-mapping of the

colonial city of Luanda through the narratives with a special emphasis on *Luuanda*. As expressed in the title (in Kimbundu), through *Luuanda's* narratives Vieira claims an equally central position to the African part of the city, the city of the *musseques*, traditionally seen in opposition to the colonial city. These narratives represent a claim of periphery, an act of evident political consequence in a colonial context. For Vieira, the narration of the nation is a transcultured practice through which the author reclaims discursive terrain with the invention of hybrid Angolan literary forms and languages, as Peres underlines. Through the introduction of the *estória*—i.e., the textualization of oral discourse or, as Luandino Vieira explained to Peres, of "something that was told and now I am telling and that will be told again" (23)—and the use of neologisms, Vieira's narratives offer a transcultured imagining of Luanda. As a resistance and transcultured sign, the *estória* is the metaphor of the construction of the nation as a dynamic and open space through which the *estórias* of Angolan nationness, its imagined pasts and its possible futures might be narrated.

The third chapter deals with the work of Uanhenga Xitu. For Xitu, narrating the Angolan nation is the

imagining of hybrid identities of the rural peripheries outside Luanda. This must be carried out, as Peres observes, through the subversive strategies of mimicry and farse. Through Bhabha's concepts of mimicry and hybridity, as well as Pratt's concept of the spaces of colonial encounters as "contact zones," Peres explores the subversive power of mimicry of colonial discourse on Xitu's narratives. She concludes that Xitu's texts demonstrate the impossibility of producing a pure counter-discourse because the counter-discourse has already been formed in the contact zone. Mimicry, on the other hand, is always subversive regardless of whether it appears in acculturated literary languages and forms or in the hybrid languages that emerge on the margins of colonialism.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to Pepetela's works. Here Peres focuses on the vision of the nation as a utopian space in Pepetela's literary path from the dream of the revolution to the most profound disenchantment. In the section "Praxis, Camarada, Praxis" Peres underlines the importance of Pepetela's works of the 1970s. As *Aventuras de Ngunga* (The Adventures of Ngunga) and *Mayombe*—where utopia was projected on the revolution that would invent Angola

from a space that was never a nation—narrate the struggle for freedom. Pepetela's post-independence novels are examined in two sections: "Back to the Futures" and "The Generation of Utopia." Here Peres signals Pepetela's questioning of the transformative power of revolution. In "Back to the Futures" she focuses on novels such as *Yaka* or *Lueji*, where the visions of utopia are located in a historical past that is inseparable from the imagining of the future of the nation. The last section deals with a book which is particularly important to Peres's argument—*Geração da Utopia*. In this novel Pepetela narrates the path of his generation: the utopic imagining, however controversial, of the dream of the nation in the 1960s, which ultimately led to deception and the concept of a nation deferred. Peres concludes that Pepetela's novels are counternarrations of the nation as the questioning of nation extends to the viability of nationness in that tense, hybrid space of cultural difference. As in the *estória*, the narration of the nation remains open.

In the fifth chapter Peres examines Manuel Rui's literary path. From his engagement with the euphoric moments of nationness raised from revolution in *Sim Camarada!* (1977)—where the new *estória* to be passed on from generation to

generation is that of the revolution—to a most disenchanting and ironic vision of a nation where the revolution has been betrayed: *I Morto & os Vivos* (1993). As Peres points out, even in his early novels Rui assumes the ironies of post-colonialism. His novels pervade the future imaginings of nationhood produced by the new generation of *pioneiros* in their *estórias* of struggle, revolution, and national euphoria in an innovative fashion. These are the *estórias* betrayed by the characters that represent—in Manuel Rui's recent works—the new ruling class which brought about independence but not the nation. In Rui's latest works irony is countered by disenchantment, not by euphoria. As Peres concludes, the present discourse of the nation reveals a condition that is neither liberating nor helpful: the revolution has devoured its children.

In the sixth and final chapter Peres concludes that national liberation in Angola was indeed an "act of culture," a reclaiming of that terrain reserved for the colonizing subject that moved the marginalized perspective of the colonized to the center of a new nation-space. However, once the periphery became center, the identification of national subjects did not end with political independence. This on-going negotiation is

also an "act of culture," one that ruptures the false and neo-colonial boundaries between colonialism and postcolonialism. In contemporary Angola, history defeats all possible imaginations of the nation and authors retreat into silence like Luandino Vieira; into self-parody, like Uanhenga Xitu; or, more creatively, into an ironic space that stops short of despair, like Pepetela and Manuel Rui, both of whom tried to keep alive a dream of nationhood that seems to have been postponed (for the time being), but which may yet arise from the disenchanting ruins of the revolution. Just as in the oral *estória*, this space remains open. Within this space, Angolan writers can explore the borderlands between what Angola had been, was, and dreamed of becoming. Here, they can continue to draw the negotiated terrain of imagined nation-space even when history seems to defeat the dream of nation.

Peres's *Transculturation and Resistance in Lusophone African Narrative* is a fascinating voyage through contemporary Angolan narrative and its literary project of "narrating the nation." This study is indispensable to students and scholars of Lusophone African studies, Luso-Brazilian studies, and Portuguese studies. It is also useful to students and scholars interested in

colonial and post-colonial studies and comparative literature. I would also strongly recommend a Portuguese translation of this study.

- Margarida Ribeiro
(King's College London)

Notes

¹ Foundation Calouste Gulbenkian, Centre Culturel Portugais. *Les Littératures africaines de langue portugaise. A la Recherche de l'identité individuelle et nationale*. Paris: Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, Centre Culturel Portugais, 1984.

² Ceccucci, Piero, ed. *Coscienza Nazionale nelle Letterature Africane di Lingua Portoghese. Atti del Convegno Internazionale*, 13-14 Dicembre 1993, Milano. Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 1995.

³ Chabal, Patrick, ed. *The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa*. London: Hurst & Company, 1996.

⁴ Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Contributors

FERNANDO ARENAS is Assistant Professor of Portuguese, Brazilian, and Lusophone African literatures and cultures at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. He has published essays in several journals including *Brasil/Brazil*, *Luso-Brazilian Review*, and *Portuguese Studies*. He is currently preparing a monograph entitled *Being on Edge: Subjects, Nations and Utopias in Contemporary Portuguese and Brazilian Writing*, and has co-edited, together with Susan C. Quinlan, the collection of essays *Lusosex: Discourses of Sexuality in the Portuguese-speaking World* (forthcoming).

ANA PAULA FERREIRA is Associate Professor of Luso-Brazilian Literature, Critical Theory, and Women's Studies at the University of California, Irvine. She has published a book and several essays on the Portuguese Neo-Realist novel, and has also published extensively on the constructs of history, nation, and subjectivity in contemporary women writers. Her latest projects center on nationalism, ideologies of "femininity," and the forgotten women writers of Salazar's *Estado Novo*.

PAULO DE MEDEIROS holds the Chair of Portuguese Studies at the University of Utrecht, in the Netherlands. Besides numerous essays in the area of Comparative Literature and on diary literature, he has also written on twentieth-century Portuguese writers. Recently, he was guest-editor for an issue of the journal *Discursos* (1996), dedicated to "Literatura, Nacionalismos, Identidade."